



Kuspuk Connections:

A Guide to Moving to the "Alaskan Bush" Kuspuk School District

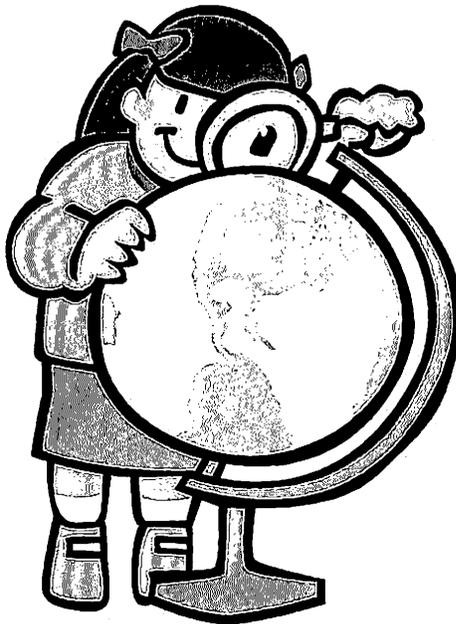
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Kuspuk School District

Welcome to Kuspuk School District in Aniak, Alaska. We'd like to take this opportunity to welcome you and your families to one of the best school districts in Alaska. Located on the Middle Kuskokwim River Region, there are nine schools in seven villages covering 12,120 square miles. None of them are connected by a road system! This is a very different way of life.

Hopefully, this booklet will assist you in your transition. If you have any questions about educational program, the lifestyles, or other practical concerns, please feel free to call or email us, see the back page. There is information on our district website at: www.kuspuk.org. There you find information about the villages and view pictures of students and staff. You will find the upcoming events and school calendar, as well as the school directory, teaching resources, and a wealth of other information.





Location And Climate

By examining the location and climates of the villages, you can gather that Kuskokwim School District is located on a large river, which has many uses. It is used for recreation and subsistence activities. From mid May through September, the river is ice-free. Subsistence fishing is commonly practiced. You can find Salmon, Grayling, and Rainbow Trout in abundance. Hunting and fishing is regulated and licenses can be purchased in Aniak. There are wild moose, caribou, bears, foxes, wolves, beavers and other small wildlife in the area.

In the winter when the river is frozen, you can travel from village to village by four-wheeler or snow machine, and sometimes truck. During break up, the river can be fast moving and treacherous. Extreme caution needs to be taken when dealing with a river during this time. You might take a few moments to read up on hypothermia and how to avoid becoming its victim. However, hypothermia is not limited to an unexpected dip in the river. If you are outdoorsmen, you already know that you need proper attire for extremely cold conditions. Temperatures can dip down to -50 degrees and stay that way for several weeks at a time.

Anticipate in August a little rain which leads to muddy conditions, severe icing conditions as the temperatures drop, lots of beautiful snow, some windy conditions, plummeting temperatures in January, gradual rise in temperatures by March, break up in April/May which can bring flooding. The flooding can bring life to a halt. At times, it can make roads and trails impassable.

Bring your mud boots or waders. Ice grippers, arctic winter boots, hat, warm/water/wind proof gloves, and scarves may be ordered in the fall from stores in Anchorage or catalogs. Each school office gets a variety of catalogs. Don't worry about getting these items until you are here. Some staff may have suggestions - ask around.

Most villages have a small general store with an AC (Alaska Commercial store) in Aniak that will ship out. Other options include:

Costco- Anchorage (Dimond Blvd.)	(907) 267-7110
Sam's Club - (across from Dimond Mall on Old Seward Hwy)	(907) 522-2333
Fred Meyers - Anchorage (Muldoon Dr.)	(907) 267-1718
Walmart - Anchorage (Dimond Blvd.)	(907) 344-5300

What can I wear to school?

The schools are properly heated but there might be a need for sweatshirts or sweaters. Layers help. Style? Casual dress is the practice. Dress for the weather and the activity in which you will be engaged. You may want to bring some dressy clothes for special events like: Christmas, graduation, etc. The students will wear currently trend jeans or pants topped with T-shirts or sweaters.

Local Common Practices

Another aspect of the area is berry picking. Families collect gallons of berries for freezing, canning and baking. You can find blueberries, blackberries, crowberries, high and low bush cranberries and salmonberries, to name a few. As a non-Native shareholder, you may need to have a \$100 "land use permit" to berry pick or recreate on their lands, available from the Kuskokwim Corporation. Visit www.kuskokwim.com for more information.

Kuspuk schools are probably not any different from the schools you are leaving. At times, the girls will wear a traditional dress called a "qaspeq" (Kuspuk). Don't forget to plan now for Halloween! The kids love it when the teachers/administrators participate and wear a costume, too!

In my experiences in the bush it has been a practice to give the students in your class small, age appropriate gifts at Christmas and Valentines. Some teachers go out of their way to buy gifts; others keep it simple. You will have time to check with several staff and order later if you choose.

Religious practices are generally Roman Catholic, Russian Orthodox, and several Protestant denominations. There are organized church services in most villages conducted by a church official, local representative or layperson. Even though they may support a religion other than the one you practice, you will always be welcome to participate. It is a good way to blend into the community and is viewed as a positive gesture. Feel free to attend services or create your own way to worship. Attending funeral services or memorial services is appreciated, but not required.

If you are invited to a potluck and decide to attend, plan to bring/share a dish (casserole, spaghetti, etc) or dessert (cookies, cake, brownies, etc). Most potlucks held at the school are open to all. Everyone is unofficially invited. You may not receive a personal invitation - but you are welcome. You don't have to bring enough to feed the village - just a regular size serving bowl/pan. Others will bring food too. It is a wonderful way to be part of the village. It may be a good idea to bring it in an aluminum pan, as you may not get it back after the meal. Participation is considered a sign of respect.

Shopping and Mailing

Moving to the bush can be a very expensive venture. You can get anything you want shipped to your residence if you have the money! Everyone is a little different, some people bring in only the bare necessities and add to their purchases after living here awhile, others bring everything they need to live comfortably from the get go! You decide which style is best!

Things you will need are: bedding (sheets, pillows, blankets), towels and personal toiletries, and possibly a shower curtain. Kitchenware (plates, silverware, cups/glasses, pots, and pans), small appliances you can't live without (toaster, coffeemaker, microwave, bread maker, etc.) Bring a good supply of paper products- paper plates, towels, toilet paper, etc.) You will need a food supply that will last you for an extended period of time. Halloween candy can be purchased in Anchorage before school begins or ordered later. Remember to shop locally too.

Stores in the villages are expensive. Food and supply costs are about doubled. Most people have food and supplies shipped in from Anchorage stores. The stores take phone orders and will charge purchases or send C.O.D. Some stores will box and mail your order for you for an extra fee - usually a percentage of the total bill. You might want to spend a day or two in Anchorage to stock up and mail items yourself. The Airport Post Office is open late hours. Fred Meyer on Muldoon Dr., Walmart on Dimond Blvd., and Carrs (grocery store) on Jewel Lake will allow you to shop and then push your cart to the "Bush Order" counter and leave it for them to box and ship out for you. It may take 7-10 days to receive your order(s).

The villages in the area are usually either "dry" or "damp". In a dry village liquor is not to be brought in, bought, or sold. In a "damp" village liquor can be brought in but not bought or sold in the village. The villages in the district are different. You may want to check with your principal or staff member before sending liquor to your village.

You may choose to box and send all your purchases via a cargo airline - they often deliver the next day or so. They usually have freezer space for frozen groceries. You can save money by sending out multiple boxes at a time because it is cheaper if you do. The rates are set by a minimum weight and then for additional weight beyond that.

Here are few cargo companies staff has used in the past. You will want to contact them ahead of time.

ACE (Alaska Central Express)	(907) 245-0231
ERA Alaska Cargo (daily to Aniak)	(907) 243-2761
Everts Air Cargo (3x week to Aniak)	(907) 243-0009 or 866-242-0009
NAC (Northern Air Cargo) (2x week to Aniak)	800-727-2141

NAC is often used for very large items- like vehicles

Facilities, Utilities, Schools and Health Care

Water is an important issue in rural Alaska. The schools and most of the residences in the Kuspuks School District have running water. Teachers may use the school for bathroom, kitchen and bathing needs. Most drinking water is good. You might want to invest in a Brita pitcher, a PUR water filter that attaches to the faucet, or a water distiller if having bottled water is important to you. You can usually purchase bottled water at the store(s) in the larger villages, but it is more expensive than in Anchorage.

Make sure you inquire about garbage service. Some villages have a service and others require you do that. It is best if you do not dispose of your garbage at school. It can get you off to a bad start with the staff. Some students are willing and anxious to take your bags for a fee. Check around with the kids. They love making extra cash and don't mind taking your trash out for you.

All villages have electricity services. Some villages have TV service but most residents rely on satellite TV. Check with your aides or city council people as to whom to contact. You can send in a TV in your goods or have one shipped directly from the store in Anchorage. You also might want to sign up with Netflix or Blockbuster.

The schools have all facilities available. They have classrooms, kitchen, and bathrooms with showers, small computer labs, libraries and Internet connection. Hopefully, the teacher before you restocked your classroom. If not, contact your principal.

Mail service is available. You will need to rent a mailbox at the post office in your village. Mail service is expected daily but Mother Nature and the daily temperament have a strong hand in mail delivery. Some villages don't have daily mail service. If the weather looks questionable and you have a bill due or need to make a deposit,

plan ahead or bank online.

Medical services are minimal in the smaller villages. Aniak has a high-tech clinic with: X-ray facilities, dental and vision services, emergency room, pharmacy, and lab. There is a Health Aide on call in most villages. Their training is limited to basic first aid. More serious injuries and illnesses are referred to Aniak. From there, patients can be med-evacuated to Bethel or Anchorage. Our Health coverage has a good mail order system for [prescription medications through Walgreen's](#). Otherwise, medicine can be dispensed at Aniak or your own method of choice. For toiletries and over the counter medications, www.drugstore.com is a good source delivering in 5-7 days!

If you take medication on a regular basis, make sure you have a few months worth of your prescription(s). Sometimes its difficult getting your mail services started and you don't want to be caught with your guard down. The same goes for bringing a spare pair of glasses or contacts and solutions.

You will find that you might become ill more often upon relocating to a new village. There are different "bugs" here and your resistance will need building. Don't let things go. Get checked out. Make sure your tetanus shots are up-to-date, just in case. As part of your employment, you will need a general health exam. You might want to take care of that before you make your final move.

Transportation

There are no paved roads connecting villages. Travel is done by air, four-wheeler, snow machine, foot, dog sled, boat, and sometimes trucks. Gasoline is currently going for about \$6.00 a gallon in Aniak. Gas prices will rise as the economy dictates. (Prices are currently rising with each new barge delivering fuel.) Some long-term residents have shipped cars or trucks to their villages. Price is determined by length of vehicle. 4-wheel drive is recommended. Snowmobiles & ATV's are very popular. Vehicles are usually flown out on a cargo plane. Aniak is an airline hub. Northern Air Cargo (NAC) has two flights weekly.

Air travel is primarily used for travel between villages. Local airlines have daily flights to Aniak and there are two carriers with daily flights to Anchorage. Round trip fares from Aniak to the villages can cost from \$130-\$280, depending on the airline and village.

The district does not pay moving costs or airfare from your home to Aniak. The district does pay the airfare for the August Inservice from Aniak to the village sites.

Ravn Alaska (907) 675-4572

(Get 10 points for each flight, 100 points earns a free flight)

Out of Anchorage to Aniak

Ravn - one way is \$ 225 round trip is \$450

Out of Aniak to Anchorage

Ravn - one way is \$ 225 round trip is \$450 (non-refundable)

Carriers to villages:

ERA Alaska - originating out of Aniak (907) 675-4572

Ryan Air - originating out of Aniak (907) 675-4295

Alaska Scenic Air Charter - originating out of Aniak (907) 676-0371

Conclusion

These are just a few of the questions that can arise when moving to a new village.
Hope this is helpful for you. See you soon! Good Luck!

Important Contact Information

Kuspuk School District		Fax (907) 675-4305
Bernard Grieve Superintendent	bgrieve@kuspuk.org	(907) 675-4250 x222
Edith Morgan Administrative Assistant	emorgan@kuspuk.org	(907) 675-4250 x223
Todd Boynton Aniak Principal	tboynton@kuspuk.org	(907) 675-4330 AJSHS or (907) 675-4363 AMNES
Severin Gardner Kalskag Principal	sgardner@kuspuk.org	(907) 471-2286
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Mike Roth Technology Director	mroth@kuspuk.org	(907) 675-4250 x224
Martha Morgan Business Manager	mmorgan@kuspuk.org	(907) 675-4250 x253
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Visit the district website: www.kuspuk.org		