

Hungry to Help My Native People

May 10, 2013 (Soldotna, AK): Alaska Christian College

http://ic.pics.livejournal.com/esandell/48603753/90613/90613_300.jpg

Thomas Alakayak has been through several cycles of life's up and downs. He was raised in the Yup'ik village of Manokotak, Alaska, located in the Bristol Bay area on the eastern-most arm of the Bering Sea.

Thomas was first introduced to ACC when recruiters visited the middle school in which he was employed. Thomas enrolled at ACC in 2004 and completed a one-year certificate in Biblical Studies. After leaving ACC, Thomas earned an Electrician's Helper Certificate from Alaska Job Corps.

With both certificates in place, Thomas was employed, married, became a father, and bought a house and a boat. However, he found many negative challenges and unhealthy opportunities. He made bad decisions and abused alcohol, which violated the law in his "dry" village. Convicted of a felony, he went through a downward spiral. He lost his job, his boat, his house, and finally, his family. At one extreme point in this cycle, he even considered suicide.

After three months working on an off-shore seafood processing plant in 2011, Thomas heard a personal message from God. "God was speaking to me, telling me that I needed to find a safe place to be." He returned to the safest place he had ever experienced and re-enrolled at ACC in Fall 2011.

Thomas says that ACC has helped him understand that God sees him as a person who is worthy. He understands that God created him and wants him to see and experience the beauty in life. He is excited about his walk with Jesus Christ. He is thankful for the people at ACC for surrounding him with love and support to get his life in order. He has been in recovery from substance abuse for two years.

Because his first language is Yup'ik, Thomas did most of his studying by thinking in Yup'ik before he spoke in English. His math instructor noted that Thomas would listen intently to repeated explanations of concepts and theories. When he became frustrated at not understanding immediately, he would occasionally leave the class meeting to work independently... and submit his homework, completed and on time. Thomas made the Dean's List with a 3.0 GPA during Fall, 2012; achieved a 4.0 GPA during Spring, 2013; and graduated from ACC on May 5, 2013, with a two-year

diploma in Biblical Studies and General Education.

Thomas declares that he is “hungry to help my native people.” He is praying and asking God for direction in making decisions about his next “safe” place. This may be a four-year college or a mission internship in an Alaskan village.

(From Jackie Smith, Instructor, and Debbie Bogart, Director of Development)