Newsletters Created by Kim Slade, 2007 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail™

**Trail Tails: 2006 Iditarod Summer Conference**

**Date:** August 7, 2006

2006 Summer Conference: The 2006 Summer Conference newsletter summarizes events that took place during the 2006 Summer Conference for Educators. Meet the participants and the guest speakers. Posted by Kim Slade the 2007 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail™.

**Trail Tales – September**

**Date:** September 16, 2006

Trail Tales – September introduces readers to Kim's dog, Kenai and shares information about the topic, adaptations. Posted by Kim Slade the 2007 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail™.

**Trail Tales – October**

**Date:** October 28, 2006

Trail Tales – October provides information about the book *Arctic Lights: Arctic Nights* by Debbie S. Miller with Illustrations by Jon Van Zyle, and opens the conversation with students about the length of the day - hours of daylight and darkness. Posted by Kim Slade, the 2007 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail™.

**Trail Tales – November**

**Date:** November 29, 2006

Trail Tales – November: Where do dogs sleep? This newsletter provides information and an activity about creating dog houses. Posted by Kim Slade, 2007 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail™.

**Trail Tales – December**

**Date:** December 30, 2006

Trail Tales December- What is the difference between reindeer and caribou? Find out in this newsletter! Posted by Kim Slade, 2007 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail™.
The Participants:
Educators from Florida, New York, North Carolina, Virginia, New Jersey, Minnesota, Washington, and Wisconsin descend on Wasilla, Alaska for the Iditarod Summer Conference for Educators and Race Fans. For most, it was their first time to Alaska. Participants learned about Alaska, the athletes (the dogs), the mushers, and how the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race can be used with NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND. Many teachers shared how they use the Iditarod in their classrooms, and many new ideas bloomed after great minds got together. One participant stated, “The conference was an out of this world experience that I would recommend to anyone and everyone interested in the Iditarod.”

The Guests:
Several guest speakers showed up at the conference enlightening teachers. Guests included:

Ramy Brooks - veteran Iditarod musher, shared his childhood dream of running dogs and how they have changed his life. Visit Ramy’s website and see his kennels at www.ramybrooks.com/
**The Van Zyles share a moment with the teachers & their dogs**

**Teachers learn teamwork works best!**

**Teachers get their “grove on” at the Native Heritage Center**

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**The Canine Fairies - a group of educators who have a unique way of showing their support for the athletes and mushers!**

**Mike Dillingham** - author of the book Rivers, told the story of Rivers, a blind sled dog. Rivers ran the Iditarod twice before coming to live with Mike. Read more from Rivers at [http://home.gci.net/~sleddog/](http://home.gci.net/~sleddog/)

**Pam Flowers** - veteran Iditarod musher and the first woman, as well as the first American, to traverse the Arctic alone by sled dog team. She told of her 2,500 mile trek from Barrow, Alaska to Repulse Bay, in the Northwest Territory of Canada. Read more about Pam at [www.pamflowers.com/](http://www.pamflowers.com/)
Andy Moderow - Iditarod musher and author, described his experiences with the sled dogs. He also shared some lesson ideas that he has created for educators. More information can be found at http://iditarod.fromalaska.org/. And don’t forget to read his stories on www.iditarod.com/

Stuart Nelson, Jr. DVM - chief veterinarian for the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, spoke about the athletes and how their health is monitored before, during, and after the race. You can read more about this at www.iditarod.com/2-6.html

Gary Paulsen - veteran Iditarod musher and author, told stories from his life and the trail. With him, teacher Sheryl Cather, talked of the unique partnership she and Gary have formed to help bring the Iditarod experience into the classroom. Read more about both, Gary and Iditalearn, at www.randomhouse.com/features/garypaulsen/ and http://teachers.edenpr.org/sleddog/

The Field Trips:
Yes, even teachers get to go on field trips! Participants traveled to many points of interest in the local area around Wasilla and Anchorage. Travels included:

Jona and Jon Van Zyle’s kennel, studio, and home - Jon is a veteran musher and the official artist for the Iditarod, his wife Jona is an extremely talented artist as well. At their kennel and studio, participants got to share in the playful antics with their sled dogs and view both artists’ works. Many of us walked away with pieces of art, pictures, and new friendships that only two such wonderful people could share. Check out their art at www.jonvanzyle.com/

Dream a Dream Dog Farm - kennels of veteran Iditarod mushers Vern Halter and his wife Susan Whiton. They gave a spectacular presentation that included helping take 17 puppies on a morning walk, feeding the dogs, putting booties and harnesses on the dogs, and learning about their race history. Susan, a vet and an avid naturalist, gave information on caring for dogs and then shared techniques on how to sketch/journal. Learn more from Susan and Vern at www.vernhalter.com/ For lesson ideas, check out the “Teacher’s Toolbox” on their website!

Alaska’s Native Heritage Center - an interactive gathering place that celebrates and shares in Alaska’s many native cultures. Visit their website to learn more www.alaskanative.net
Anchorage Museum of Art and History - full of exhibits, paintings, and collections, the museum was designed to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the purchase of Alaska from Russia. Learn more about 100 years of Alaska by visiting the museum’s website at www.anchoragemuseum.org/

Iditarod Headquarters - the Official Headquarters to the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race! This facility houses trophies, memorabilia, displays, a full-size replica of a cabin in Rohn (a checkpoint along the trail), Raymie Reddington’s cart rides, as well as a gift shop where many educational materials can be purchased. This is also where the Volunteer Picnic was held, and where mushers signed up for the 2007 Iditarod!

Other Activities:
Whether it was the fact there are many different aspects to the Iditarod, the pure number of things to do in Alaska, or the long summer days, the evenings were spent exploring even more of the the Nations largest state. Participants visited the following places:

Independence Mine - gold mine up Hatcher Pass just 12 miles outside of Wasilla www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/units/indmine.htm

Talkeetna, Alaska - a small town about 2 hours north of Anchorage. The entire town is listed on the Register of Historic Places, is the base of Mount McKinley treks, and is said to be the inspiration behind the TV show, Northern Exposure www.alaskan.com/talkeetnadenali/

Eagle River Nature Center - offers nature studies, hiking trails, and public use facilities www.ernc.org/

Knik - 13 miles south of Wasilla. It is a checkpoint along the Iditarod Trail.

Matanuska Glacier - 100 miles from Anchorage on the Glenn Highway www.akhs.atfreeweb.com/Hikes/MatanuskaGlacier.htm

The Canine Fairies sharing their Iditarod Character Traits at the summer conference(left) and cheering on teams at the 2006 Iditarod in Anchorage
Welcome

I would like to welcome you to my journey as I set out on an adventure of a lifetime. My goal is to share the connections, from Florida to Alaska, that the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race has made for my students. Along this voyage, I challenge you to make your own connections as you travel the trail with me.

Adaptations

When Kenai came to live with us in Florida, we were worried that she might have a difficult time adjusting to the warm weather. As the summer turned to fall and then to winter, we watched and waited for her coat to change - to thicken with an undercoat. To our surprise, it never did. A year later, Kenai’s coat has stayed thin, with no undercoat.

Left: Kenai shows how she stays warm down in Florida!

This has raised many questions among students here in Florida. As students grapple with these questions, I encourage them to investigate adaptations and how they play a role in animal survival. Take a look at the fur of a husky that lives in Alaska and then compare it to Kenai’s fur. What does this show? Why doesn’t Kenai get that thick undercoat that huskies living in Alaska get? What can you hypothesis about climatic adaptations?
Arctic Days

As the days get shorter and the nights longer, think about how this affects the arctic? The book *Arctic Lights: Arctic Nights* by Debbie S. Miller with Illustrations by Jon Van Zyle, tells the story as the months tick by in the arctic. The story highlights the twenty-first of each month by showing what could be happening in the arctic, shares the amount of daylight, and the average temperatures. It’s a journey like no other and is the focus of a new lesson found on the Iditarod website. Check it out!

**What do the days look like in your area?**

Is it dark when you get up in the morning? What time does the sunrise where you live? What time does it set? What does it mean when people say that the days are getting shorter?

In Vero Beach, Florida, it is dark when we get up at 6:15 a.m. This is the time when my family begins to get ready for school. It is also the time when Kenai is ready to go outside (if you know what I mean). The sunrise is about 7:20 a.m. and it sets about 6:50 p.m. each day, but it is rising and setting earlier each day now (about a minute difference each day).

Check out the sunrise and sunset times around the country at [http://www.sunrisesunset.com/custom_srss_calendar.asp](http://www.sunrisesunset.com/custom_srss_calendar.asp).

Daylight Savings Time is just around the corner - What is it? How does it affect the length of the day?
When we put the Christmas tree up in our house this year, we had to remove Kenai’s chair. Feeling a little guilty, we decided to get her an early Christmas present - a dog bed. This got me thinking about where other Alaskan huskies sleep.

I took many pictures on my visits to kennels in Alaska. This is where the some dogs sleep when they are not out on the trail.

Think about the perfect design for a doghouse. Draw a picture or sketch your design. What special features would your doghouse have?


Send pictures of your designs to kim.slade@indian-river.k12.fl.us

I would love to share them in next month’s newsletter.

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Kenai’s Korner

Kenai has just finished her classroom visits here in Vero Beach. She will soon be visiting other schools across the state of Florida. She really loves to travel and enjoys all the children she has met.

(Above: Kenai is doing what she likes best - getting patted on the head by students)

If Kenai could design her own house, she would like to have a style that blends her Alaskan birthplace with Florida living. Her house might look something like the log house, seen right, but with a front porch and brightly colored shutters.

What doghouses have you seen? Do they look like these? Have you ever thought about designing a doghouse?

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When on the Iditarod Trail, do you know where the dogs sleep? Do they have houses? Where do the musher sleep?
What are reindeer? According to Wikipedia, they are caribou when wild in North America, but reindeer as found in Northern Eurasia. Caribou and reindeer are the same species. They are found throughout Scandinavia (including Iceland), Finland, Northern Russia, and in North America they are found on Greenland, Canada, and Alaska. Wild reindeer, caribou, are still found in North America, Greenland, Iceland, and in southern Norway. In Northern Scandinavia and Russia, the reindeer are mostly domesticated.

While visiting Alaska this past summer, I had the opportunity to meet some domesticated reindeer and found out they are a little smaller than their wild counterparts the caribou.

The Chukchi herders from Russia were the first to bring the domesticated reindeer to Alaska. Then in 1894, the Sami reindeer herders from Lapland were hired by the United States government to introduce herding skills to the Yup’ik and Inupiaq Peoples of Alaska. As I found out from my visit to the Alaska Native Heritage Center, at the end of their three-year duty, some Sami stayed in Alaska to establish homes and some married into Alaska Native families. They built up large domesticated reindeer herds which provided food, clothing, and transportation during the Gold Rush and into the 1930’s.

The wild caribou herds are still found in Alaska and migrate in large herds between their birthing habitat and winter habitat. Their wide hooves help them travel through the snow and tundra.

Find more information on reindeer and caribou at the following websites: http://www.mnh.si.edu/arctic/html/caribou_reindeer.html and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reindeer
Where is Winter?

That is the question Floridans are asking this year. With temperatures well above normal, outdoor enthusiast have donned their beachwear instead of winter jackets.

This winter I have spent a lot of time outdoors enjoying the beach and boating thanks to temperatures in the mid 80’s. These temperatures have afforded me the opportunity to see bottlenose dolphin frolicking in the lagoon (right) and have allowed me to spend more time in shorts than any past winter.

As my winter clothes arrive for my trip, it seems so surreal especially when I have to adjust the thermostat to make it cooler just so I can try them on.

Although it has been enjoyable, I am looking forward to snow and cold temperatures - I can’t wait to wear all of the cold-weather gear out on the trail!

My Family

I wanted to take a moment and thank my family for the support and understanding they have given me as I follow my Iditarod dream. Hunter, MacKenzie, and Kevin, I will miss you terribly and am sadden by the fact that you will not be by my side experiencing all the wonders of the trail. Thank you and I Love you all very much!!