

Knowledge of the Supernatural Environment

A study of Bering Strait residents' knowledge, beliefs and experiences



"Hairy Man" illustration from the Delta Discovery, 5/29/13, Vol. 15(22).

Kawerak's Social Science Program has recently initiated a new research project on the "Supernatural Environment." Phenomena that can be described as "supernatural" include, among others, things such as sea monsters, little people, wild babies, unexplained lights, animals that can change into other things and invisible sea birds. We will be collaborating with 17 tribes in the Bering Strait region for this project.

The objective of the project is to document, in a serious and meaningful way, Bering Strait residents' knowledge about, experiences with, and beliefs about supernatural phenomena. We think that this information is important to understanding how people relate to their environment and that there are culturally-specific understandings of these phenomena which have not been previously documented.

During the course of the project we will:

- hold community meetings to get your input about what should be researched
- hold community story-telling nights so that stories can be shared
- conduct interviews with people interested in talking about their beliefs, knowledge and experiences related to the supernatural
- hold focus groups with individuals interested in discussing topics such as the meaning and importance of supernatural phenomena
- hold a workshop at the Kawerak Regional Conference
- document indigenous words and phrases related to the supernatural
- do extensive archival research on traditional knowledge and stories about the supernatural
- produce a book about what we document during the course of the project

Project participants can choose to remain anonymous.

For more information please contact:

Julie Raymond-Yakoubian, Social Science Program Director
julery@kawerak.org or (907) 443-4273
<http://www.kawerak.org/socialsci.html>

