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# Millie Katongan

## *Unalakleet, Bering Strait*

It is Christmas time and it's first grade. As our little class is in a line filing into the Bilingual Bicultural classroom, Millie is in her chair at the sewing table. **"Ublaluatuk," she says. This means "good morning." This is how Mildred Katongan greets her students every morning.** This is a ritual for her. Another ritual is her forever ripping out our sewing. "Your stitches are too big, how are the toys going to stay in your stocking?" she asks. Each time we hear a hard-worked-on stitch torn out, we feel as if we are about to cry. Little did we know Millie was helping us.

Years later, we are in the same room as eighth grade students, but this time we are imploring her to let us interview her for the nomination process for the FEA Educator Poster Series. **"Why do you want to interview me?" she asks humbly. "Because you're our favorite teacher," we say.** "You are the reason I learned how to sew," says Kendra. "Because you are my Atiq. I got my name from the best," says Mildred. "You deserve it. You always helped me along with other students and you tell good stories," says Korbin. After all of us telling her why we think she should let us nominate her, she agrees to do it. Here is what we wrote from her answers.

Millie loves to teach students how to stretch skins and make the right stitches. She also loves teaching students from preschool to high school how to sing songs translated into Inupiaq. She enjoys teaching because she likes the students to learn about their past to help them find a bright and better future.

She would also rather be at school teaching than at home sitting around. "I don't like doing nothing," Millie says. **Millie likes to make sure that students finish their projects. Her advice to students is, "Go to college and get more education. Finish what you start and not give up. Respect yourselves and others."** Millie loves working with the arts and teaching students how to understand themselves, and she is good at it! That is why we think she deserves this recognition.



*Unalakleet FEA members, Bobbi Storms and Jill Freytag, at the Arctic Regional Gathering in Kotzebue in 2010.*



**Educator Nomination Submitted by the Unalakleet Future Educators of Alaska Club**

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