



PRESS RELEASE

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By Sgt. Marisa Lindsay

Alaska National Guardsmen enjoy cultural exchange with residents at top of the world

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska —More than 40 Guard members assigned to the 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, participated in a cultural exchange at the Inupiat Heritage Center in Barrow on the last day of their annual training April 6.

The cultural exchange included an interactive traditional dance demonstration by the Ovluaq Dance Group, educational presentations on subsistence living and hunting, traditional Inupiat food samplings, including muk tuk, Eskimo donuts, and caribou soup, and a crafts exhibit held by local artisans.

Brig. Gen. (AK) Laurie Hummel, commander of the Alaska National Guard, and Col. Charles "Lee" Knowles, 297th BFSB commander, also attended the festivities, and together they performed a recognition ceremony for the two remaining Alaska Territorial Guard Soldiers of Barrow.

"I would mark this week and today as an absolute success," stated Capt. Ronald Desjardins, commander of the 297th BFSB Headquarters Headquarters Company. "We were able to honor living members of the Alaska Territorial Guard during the community gathering after displaying the relevance of our current force through our annual training."

The cultural day event followed a week of vigorous cold-weather training and Defense Support to Civil Authorities preparedness, as the Army Guardsmen partnered with the North Slope Borough risk management team in support of the statewide exercise Alaska Shield.

Guard members also hosted a community appreciation barbeque during the cultural event. Locals, Soldiers and personnel with the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs gathered and mingled over hot dogs and hamburgers while perusing Alaska National Guard and Alaska Territorial Guard historical displays.

"Cultural Day has allowed us the opportunity to hear from elders and local leaders and learn more about the community's rich culture and history," Desjardins said.

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PHOTOS

1. **DVIDS link** includes story and photos. (DVIDS is generally accessible from .mil computers)

<http://dvidshub.net/r/ysfpri>

2. **Flickr link** includes an event album with the complete selection of full-resolution, free downloadable images. (Flickr is not generally accessible from .mil computers.)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/alaskanationalguard/albums/72157666782222572>



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Brig. Gen. Laurie Hummel, commander of the Alaska National Guard, speaks with Alaska Territorial Guard members Wesley Atkin (foreground) and David U. Leavitt, during the cultural day event held at the Inupiat Heritage Center in Barrow, April 6, 2016. The cultural exchange marked the conclusion of a vigorous week of annual training by Guard members assigned to the Anchorage-based 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, Alaska Army National Guard. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Marisa Lindsay)



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Jade Kignak, 2, and her mom, Jerica Aamodt, stop for a picture after participating in a traditional dance demonstration with the Ovluaq dance group during a cultural exchange with Soldiers assigned to the 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, Alaska Army National Guard, at the Inupiat Heritage Center in Barrow, April 6, 2016. The cultural day event followed a week of vigorous cold-weather training and Defense Support to Civil Authorities preparedness, by partnering with the North Slope Borough Risk Management team in support of the statewide exercise Alaska Shield. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Marisa Lindsay)



160406-Z-QK839-021

Col. Charles "Lee" Knowles, 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade commander, recognizes David U. Leavitt (left) and Wesley Atkin, the two remaining Alaska Territorial Guard Soldiers of Barrow, during the cultural day event held at the Inupiat Heritage Center in Barrow, April 6, 2016. The cultural exchange marked the conclusion of a vigorous week of annual training by Guard members assigned to the Anchorage-based 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, Alaska Army National Guard. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Marisa Lindsay)