

Strong Man

by Staff
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The Association of Alaska School Boards is proud of the spirited, collaborative efforts to bring Native culture to a wider audience.

Writer Ishmael Hope and illustrator Dimi Macheras interweave ancient oral history with a contemporary plotline to bring Strong Man into the comic book realm, highlighting traditional cultural values as a foundation for youth achievement and resiliency.

In this unique presentation, the traditional Tlingit story is mirrored with the chronicling of a young man's struggles and triumphs in high school.

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Strong Man comic book finds broad fan base

The past merges with the present in Strong Man comic book

(from the introduction to Strong Man)

Traditional storytelling is alive and strong in the Tlingit communities of Southeast Alaska. We fish, we hunt, and we still tell each other stories on the beach, while salmon sizzles over the fire.

For this particular story, the Strong Man, or Dukt'ootl', I have learned from and have been inspired by the storytelling of Frank Johnson, of the Sukhteeneidi clan. In the story, published by Richard and Nora Dauenhauer in the book *Haa Shuka: Our Ancestors*, he tells of the old island Henyaa, as the place in which the story occurred. This is important – acknowledgment of place and origin is a part of the protocol of telling these stories.

I wrote the text and "thumbnail-sketched" the panels. Dimi did all the illustrations, inking, coloring and lettering. We've done our best to maintain the structure and integrity of the Strong Man story. Dimi and I have viewed this undertaking as a way of extending the history, of finding new genres to express ancient (and still relevant) traditions. Yet, as individual artists, we've strived to find our own voices and styles. I felt the best way to do that

was to add a contemporary plotline, told along with the traditional story, of the struggles and triumphs of a young man in high school. In this way, the traditional and the contemporary intersect, making the past and present conversant with each other, and, hopefully, enhancing each other.

...we encourage you to read this to your kids, parents, students, or your family. Share it. Pass it on.

Gunalcheesh!

Ishmael C. Hope