



In the Shetter of His Wings

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty."

He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

Psalm 91:1,4

This Native Alaskan story mask is a collaborative piece. It tells one story from two perspectives, with one vision, one hope. "In the Shelter of His Wings" was created to represent a deeply personal vision for the strengthening of Alaskan families. DJ Angaiak not only created this mask, but also helped to shape and mold its story. In this mask you will see Native Alaskan and Western influences interwoven by a common root of deep connection to the heart of our Father God, and a deep desire to see strong, thriving families in Alaska.

Julia Bolles



DJ: In the western culture the owl is often attributed as a symbol of wisdom. I chose the snowy owl to be the physical representation of Psalm 91, in the form of a Yup'ik Eskimo story mask. Each part of the mask aids in telling a story that bridges both the physical and spiritual aspect of relationship with one another, and with God the Father who's loving guidance provides the wisdom we seek giving us the ability to care for others well.

Julia: The owl is the main character in the mask. It represents wisdom, yet it also represents the parent. As we seek to bring healing and restoration to our families, we need to seek wisdom. We look to God for this wisdom and we find refuge in Him in times of need or distress. The vision for this mask came at a time of deep encounter with God, a moment in time when my heart connected with the Father-heart of God for His children. This heart was captured in its name, chosen by DJ.

Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.

Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her.

She will place on your head a graceful garland;

she will bestow on you a beautiful crown.



DJ: There are moments in our lives when we recognize our insecurities; when reaching out or stepping into new experiences can feel challenging, even scary. For the one performing the dance for the first time, these feelings are very real. For this reason, I give the mask a smile that only the one wearing it can see. It's a simple way to express happiness and courage, because I know in their obedience, choosing to continue on, they are about to give away more than they receive.

Unlike masks in the western culture, strings are not used to wear this one. Instead the wearer of the mask uses their teeth to pick it up by biting the mouthpiece. To use it, the dancer takes their place by kneeling before the mask on the ground. Then as the song begins, they bend forward and pick it up. As they rise, it's as though they have been transformed, enabling them to tell the story of the song. This is a traditional method practiced in the Yup'ik culture.



Julia: Designed to encourage a parent to seek wisdom for their family, this mask is a functional piece. Held in place with its smiling mouthpiece, the wearer must be in a place to take a firm, decisive hold, to look for the positive, to listen. They should be in a posture of receiving, of learning. It is a conscious choice as a parent to posture ourselves to say yes to being surrounded by support. Isolation is easy, but unhealthy for us if we want to thrive as a family. We were made for relationship, we were made for community. Yet we often shy away from it or feel like we don't need it.

The wearer of the mask has to say yes to building a circle of support around their family. They have to put it on. In a posture of humility the dance begins and they rise up to a new beginning.

See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. Isaiah 43:19



DJ: The hoops in Yupik Eskimo culture represent levels of heaven, but here they represent circles of help, of support.

When I think about the levels of heaven it makes me think about Our Father, The Creator who looks at us and cheers us on so that we can know that we can have a strong family and we have support through Him.

Julia: The hoops represent the circles that we want parents to walk in, circles of support. In our community there are many agencies that will walk with a parent through seasons of hardship and crisis. They provide what we call wrap-around-services. However, my vision for our community is that agencies would be replaced with natural supports for each family; layers of relational support that surround each family so they can be strong, safe, thriving, creating new legacies for their children.

May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you his favor and give you his peace.

Numbers 6:24-26



DJ: The mask is titled, "In the Shelter of His Wings," and yet at the same time, he gives us family, he gives us friends and teachers to come alongside us to be able to protect and encourage us, and strengthen us in our relationships.

The hoops on this mask support all the emblems that make up the circle of support, the helpers.

Julia: As I think about the types of people that have helped me on my journey, there were four types that came to mind. These are represented in emblems around the circle. On this challenging journey of parenting we need to be surrounded by real, relational support. As we grow and reflect, in each season we are called to ask ourselves "Who is in my circle?"

Who is in your circle? Whose circle are you in?



DJ: The Gatekeeper is represented by a solid hand motif which tells the Yup'ik audience the subject in the story is physical. This appendage is a hand raised in prayer, and represents those who listen and provide the path toward healing. They are the ones that ensure that the right help is being sought after.

For me, the aspect of it praising our Creator is huge. So I chose to put the Gatekeeper at the top as though they are raising their hand to the Creator so that they would have the wisdom to pursue all they need to do to help others.

Julia: The Gatekeeper provides a level of protection as we begin to form the circle of support. The trustworthy hand that stands at the gate. It keeps harmful things out and it opens the door of opportunity. The Gatekeeper helps to identify those that will build the parent up and enrich the circle. It also guards against destructive, negative forces that can disrupt or destroy the family. The Gatekeeper is the trusted voice of wisdom and discernment; they help to establish and keep healthy boundaries.

Who is your trusted voice of wisdom and protection?
Who helps you with healthy boundaries?



DJ: The Parent Helpers are depicted by a Yup'ik mom holding her baby on her back. This represents the families who share wisdom and care for others who are learning to live well.

Parents have wisdom and knowledge, even if they are only a few steps in front of other parents. When it gets challenging they can encourage families to know that it is okay. There is great reward in having strong families, it is good for the families themselves but also for the people that are around them.

Julia: Parent Helpers have your back when it comes to your children. They share parenting wisdom, maybe baby-sit your littles, or give you insight as you parent. We all need the wisdom and counsel of those that have lived through this season already, or will step into our mess. Parent helpers could be someone whose voice your child will hear when they don't hear yours, a positive parenting voice.

(1) ho is willing to step into your family culture to support you in each new phase of parenting?



DJ: This emblem depicts an elder who is ice fishing. It represents the Teacher. The Teacher is one who takes life wisdom, knowledge and skills, and passes it on to others so that they will be able to help themselves and in turn, can help others too. They teach us new life skills, and continually encourage us to grow.

Julia: Teachers can be mentors, teachers, coaches, or friends. They have special skills or areas of knowledge to help the parent learn and navigate through challenges. They may bring cultural knowledge, systems of support, or connections and resources to help. Teachers have the ability to teach, inform, and guide the parent on their journey.

What skill set or lived experience do you have that could encourage another parent?



DJ: In the form of a Yup'ik woman dancing her prayers, this emblem represents The Friend. The Friend is someone who comes alongside us, encouraging us to keep moving in the right direction.

In the Yup'ik culture elders are the carriers of the song, the carriers of the dance, and dance is used to tell stories. The younger generation watch the elders, watch their friends who are dancing and they mimic them until they learn that dance. Then, at some point, they stand alongside one another dancing those prayers together, encouraging one another, helping one another.

Julia: Friends stand alongside you as you celebrate, as you struggle, or as you grieve. They bring emotional and spiritual encouragement. They may bring fun, food, prayer, or encouragement to enrich your life and keep you on the right track. These are our cheerleaders, champions, and safe places to vent. Friends are a crucial part of our circle. Trustworthy, faithful friends keep us on track and connected to community.

Who do you call when you need support?

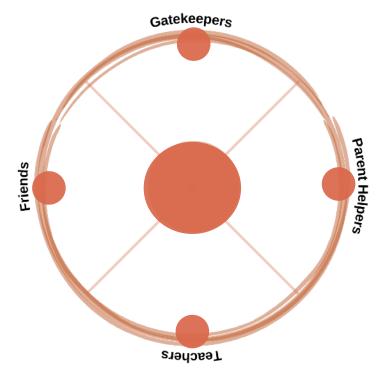


Build Circles

Just imagine if every family began to look in their circle for support and intentionally stepped into the circle of others. Every family has strengths, every family has weaknesses, every family experiences crisis and hard seasons. It is time to recreate the natural, relational support that used to be so prevalent in our communities.

Let's build a circle for every healthy family, struggling family, divided family, blended family, reunited family, hurting family, grieving family, foster family, adoptive family so we can be a thriving community creating new legacies for our children together.

Take time to think about who you can invite into your circle of support. Write their names in the circle.



Gatekeepers

Who do you trust? Who understands the risks and opportunities your family faces? Who helps you with healthy boundaries?

Parent Helpers

Who will support you, or one of your children in healthy ways? You may have different parent helpers for each child.

Teachers

What do you need to learn? Who do you know that can help you navigate these areas?

Friends

Who celebrates with you and grieves with you? Who keeps you healthy?

Whose circle could you step into?

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Learn more here: angaiakfineart.com/

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Learn more here: churchak.org/stand-for-children-and-families/

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