

**Never Alone (Kisima Ingitchuna)**  
**FAQ FOR EXTERNAL USE**  
**Last updated: 22 July 2014**

**1: How/why did the E-Line/CITC partnership come about?**

Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC), a leading provider of social, educational and employment services to Alaska Native people residing in the region, had three goals: to create new sources of revenue through its for-profit subsidiary, CITC Enterprises, Inc. (CEI) that could allow CITC to increase the level of opportunities offered to Alaska Native people; to share Alaska Native culture with new audiences around the world; and to use the power of games to share, celebrate and extend cultures throughout the world

After evaluating many different types of business investments, the leadership of CITC and CEI determined that creating a video game based on Alaska Native stories and culture could successfully accomplish these goals in an innovative and fun way.

Gloria O'Neill, CEO of CITC, conducted an extensive search of possible development partners. During that process, she met Alan Gershenfeld and Michael Angst, co-founders of E-Line Media, a company with a long history of creating games to educate, engage and empower. Together, CEI and E-Line realized there could be a great opportunity to combine expertise and create a compelling game based on Alaska Native culture.

**2. Who are the Inupiat people?**

The Inupiat people are an Alaska Native people whose traditional lands are north of the Arctic Circle. They are one of seven major indigenous groups in Alaska, and continue to place a high value on subsistence hunting and fishing in one of the most challenging environments on Earth; they have consequently developed a deep connection with nature, which is reflected in their resiliency and incredibly rich storytelling tradition.

**3. What does Kisima Ingitchuna mean? Why have the name in two languages?**

Kisima Ingitchuna means "I am not alone" in the Inupiat language. The phonetic pronunciation is "Kees-eem-a Eeng-eet-chuna."

The full name includes both languages because it both reflects the importance of Inupiat involvement in the cooperative design and development of the game and highlights the fact that all spoken narration in the game has been recorded in Inupiaq.

**4. In what ways is Never Alone (Kisima Ingitchuna) a first?**

Never Alone is:

- a) the first example of a commercial game built on the principles of cultural storytelling via an inclusive development process in partnership with an indigenous organization
- b) the first mainstream commercial game from a game company with significant Alaska Native representation among senior management
- c) the first commercial game to explore the world of Alaska Native people

d) the first and only commercial game to license a traditional Alaska Native story from a living descendent of the first family recorded telling the story (vs. appropriating it); working with the family to ensure it captures the important wisdom, lessons and nuances that might otherwise be missed

e) the first commercial game to incorporate Alaska Native elders and storytellers into the development team

### **5. What do you mean by “game-based cultural storytelling” or “World Games”?**

“Game-based cultural storytelling” is a new paradigm for video games, using the power of video games to share, celebrate and extend cultures throughout the world. We hope to help pioneer a new genre of “World Games” that bring carefully-selected stories from indigenous cultures from around the planet to life in compelling, innovative ways that are accessible and entertaining for global 21st century audiences.

Via game play, players discover the wisdom and learning that are normally passed from one generation to the next through stories and players can also experience universal human themes that are focused in ways that help these indigenous people to survive their unique environments. Such games enable these indigenous peoples to share their stories with the world in a way that allows others to experience their unique culture in an authentic, engaging, and entertaining manner.

### **6. Can we call Never Alone a “Native American” game? In what ways and to what extent have the Inupiat people been involved in the game’s conception, design and development?**

Yes - Never Alone is the first commercial game initially conceived by an indigenous North American people and then funded by and co-developed by the same people.

Specifically, it’s an “Alaska Native” game -- Inupiat elders, storytellers, linguists, artists, youth, community leaders and cultural advisers have been, and continue to be, intimately involved in all aspects of the game’s design -- everything from art and characters to level design to overall narrative arc -- from initial concepting to final production.

### **7. How many Alaska Native people are on the development team?**

Nearly three dozen Alaska Native people have been involved during the course of the project, collaborating on everything from art and characters to level design to overall narrative arc. Alaska Native people involved include elders, storytellers, cultural ambassadors, historians and youth from many communities such as Anchorage, Fairbanks, Barrow, Anaktuvuk Pass, and Ambler. Alaska Native people also serve in senior leadership roles at E-Line Media, including Executive Chair and CFO, and these individuals are extensively involved in all aspects of the project.

### **8. Can you give me any specific examples on how the game design was impacted by Inupiat people?**

Prior to beginning any core development work, the team met regularly with Alaska Native elders and storytellers to discuss how Inupiat culture, stories and art could fit into a video game structure. Together, the stakeholders selected the traditional story “Kunuksaayuka” as the

narrative arc for the game and the team worked directly with the Inupiaq elder most closely associated with the story to ensure that the game captured the most important messages and themes. As game design documents were drafted, they were reviewed with the Alaska Native team members and revised to reflect those team members' ideas and input. Alaska Native team members continue to participate collaboratively on all aspects of development.

## **9. How does the game reflect the culture, heritage and sensibilities of Alaska Native people?**

Never Alone comes from an inclusive development and publishing process in which Alaska Native people (elders, storytellers, linguists, historians, youth, etc.) contribute significantly to every creative and business decision.

The game has been developed around the key themes of interdependence, resiliency and intergenerational exchange which are core themes of Alaska Native cultures, a collection of cultures that have evolved to ensure survival in one of the harshest environments on earth.

The main narrative arc of the game is anchored upon the traditional Inupiat story "Kunuksaayuka" (phonetically Koo-nook-sah-yooka), and the team worked directly with Minnie Gray, the Inupiaq elder whose father was first recorded telling the story, to ensure that the key themes, plot and messages of the story are accurately reflected in the game design.

In addition, many important elements of the game (characters, art, environments, themes, etc) have also been based on and inspired by additional traditional Alaska Native stories, folklore and cultural perspectives.

Finally, the game will offer special "Insights" - including interviews with elders, storytellers, hunters - that will be unlocked throughout the game and will provide additional depth and richness to the overall experience. These will be complemented online by additional content about the culture, region and making of the game.

## **10. Who is on the game development team?**

There are more than 30 people who have contributed to the design and development of the game. The core team members are spread between Alaska and E-Line's Seattle studio and have backgrounds spanning film, the game industry, education, and community leadership.

Collectively, the development team boasts many previous games credits, including *Interstate 76*, *MechWarrior II*, *MechWarrior IV*, *Tomb Raider Legend*, *Tomb Raider Anniversary*, the *SOCOM* games, *Rage*, *Quake Live*, and *Quake 4*, among others.

## **11. Who is your target audience for this game?**

Never Alone is being designed to appeal to all gamers across generations - from younger players to adults who grew up with classic console platform games, and as something they might play together.

We think fans of games such as traditional platformers, including *Rayman* and *Super Mario*, as well as accessible indie puzzle platformers like *Limbo*, *Braid*, *Fez*, *Trine* and *Journey* will love the beautiful environments, detailed animation and carefully crafted levels and puzzles.

People who love the artistic passion-project, experiential and less formulaic style of game play cultivated by the “indie” games sector will be drawn to the unique cultural storytelling and authenticity of *Never Alone*, the first game to celebrate, share and extend an indigenous people’s mythos and culture in video game form.

Gamers who enjoy meaningful game experiences will want to play *Never Alone*, which incorporates the sensibilities and philosophies of an indigenous people in a faithful and fun way.

**12. When will the game launch, and for what platforms? How much will it cost, and in what forms will it be available?**

We expect the game to launch in Fall 2014 for PC, PlayStation 4 and Xbox One (and we hope to bring *Never Alone* to many additional platforms as well). We are planning a retail price of \$14.99. *Never Alone* will be a downloadable title, not a boxed retail product.

**13. Can we talk to the Alaska Native people involved with the project?**

We can work with you to arrange a mutually convenient time to speak with some of the Alaska Native people involved with the project.

**14. Why did you pick the platform game genre for this first project?**

As we looked to bring Alaska Native stories to life in game form for the first time, we wanted to build on a structure that would be instantly familiar and comfortable for audiences of all ages, no matter where they may be.

We also needed a genre that could allow us to focus on story and characters, how the characters could interact with their environment and how the environment itself could be as important as the characters. The platform genre inherently meets these needs.

**15. What are some examples of the creative challenges that have come up between the Alaska Native community and the development team? How have you dealt with them?**

Inclusive development, while extremely rewarding, requires a huge commitment from all sides to build a foundation of mutual trust and respect, and common vision as this is the foundation upon which everything else is built. In this case, the team members came from very different worlds (i.e.: game development, Alaska Native community leadership), so developing a common vocabulary and understanding took time. We all still continue in the role of student in the other’s world, but it has been a wonderfully enriching experience.

The process of alignment on creative direction and decision making is always delicate, requiring patience and empathy -- we need to find what ‘feels right’ to all stakeholders. Each decision, from the main character’s gender to the type of companion-animal character to the selection of stories for the narrative arc, involved spirited discussions. As with any complex project that involves input from a collection of actively participatory stakeholders, it takes time to work though

that input to arrive at solutions and directions that both yield strong creative ideas for the game and still authentically represent the people and culture upon whom the game is based.

**16. What are some ways that Alaska Native people have been involved in the development of Never Alone?**

The project began with a deep ethnography built over several extended visits with Alaska Native elders, research at museums and sessions with storytellers and youth.

This continued with a collaborative process that helped identify the particular stories that would represent the narrative arc of the game and helped provide guidance on direction and design - everything from how ice should look to how Native structures should look to how the Inupiat spirit world could be incorporated into gameplay in a way that preserves the deeply personal way it connects the people to the world around them.

**17. How would Never Alone be different if the team didn't have access to or the involvement of key Alaska Native storytellers, elders, cultural ambassadors, etc?**

The project would have died early on. Our deep collaboration with the Alaska Native community is at the core of the development - there is no way that we could successfully help these stories come alive without the communities' active participation in all key decisions around the game's development and publishing.

Additionally, the collaborative development process promised a uniquely enriching experience that has helped us attract many of the team members to the project and push us creatively to new heights in terms of direction and features.

**18. What genre is this game? How would you describe it?**

We describe this game as an atmospheric puzzle platformer. It starts with classic platform running and jumping, adds a second controllable character with very distinct abilities, and then layers in creative puzzles that require both characters to work together to progress.

The game is set in the harsh, but beautiful, world of the northern Arctic where the environment becomes as much a part of the game as the characters. The presentation is evocative, using traditional Inupiaq art and design to inform the landscape, lighting, level and characters.

**19. Why did you choose a girl for the main character?**

Inupiat stories are filled with both boys and girls, men and women. The narrative arcs of stories generally downplay character specifics, like gender, in order to focus on the important themes, knowledge and values that the story is communicating.

We feel that girl characters have been underrepresented in gaming, particularly girl heroes who are powerful and can survive and overcome incredible challenges. Since many of the team members have daughters, we really wanted to create an inspirational role model that could show girls that they can succeed at anything they put their mind to.

**20. What's your mission with the game?**

Through Never Alone, we are striving to deliver a world-class game experience that builds upon the stories and culture of Alaska Native people. The game celebrates and shares Alaska Native culture with the world through game play.

We believe that, through inclusive and participatory development, we can extend this model of games based on the traditional stories of unique human cultures to new stories, new cultures, and new types of game genres; Never Alone represents the first of what we hope will be many products in this exciting new category of entertainment ("World Games").

**21. What is the relationship between Upper One Games and E-Line Media? Who is publishing the game?**

Upper One Games was originally established by CITC Enterprises, Inc. (CEI), a for-profit subsidiary of Cook Inlet Tribal Council as a business that would help it develop enterprise value and fiscal self-sufficiency. Upper One Games was the first indigenous owned game company in the United States.

Upper One Games partnered with E-Line Media for co-development and co-publishing of Never Alone. The partnership was created to ensure that the game was developed inclusively with the development team and Alaska Native people working hand-in-hand to deliver a great, meaningful experience.

As Upper One Games and E-Line worked together, it became clear that both organizations shared the same vision, passion and long-term goals. After a period of collaborative strategic planning, both organizations felt that this vision would be better realized through the integration of Upper One Games directly into the operations of E-Line to streamline operations and unify the strengths of our management teams. Consequently, Upper One Games and E-Line merged in June 2014 with CEI becoming the largest equity owner in E-Line and Upper One Games' senior leadership joining the senior leadership team at E-Line (mirroring the inclusive process that has been so successful for the development team).

The union of the two companies will enable greater focus and investment on building the nascent category of "World Games."

E-Line will continue to use the Upper One Games brand to represent its consumer oriented "World Games."

**22. What is CITC?**

Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) is a tribal nonprofit organization serving Alaska Native and American Indian people residing in the Cook Inlet region of southcentral Alaska. Located in Anchorage, CITC helps individuals achieve their full potential through an array of support services, including education, employment and training services, workforce development, family preservation, and support for individuals recovering from addiction, substance abuse or incarceration.

## **22a. What is CEI?**

CITC Enterprises, Inc. (CEI) is a for-profit subsidiary established by Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC), an Alaskan non-profit organization serving Alaska Native and American Indian people residing in the Cook Inlet region of southcentral Alaska. CEI's main goals are to develop and/or invest in innovative independent businesses, aligned with the values of CITC, that can: (1) deliver positive social impact; (2) help to build enterprise value; (3) generate market rate returns that can contribute to financial self-sufficiency for CITC.

## **23. What is E-Line Media?**

E-Line Media is an entertainment and educational publisher harnessing the power of games to help youth thrive in a globally connected and rapidly changing world. E-Line has a number of lines of businesses across different game categories but, collectively, all of its efforts are focused on creating games and game-based educational curriculum that engage and empower.

In addition to "World Games," , E-Line develops and publishes digital games that tap into the natural passions of youth and connects those passions to core curriculum, 21st century skills and pathways of learning, from middle school through college. Games of note include Gamestar Mechanic, a game focused on teaching the principles of game design to middle school students, and MinecraftEDU, a special version of Minecraft adapted for classroom use by TeacherGaming, LLC and co-published by E-Line. E-Line is also currently developing a standards-aligned games-based middle school curriculum that spans multiple disciplines - language arts, science, math, history and other subject areas. To complement this project, E-Line is creating a games-based professional development program for teachers as well.

E-Line has also been instrumental in driving new initiatives such as the National STEM Videogame Challenge (announced by President Obama at the White House), and helping to found groups such as the Center for Games and Impact at Arizona State University to build a body of research-based knowledge that can help make future educational game development more effective and impactful.

E-Line also works closely with leading foundations, government agencies, universities and social entrepreneurs on impact-focused game projects. Partners include the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, Smithsonian, Joan Ganz Coony Center (Sesame Workshop), USAID, NSF, DARPA and many more to harness the power of impact games for learning.

Never Alone (Kisima Ingitchuna) is the first title to be published in E-Line's slate of consumer oriented games that fire the imagination, catalyze curiosity and create gateways to new ideas, themes and interests.

## **24. How was the merger between E-Line and Upper One Games structured?**

The two companies consolidated operations in a transaction through which E-Line Media acquired Upper One Games from CITC Enterprises Inc in exchange for ownership interests in E-Line. Upper One Games is now a wholly owned subsidiary of E-Line. Financial details are not

being disclosed at this time. Through this transaction, CITC Enterprises, Inc. has become the largest equity owner of E-Line.

Gloria O'Neill, CEO of Upper One Games, will now serve as the Executive Chair of E-Line and Amy Fredeen, CFO of Upper One Games, will serve E-Line as CFO. Together E-Line Media and CITC Enterprises, Inc. hope to expand their "World Games" initiative under the Upper One Games brand.

**25. Why did E-Line and Upper One Games merge? What was the driving force behind this?**

As Upper One Games and E-Line worked together, it became clear that both organizations shared the same vision, passion and long-term goals. After a period of collaborative strategic planning, both organizations felt that this vision would be better realized through the integration of Upper One Games directly into the operations of E-Line to streamline operations and unify the strengths of our management teams. Consequently, Upper One Games and E-Line consolidated operations in June 2014 with CITC Enterprises, Inc. becoming the largest equity owner of E-Line and Upper One Games' senior leadership joining the senior leadership team of E-Line.

E-Line will continue to use the Upper One Games brand to represent its consumer oriented "World Games."

**26. Since E-Line Media was already an established developer and publisher based in Seattle, can you still claim that Never Alone is really from the first indigenous peoples-owned studio?**

As described above, Never Alone has been developed through a close partnership between E-Line and CITC utilizing an inclusive development process that included nearly three dozen Alaska Native community members. The stakeholders of both organizations believed that the best way to ensure that the values and perspective of indigenous communities could be realized through the creation of highly engaging and meaningful entertainment would be to combine the leadership and expertise of the two organizations into a single unified team that pursued that vision together.

The merger of the operations of Upper One Games and E-Line has resulted in a combined company in which CITC Enterprises, Inc. is the largest equity owner and a unified leadership team that includes the senior executives of Upper One Games.

**27. Is the game still being developed in Alaska? How many of the Alaska Native people on the team will be retained now that E-Line has acquired Upper One Games?**

The inclusive development process for Never Alone is unaffected by the merger of E-Line and Upper One Games. All of the people who were involved in the game prior to the merger are still involved and in the same capacities. Development of the game continues to take place at E-Line



Seattle with nearly three dozen Alaska Native people contributing their expertise, wisdom and perspective.

**28. Since Upper One Games was originally started by CITC, what is CITC's role and involvement now?**

Upper One Games was actually established by CITC's wholly-owned for-profit subsidiary, CITC Enterprises, Inc.

CITC Enterprises, Inc. has become the largest equity owner of E-Line Ventures LLC (doing business as E-Line Media) and E-Line is now led by a unified management team of executives from both organizations.

CITC Enterprises, Inc. continues unchanged as CITC's for-profit subsidiary.

**29. What will become of the Upper One Games brand?**

Under the Upper One Games brand, E-Line plans to build upon its experience with Never Alone to help pioneer a new genre of "World Games" that bring carefully-selected stories from indigenous cultures from around the planet to life in compelling and innovative ways.

Our hope is to establish the trust of consumers that games published under the Upper One Games brand are made through a deeply collaborative, inclusive development process so that the values, voice, and heritage of a community are infused in a meaningful entertainment experience that can be shared by passionate gamers around the world.