

2009 Interpreter's View #3

A collection of interpretive ideas created on a weekly basis by the Año Nuevo docent trainee class of 2009
Topic: Working with Children Presenters: Mountain Mike and Greg Kolar

Working with Children!!!!

Yes, here is how the docent trainees will be communicating with kids when they are out on the trail this year. They hope all docents will join them in sharing their excitement about Año Nuevo in ways that work best for children

How far...How fast...You're kidding !!!! You can tell kids that elephant seals can run faster than they can....**BUT...**it's better they learn that for themselves... safely, of course....and learning and experimenting like a scientist is always the most entertaining way for children to approach discovery. Here's how to do it safely....Tell the students an elephant seal can travel 30 feet in 3 seconds (about 8 mph for short bursts). Is that faster or slower than you can run? Mark a line 30 feet away on the sand. Choose a couple of students to "run" the test. Ready, set.. go...time them on your watch and tell these young researchers the results. Accent the "researcher" idea, and continue to ask these young scientists for their input...for example, while observing the seals... "Count how many pups, how many male threats, chases, and fights there are...etc.... etc..."

Help stamp out ignorance...Kids love stamps. "I got a star on my paper!!!" "Look Mom, I got a stamp that shows I helped clean the beach!!!" "Wow! I got a stamp when I finished my Treasure Hunt in the Visitors Center at Año Nuevo!!!" . Want to be an instant hit with the kids? Do you want to have students ask you questions about your tour and tell you all the things they learned? All you need is to say the magic words... "I will stamp your hand if you ask questions or tell me what you learned." The stamp can be anything fun....a star....a bird....a starfish....a seal...your mailing address??? Purchase an inexpensive self-inking stamp at any parent/teacher supply store like Kaleidoscope in Capitola, and watch your kid appeal rise!!!!

Speaking of Kid Appeal... Mountain Mike says, "Here's what I do when I want to make it fun for kids and myself too." Note: *Mike has been working with kids in nature settings for longer than most of you have been docents.* First, be excited... about everything. Kids respond to that, big time. If you're not...pretend you are until you are...fake it until you make it. Speaking of pretending...fantasy and make believe are what kids do best, so turn your group into researchers, explorers, into partners in learning...try things like "Count the number of newborn pups and report to me." Use kid speak when you address students e.g. *Elephant seals don't have "adaptations"...they have SUPER POWERS!* Borrow, beg, steal and then USE as many kid-friendly teaching techniques and tidbits as you can (start with the ones on this sheet then move on to the "Kids Corner" display at the Roost) Mike reminds new docents that you have to take charge and be in control the children...kids should raise hands, listen to each other, and it's three strikes and they're out standing next to the teacher for a few minutes. Make working with kids EXCITING for yourself by trying a new idea out every time you lead a tour with a school group (it works to enliven your adult tours as well). Most of all have FUN!!!

Did you bring your tape measure??? A small one, a big one, or any one will do. Just pull it out, have a kid grab the end and start revealing how big or small elephant seals are. Stick some kids in the middle of the tape as markers. Use the tape to measure off 30 feet for the "Am I faster than an e-seal test/race"...or stand it on end for a demonstration of "that's how tall an alpha bull gets when he's mad at someone." Don't have a tape??? Use a rope that can be found in one of the "Kids Corner" pockets at the Roost.

Do you want to be interesting to kids??? Of course you do...and it's very easy to achieve. Just be interested in them. Think about what it is in a kid's world that will make them connect with and understand the world of elephant seal. That is the approach *Sharing Año Nuevo with Children* uses. You can find individual lessons from "*Sharing...*" in the Roost as part of the "Kids Corner." Notice how each lesson starts out with the children's experience first, then moves to e-seals. Example: How many of you kids have dived to the bottom of a swimming pool? What was it like? How deep was it? An elephant seal dives 100 times that distance! See the mountains behind us? That's how deep a seal dives on almost every descent.

Now let's play ARCHAEOLOGIST... Bring your group of children over to the Midden area. Have them pretend to be researchers as they hold, inspect, and theorize about the midden items and what they tell us about the Ohlone way of life. One item per group, and the group reports their findings to the whole class. Science in action and they are making it happen.

What's an elephant seal feel like??? Easy, lets go pet one!!! ...or...much safer...just pass around a few pieces of fur (found in the Kids Corner) and let everyone experience it for themselves. Ever pet a really big dog? That's

like petting a female e-seal, but without the ears. Ever pet a grizzly bear (that's been stung in the nose by bees)? That's like petting an alpha bull.

Making Global Warming Real... On the way out to the Point, stop and ask the kids, "Why is it so flat out here?" Answer: this was once a beach, during one of the earth's warmer times (like now). And...If NOW was one of the colder times (Ice Age), we'd have to walk about 2-3 miles further to see the elephant seals. Where did the water go??? It was locked up in glaciers.

Anyone hungry??? Children, tell me this...how much longer will your parents be providing food for you??? An elephant seal parent stops providing food for its child after 30 days...imagine if that was you.... In fact...do just that. What if you were left behind here at Año Nuevo, where the rule is "let nature take its course and don't interfere." Imagine that all the cars, buses, teachers, docents, and rangers left, drove home and left you miles and mountains away from food and family. What would you do to survive? You'd have to use your instincts and your brain. How would you do it? Every newborn pup will face that situation in about 30 to 60 days from now. How would you do? How will they do????

Beach Cleanup Day is every day at Año Nuevo. Who do you think cleans up the beach around here? It's a bunch of kelp fly larva (maggots) and beach hoppers that eat up the dead seaweed that covers the shoreline. Dead seaweed is taken care of...what about dead animals, afterbirth, pup poop and things like that? Call out the seagull and raven brigade. When the animal is too big, in come the coyotes. They are part of the cleanup crew as well. It's all part of the Life Cycle, which is a true Green Cycle at Año Nuevo.

Your school is different from my school...What subjects do you children learn about at your school? As the children mention and discuss various subjects, you can interject what an Ohlone child might be learning in their home or tribal school. For example, acorn gathering, processing, and cooking. Basketry material preparation and basket making. Fire making, stone heating, and basket cooking. etc. etc.

Kids....How are elephant seals like astronauts??? They both live in weightless environments. So what??? As a result, they both suffer from bone density problems. When they land (on earth or on shore) their bones might be too weak from their zero gravity phase to move about without damage or injury on terra firma. That's why they both must get out of space (liquid or outer) for a while in order to strengthen those weakened bones.

So you're just floating??? What kinds of things do children use to float on so they are safe and comfortable in the water? What about young marine mammals; what keeps them safe and buoyant? Let's see...Weaners have a layer of very floatatious blubber. Baby sea otters are covered with an

unsinkable layer of fur. What about us adults, what are our boats and larger floatation devices made of? Now what do you think the Ohlones used for boats? It was the super light, super waterproof, super plantthe tule.