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Computer games help players confront cancer and learn about native Alaskan heritage

COMPUTER GAMES HELP PLAYERS CONFRONT CANCER AND LEARN ABOUT NATIVE ALASKAN HERITAGE

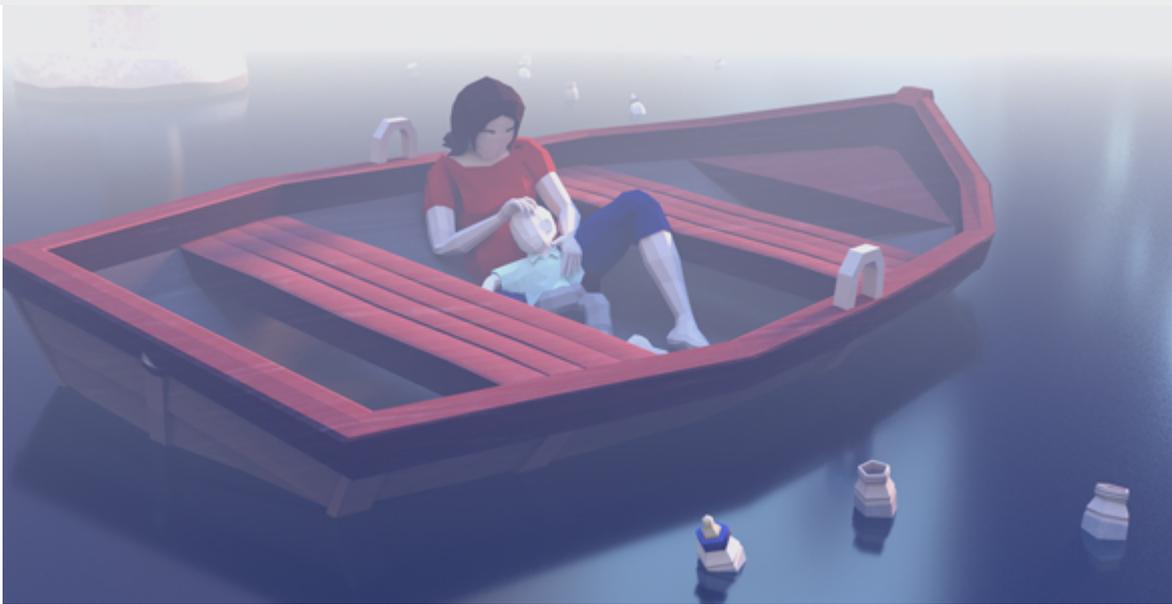
 PUBLISHING & MEDIA

Two more indie computer games build on the promise of beautiful, educational gaming.

We recently reported on [Elegy for a Dead World](#) — a computer game which helps players improve their creative writing — and we now have yet more inspiring examples of the video game maturing beyond simple entertainment. [That Dragon, Cancer](#) is a point and click adventure game created by Ryan Green, which tells the story of his son Joel's four year fight with cancer, and [Never Alone](#), developed by Upper One Games — the worlds first indigenous owned video game company — is an educational game which transforms a traditional native Alaskan story into a two player puzzle platformer.

Both developers recognized the power of games to inform and educate players, while simultaneously entertaining them, and chose the interactive format because of its power to engage its audience. The games combine rich imagery, atmosphere and emotive narratives with simple gameplay to commemorate their stories, keeping the memories alive for the players and creators alike.

[That Dragon, Cancer](#) takes place in an impressionistic world navigated by simple mouse movements, accompanied by narrated poetry, prose and a soundtrack by Jon Hillman. Players explore a 3D environment, unlocking the tender story of a family's experience with cancer. The game completed a successful Kickstarted campaign in 2014 and is planned for release in late 2015 in association with Ouya.



Never Alone is based on Kunuuksaayuka, a traditional Iñupiat tale, and tells the story of a young girl called Nuna, fighting against a blizzard which is threatening the survival of her community. In the game, she is accompanied by an arctic fox and players can choose which character to play as, or ideally play in two player mode — co-operating with their companion to help Nuna and fox work together.

Upper One Games, which developed the platformer, was setup by the Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC), a nonprofit organization based in Alaska. The CITC is committed to tackling issues ranging from drug addiction, alcoholism, unemployment and education, and Never Alone fits into this programme as an attempt to teach players about native Alaskan heritage, while simultaneously raising funds to supplement the CITC's US government funding. It is currently available on Xbox One, PS4 and [Steam](#) for USD 14.99. You can watch the release trailer below:

Are there other important narratives which could be made accessible through video games?

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