

FOUND: Man 'made cold by the universe'

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Pavilla's face had darkened and his hair had grown long. Both Bethel newspapers wrote stories about the case.

Atchak said he couldn't make sense of it, so he met with Yup'ik elders. They gave him similar versions of the same story: Pavilla may be in limbo, alive but stuck between this world and the next. If so, his body would be extremely light, allowing him to travel the delta with little effort. He would be wary and extremely thirsty. To bring him back, someone would have to touch him or, if no one could get that close, spit on him.

Though many elders had heard stories about the condition — Atchak said it is called *cillem quellra*, "made cold by the universe" — they said it is so rare that most knew of only a couple of cases in their lifetimes.

The duck hunters found the body Friday evening. Atchak went to the site Saturday. The body was a little less than two miles southeast of where the companion's body and snow-machine were found. Pavilla's body was face-down and fully clothed. It looked like he had been carrying a walking stick, Atchak said.

When they turned him over, the face was dark but it was clearly Pavilla's, Atchak said.

"His body was well preserved, so he was still recognizable," Atchak said.

Authorities released the body to Pavilla's family.

There was no point in doing an autopsy, said Dr. Michael Propst, the state medical examiner. The body was identified as Pavilla's, and there was little question but that he died of hypothermia. Even if there were a credible doubt about the time of his death, Propst said, a body frozen for so long would not yield much evidence about that.

Propst said he had heard stories about people claiming to have seen Pavilla long after he went missing.

"While that makes for interesting reading, there's no scientific basis for it, and it's not possible that he survived more than 24 to 36 hours," he said.

Atchak said the body was found less than 10 feet from a sign searchers had placed back in December to mark one of Pavilla's footprints. Searchers had probed the snow in that area with long avalanche poles, Atchak said, but the snow drifts were as deep as 30 feet.



RON ENGSTROM / Anchorage Daily News

"We were so close," Atchak said "We were right on top of him and of course couldn't see him."

Atchak said he had no doubt the people who reported spotting Pavilla were sincere.

But what does it mean now that Pavilla's body has been found? Was Pavilla at that spot all along? Had his body physically roamed the delta? Atchak said he doesn't know.

"I'm still waiting to hear back from a couple of our respected elders who have knowledge in this area," he said.

Others, he said, aren't varying much from the original story.

"I was talking to an elder. They say on some occasions, which is also rare, when you are passing between our world and the next world, you enter the world of the 'little people.'"

According to Yup'ik beliefs, little people — *Ircenrrat* — live underground and are occasionally seen making mischief or malice for humans.

"He may have entered their world and then they offered him three doors," Atchak said. "He may have taken the wrong door. The right door is always the middle door."

The elder said that if Pavilla took the bottom door, it may have left his soul wandering around, accounting for the sightings.

Though the possibility of rescue is now extinguished, Atchak said, the discovery of the body brings a welcome sense of finality.

"We're accepting this one in good heart," he said. "We're extremely relieved."

Pavilla's father had searched for his son daily, still hoping to save him, even as winter faded. He said he believes time ran out on Richard.

"We were looking for him, but he was outside too long," Moses Pavilla said. "His glasses were broken. I think he couldn't see clearly where he was going."

Pavilla's funeral is planned for today in Atmautluak.