

# Native Communities of the Future: Healthy Individuals, Culture and Communities



First Alaskans  Institute

Report on the Conversations Convened by  
First Alaskans Institute  
June - August, 2007



*"If you don't know who you are, it all becomes irrelevant"*

## Background to the Conversations

*"Can Villages Survive?" was the AFN Convention theme in 1977 and thirty years later, we find ourselves still asking the same question."* Conversation participant, July 2007

First Alaskans Institute was asked to lead a panel at the 2006 AFN Convention on the topic "**Native Communities of the Future**," but due to time constraints, the panel was cancelled. First Alaskans believed this was an important subject because considering the future forces us as individuals and as community members to think about our values as well as what we need to do individually and collectively to achieve our vision for our, and our children's', futures.

Byron I. Mallott, Senior Fellow with the Institute's Alaska Native Policy Center, convened an initial conversation which resulted in a decision to hold a series of conversations among a broad cross-section of the Native community. The Institute wanted to provide a safe place for participants to discuss their hopes, dreams, ideas and concerns about Native communities of the future. Over the summer of 2007, a total of 16 conversations were held. Fourteen were held in the First Alaskan Institute's conference room in Anchorage with teleconference available for those participating from rural Alaska. Two conversations were held in Kodiak at the Kodiak Area Native Association's conference room with teleconference available for participants outside Kodiak. Institute staff participated in the conversations as note takers. These 80 pages of individual notes were then combined to reflect the overall comments summarized in this report.

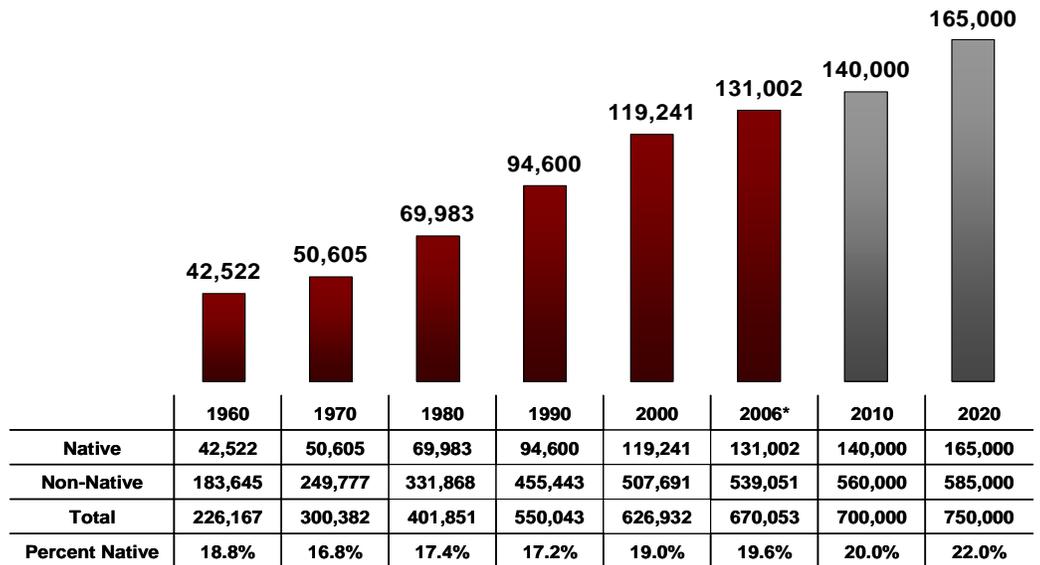
Over 150 people participated from around the state. Most conversations had a fairly even split of men and women; however some conversations had more women than men. The ages of the participants ranged from 15 years to over 70 years old. Participants included individuals from all walks of life and from most regions. They included people who were active in some way in Native life. For example, many participants were in leadership positions either locally, regionally or statewide. While the Institute invited participants via phone, internet and personal contact, there were those who, through word of mouth or urged by prior conversation participants, came on their own. Several attended more than one conversation. All told, those participating in the conversations contributed over 300 hours of their time.

Conversation structure was deemed important and began with a statement that participant remarks would not be attributed to any individual in notes taken by First Alaskans staff. The conversations were described as a "safe place" for candid, sincere, respectful and open discussion. Each conversation was "on its own" in that prior conversations were not summarized. The facilitator focused the conversation around the topic "Native Communities of the Future." Each conversation was scheduled for one hour and a half and most went over that time by five to fifteen minutes. The same format was followed in each conversation. This document provides the reader with a brief context of the conversations, a report on the conversation themes and specific remarks that highlight the themes.

## Context of the Conversations

These conversations are about our communities and the future of our communities. The context is Alaska Native peoples as a statewide community and also as individual communities within the larger Alaska society. Briefly, data on the statewide Native population show that we are:

- Growing in numbers: 131,000 in 2006 and 165,000 by 2020
- Young: 40% 19 or younger, median age of 24
- Living longer: 46 years in 1960, 69.5 years in 1997
- Very mobile, movement from villages to regional hubs as well as urban centers
- Experiencing changing family structures



Source: ISER, Status of Alaska Natives Report, 2004, pages 2-7, 2-59; \*2006 data: State of Alaska Department of Labor

These changes in population have impacts on:

- Education system
- Elder care
- Workforce preparation and placement
- Health and social service provision
- Housing
- Subsistence
- Affordable energy, transportation and telecommunications to support the above infrastructure.
- Culture and traditions

## Summary of What Participants Said

Although the participants in each of the 16 conversations were different, they expressed shared concerns and values which surfaced as recurring themes: Native spirituality, culture, and Native identity; economics, costs of living, “have and have-nots”; emerging leaders and leadership; internal Native politics and Native issues; healthy Native communities; men’s issues; cooperation and working together; out-migration/moving among communities and rural and urban issues; climate change; and, education. An overriding focus was on the future of Native villages and the attachment that Natives, no matter where they currently reside, have to home villages. This seemed to be a strong sentiment, even after discussion recognizing and emphasizing the issues of regional centers, urban Alaska and the fact that many Natives live “outside”.

Looking deeper into the participants' discussions, several concepts emerged. For example, in each conversation there was the natural tendency to describe symptoms and consequences of underlying or root causes of problems. But there was also a strong desire to explicitly address the underlying problems. Over the course of the conversations, there was an emerging consensus in recognizing that we know the underlying issues, and that we need to prioritize them for action. Many participants expressed the need for increased communication, transparency and working together to break down "silos" of thought and action so that a sense of shared priorities and collective action might be established. The need for strong, committed, knowledgeable and caring leadership at all levels of Native life was also emphasized. There was respectful questioning of current leadership and its focus and priorities.

Also emerging from the conversations was an often stated and strong desire to "do it ourselves." People said the solutions lie within and that we must be proactive. There was a sense of things that are working and things that are not working, and that we need to support the things that are working and correct the things that are not working. In most conversations, there was discussion of whose role it is to address the issues: in some cases, participants acknowledged that it is the individual who has responsibility; in other cases, it might be an organization, a community, a regional entity or a state organization/agency.

Another underpinning expressed by some participants was the belief that only by knowing "who we are" as Native Peoples and acting—even living—based on shared Alaska Native values, beliefs and knowledge of tradition and culture could a future for our children as Native people be assured. Accordingly, there was a clear sense that we do know "Who We Are" as Native people, the First People of Alaska. And while there have been generations of repression and efforts to make Natives something else – which has negatively impacted Native people even today – we have come to a time and place that requires us to collectively strengthen and focus on our "Nativity" to develop a common vision for the future.

## **Achieving the Vision**

Despite remarkable successes over the last 30 years, Alaska Natives continue to face serious issues that require statewide unity and effort. During the conversations, participants noted that while our institutions have been achieving successes, we have tended to work in silos. We can be self-determining people who produce great benefits in health care, housing, employment, and the operation of tribal governments and corporations. But, somehow, when it comes to addressing common concerns, we have regarded it as someone else's responsibility. The Native community can no longer afford that. Here's why:

- Approximately 20% of Alaska's total Alaska population is Alaska Native (131,002)
- About 40% of the Native population is 19 years of age or younger
- Costs of living in our rural communities are disproportionately higher than in urban areas of the state – this is especially true for electricity, gas and heating fuels, and food
- On a statewide basis, Native household income levels are approximately \$20,000 less than non-Native household incomes

- Education statistics indicate that Native students show the lowest percentages of any group tested for proficiency in reading, writing and math (in the statewide “Standards based assessments”); and similar indices of performance (e.g., the High School Qualifying Exam, graduation rates, the number of Native freshmen who must take remedial courses in college, and the number of young adults whose academic skills will not qualify them for the few jobs that exist) demonstrate that a large percentage of Native students are not being adequately served by the system.

This situation demands greater Native involvement in the public institutions that impact our lives. The existing system will begin to make progress only when Native people- educators, parents, school board members, village leaders, and the Native community in general - take responsibility for, and ownership of, our communities’ well-being. Although we must work closely with all sectors, the process starts with us. No one else can make it happen. These seem to be the “driver” issues of the future of Native communities, and they depend on a multitude of decisions to be made by Native individuals, families, institutions and communities.

## Next Steps

Participants made recommendations to First Alaskans and to the Native community for what to do with the conversations and potential next steps. Among them, the recommendations included a desire to have more conversations and meaningful, relevant dialogue around issues of importance; a desire to turn ideas, themes, and issues from the conversations into accountable actions. In several of the conversations, participants recommended that generational leadership gatherings be conducted, particularly around the issue of transitioning leadership, preparing our youth for leadership responsibility; working together to create an understandable, clear sense of the Native future; looking to village leadership, and especially Elders to help create our priorities.

Participants asked what First Alaskans was going to do with the results of conversations. The Institute committed to summarizing what it heard and report that back to Native people. It also committed to determining what follow up may be appropriate to the Institute’s mission, either by itself or with other institutions such as the Alaska Federation of Natives.

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## CONVERSATION THEMES AND REPRESENTATIVE COMMENTS

What follows are conversation themes and specific participant comments that are representative or provide a sense of the depth of feeling around an issue area. These are presented in no particular order.

### SPIRITUAL

- Subtle trend: “what you do for a job defines who you are as a person.” Feel torn and need to go home to remind myself of who I am. Some within the Native community feel you need to choose
- Issues of self-worth – what does it mean to be a Native person today?
- Need to take stock of who we are – “what have we wrought in that context?”
- Like to see a gathering of people – what life wisdom can we give to the next generation in terms of what’s worked/not worked?
- “Rooted-ness” is our struggle; we need to build a foundation from within
- For all we’ve done, all we’ve accomplished – there’s still something powerfully wrong we have to fix
- Grandchildren connected with culture – immediate sense of who they were
- Spirituality is our foundation, how we became imbalanced, especially spiritually; unhealthy people can’t make healthy choices; traditional values vs. how we live today
- We need to heal ourselves, our leaders need to heal
- Institute rites of passage, ceremonies
- How do we define what it means to an Alaska Native? How can we give back? How can we make this better?
- “I came back from living Outside for several years, walked into AFN and cried – people looked like me, cared about what I care about”
- What does being Native mean to solving problems of the day?
- Is there another way to look at our realities? Religion/spirituality, aspects of who we are
- In order to move ahead we need to know who we are
- We have been working away like a Native beehive yet there are parts of where we are, who we are that are yet to be explored, examined
- Challenges – so many, so serious; we need to start a discussion now of who we are because if we don’t have this conversation now it will impact our personal lives and how we function
- Rooted-ness is our strength – woundedness does influence decisions we make. How do we address that so we make decisions from the place of real human beings?

### CULTURAL

- There is something powerful within us as Native people that has been repressed (it is still close to the surface) and we have to reach down and pull it up—capitalize and build upon it to make us whole again.
- Focus on who we are; culture, values, strengths—learn from our Elders now before that knowledge disappears.
- We are 1<sup>st</sup> people in the most powerful sense; let’s maintain/build on it
- Urban – the overwhelming need to stay connected to places that give us sustenance
- Not knowing who we are creates social ills (alcoholism, drug abuse, unhealthy relationships, suicide, lack of jobs, and no sense of purpose).

- 20 years from now culture could be entirely different. We're about to jump off a cliff and we don't know what that cliff is
- My greatest fear is if my grandchildren/great-grandchildren say, "*My mother was an Alaska Native.*" This would be when we know our children's self-identification went away
- Inuits are successful adapting to change, lots of challenges/change – adapt and still have a strong sense of identify
- Sustaining culture—maintaining what keeps us special and unique as AK Natives.
  - What can we learn from other Indigenous groups who have gone through similar struggles
  - Use of technology to teach culture
- Healing, self-esteem and pride in our culture; we need to know who we are; need that because we don't know we're not whole
- Urban Natives are seeking a way to connect with and be Native in Urban settings—how?
- Sense of identity is critical if Native Communities are to survive.
- Are we prepared to have an urban culture? Those moving to the urban areas can't afford to go back
- Needs to be more intergenerational communication within the Regions; Elders are not respected, age doesn't mean you're an Elder, young people know/see what older generation did when they were growing up and talk behind their backs
- Perceptions/misperceptions of Natives during a Native/non-Native exchange; non-Natives want to help but don't want to fight battles of 30 years ago and be blamed for past mistakes they weren't involved in
- Lack of transfer of traditional knowledge (grandparents were made to feel ashamed of their culture)
- The extended family and structure exists to support the children and family; re-establish/strengthen these connections
- Talking Circle brings us back to a place of comfort/value – so I feel a sense of pride – so we can move forward
- 150 years have been spent by churches, the government and other institutions on intentionally changing/eradicating Alaska Native culture, future generation has obligation to find what we've hidden to allow them to be what they need to be; we need to find a better way to articulate a vision
- Big white elephant in the room – not discussing what's going on with other generations; the trauma of previous generations is borne out by the current generation
- New Zealand – look at where they're going, not acceptable to not know language/culture
- We're creating the haves and have nots
- Cultural diversity – we can't see what we're doing; people "visiting" each other to see what's going
- We need to toot our own horn, honor our own people
- Losing the values of who we are; 3<sup>rd</sup> generation who move lose desire to eat moose soup vs. pizza hut, they become more urbanized
- From a survey, people want to learn language; being an Alaska Native is viewed as a strength; feel good and special about who they are
- Loss of language is one of the root causes; not a priority for Native people
- Respect is an issue – our young people need to be accepted for who they are no matter what they do or where they live
- We are products of our own time – Wrangell Institute

- Part of communities has to do with who we are; we need to remind ourselves we're very resilient; build on the capacities of our own people; find solutions to our own problems
- Entitlement perspective vs. building for the future
- Need to spend time with each other
- Have to understand who we are, understand the forces which determine our future and get out of the reactionary mode
- We need to be involved as full partners in the larger society
- A whole system was taken away, stripped of what we knew by educational/religious systems; we need to go back to old system, our foundation; not knowing who we are created dependency models where we don't feel good about ourselves
- Created dependency, feeling as though we're victims
- Who are we? Generational view – good to look at but focus on young kids
- Work from within like the Maori people in New Zealand
- Our woundedness does influence all kinds of decision-making
- We should have a children's conference – there's a gap between 6<sup>th</sup> grade and 12<sup>th</sup> grade, we should get 6<sup>th</sup>-graders perspective
- Sealaska did a survey, focus groups on attitudes of urban shareholders; keyed into values. Sealaska – 40% urban, 40% outside, 20% village. Outside AK shareholders still have a strong tie to culture and to the land, want the land to be protected
- We need to manage the impact of change
- Need to maintain identity, culture and existence as a people; political self-determination, education through charter schools which offer language
- Urban is even more fragmented than the villages; people are lost
- We can make it better – we have the tools but lack the will; isolated through silos – we don't have to wait for others to do the work for us
- Sense of community has been lost; what had been provided by the community is now being paid by outside funding sources
- We've been talking too much – when is it going to be time? Going on too long and something needs to be done
- Elders are not functional anymore
- Frustration of measuring ourselves by the negatives – lack of positively-oriented measurement tools
- “The heartbeat of our ancestors still beats in us”...the beat goes on – theme of Togiak youth group
- The following is an analogy of knowing who we are as Native people and the importance of that knowledge: “We are raised in our pond as a fish; we are comfortable and happy there. When someone takes us out of our pond and puts us in a different pond we are not happy. We must find a way to get back to our pond to become whole again”
- Racism/lack of being seen even when successful
- Interest in cultural revitalization
- Living the Native values that enabled us to survive over time (i.e. looking out for each other rather than just ourselves is part of being Native)
- Fear of loss of culture; “my grandmother was Alaska Native”—there is great concern that future generations will not know who they are as Native people

## EMERGING LEADERS/ LEADERSHIP

- Benefits of mentoring programs
- Utilize –allow Emerging Leaders to have a seat at the table
- Transfer of leadership and responsibilities
- Are our leaders dealing with the right things?
- If we don't have healthy Native organizations our youth will find other organizations to work for that utilize their strengths and talents
- What systems do we have to mentor young people?
- Ask young people what do they need in the way of healthy activities
- Lead by example.
- Urban leaders are sometimes out of touch with what is going on at home (rural areas)
- Show value of family leadership vs. tribal/corporate leaders
- Leadership can't fall to one person, they get burned out; work with the Elders (vs. people who are just old); use the traditional model
- We need to assess what we're doing; the 1960-70's saw a very proactive generation of leadership; the younger generation needs mentoring
- Need mentors from the Native community; constant reinvestment back into the Native community; we will be our own problem-solver but how do we use what's in front of us to solve today's challenges?
- Not all leaders have/need MBA's; not always sure we have the right people at the table
- Has to be a new acceptance of going to get educated and returning home; need to be accepted when you went back home; reality is there are more choices now outside of the Native community
- Use tools the kids are using today – "You Tube" – explore what are we doing deliberately to include young voices, we need youth seats on boards, on the agenda
- Expected younger generation to say "get out of my way"; youth representative – "we won't do that, we have too much respect for adults/Elders"
- Media helps to form our perspective – youth see value of the city, then de-value village
- Should be a conference of emerging leaders
- Need to recognize young generation; we're aging without dynamic young leadership; including generations now is essential
- Transition is on both sides; young people wanting in but older people pushing back
- Young people/descendents feeling you're not Native enough if you don't have ¼ or more Native blood, if not invited to participate, they disengage
- Disconnect between generations; there has to be opportunities
- No vehicle to bring young people together; need more mentorship programs within the corporations
- We are masters of our domain; we have a generation lost; need to bring college-aged generation into the fold
- Elders & Youth Conference you see a generational gap, urban/rural split as well
- Young leaders are coming thru (a new wave) – we need to know how to deal with them
- Communications is critical to bridge generations
- Mentorships are critical
- Youth are looking around wondering where the Elders are
- We encourage kids to go out for education but what do they have to come home to? No job – what are we doing to bring kids back?
- Differing generational perspectives

- Young emerging leaders are talking/sharing – things are productive, they need to hear the voices of leaders and the Elders
- We need to provide opportunity for our youth to learn values, core values, tools to provide a way forward
- Instill a sense of pride in young people, become confident, proud and grow strong from it
- Brain-drain – no work and people leave due to dysfunction in small communities at a time when we want minds to stay to run government
- “We all have ways to celebrate our culture; I’d assume I’d catch on naturally to my Nativeness; I didn’t. I had to leave Alaska to understand who I was. Alaska is a special place but it’s not the only place. My culture was neither taught nor passed down to me; I had to start asking questions in order to learn who I was.”
- Appreciate the conversation but am tired of talking – find one issue to try to tackle, then I would feel like I was actually getting somewhere; even if we fail we’re taking action, learning, moving forward
- Grew up in Anchorage; attended school here didn’t see much Nativeness; needs to be more visible – this is a Native community

### **MENS’ ISSUES**

- We need to bring pride back to young males, who are our young girls marrying?
- Between 1985-1995 (10-year period) we lost 70% of our young men (Pribilofs); our role model systems have been severed
- Young men feeling they’re not providers, it’s a powerful feeling when you’re part of something; we need to help ourselves get back to our ways
- Girls develop faster, Native boys see that as threat, get kicked out of school; no Native teachers, no one to teach them. Boys need projects, bored sitting around – use sweat lodge as rite of passage for young men
- Bring back traditional house for young men; we can do it ourselves but we just don’t fund our own things; local effort in old days now it’s waiting for outside funding
- Don’t value our men as hunters – their role is changing, not all go to college – issue
- Role of young men needs to be addressed – we have a whole generation of men in prison; feels like we’re writing a whole generation off
- Need to explore why Native men drink and why they don’t apply for jobs. Feelings of low self-esteem coupled with family upbringing
- Use sweat lodge for men; start carving program
- Where are the men and what are their roles?
- What is going on with Young Native Men?
- A generation stopped trying to get into leadership positions; how can we help our men?

### **ECONOMICS/COST OF LIVING**

- Struggle for small village/communities to survive
- High cost of living (energy, groceries, everything)
- Rural Refugees/Homelessness/lack of skills when villagers come into an urban setting— negative impacts
- Lack of economic opportunity in villages/jobs
- Modern impacts/technology on rural communities.
- Will we lose our subsistence rights over time if we do not occupy our homelands?
- Many people can’t afford to live in the villages
- Listing of communities we might lose in the next 20 years, future economics, cuts, ear marks, impacts on the subsistence food chain, and our food source – this is just the fact of what’s happening

- What happens when Alaska Natives move out of villages – will we lose our access to subsistence on federal lands – and our subsistence rights we fought for?
- I'm ½ Inupiaq, ½ white – wanted to move up in the village but hit a ceiling so I needed to go to the big city to advance
- Wanted to work with tribe but no jobs so I needed to move to Anchorage; great career we need to develop an agenda to create educational self-determination and political self-determination
- Organizations are all serving the same people, how to engage our economic/political power
- Energy costs – how do you keep people in villages when people can't afford to be there and what can we do about it
- We know issues, we need to focus on ways we can address the problems – energy/economy. Clark's Point – oil flown in to keep village going; Dillingham gas is \$5/gallon
- PCE is a short-term fix; long term we need to get off diesel and go to wind, small hydro or some form of alternative energy
- Practical issues of how do we keep the lights on, how do we feed our kids; how do we keep kids in school
- Not a question of whether or not communities are going to exist, but in what form?
- Balance in sustainable economic development and maintaining our communities
- No one in villages is teaching people modern skills – financial. Lot of people/young people in debt and more predatory lending occurring
- Looked at decolonization, reclaim our communities
- In Kenai there are jobs and money but people are invisible; Native role models nowhere to be seen
- Drugs are more crippling from an economic view; can't get people to pass a test – they can't get a job

### **NATIVE POLITICS/ ISSUES**

- Where are we going? – an important question we collectively need to address
- Do we have a vision as Native people? --accepted Statewide?
- Feel we're stuck in a model with ANCSA and IRA
- AFN needs to interact more with communities
- Region vs. Village corporation vs. Tribe...how can we work towards a common goal?
- What do we want as a Native Community, how are we going to bring people together to address where we go?
- Need to find the "Native truth" about climate change, economy, health, status of education and share with others
- Is the AFN model effective for today or should it be changed? Reorganize AFN to include entities to be more inclusive. AFN was created at a time for a particular purpose, should its structure be revisited?
- Don't feel we have good political representation
- No community focus (AFN/ANCSA) we've created fiefdoms and there's competition between entities; hard to feel a sense of community
- AFN represents more tribal issues; lacks the ANCSA regional perspective
- AFN only hears the ANCSA regional voice
- Is a leadership rift between village corporation and tribes; too fragmented
- More we try to get Native corporations together the more segmented we get; struggle on how to succeed in that effort

- Native community hasn't defined where it's going; no common goal, very fractured, so reactive, not being proactive; lack of connectivity in Native community
- We had a visioning process, we need to create our own vision together
- Timely to bring to AFN Convention
- We need to talk more before jumping into a structured process, get stuff out before we move on an agenda
- Aversion at village level to regional forms of organizations
- Lack of village leadership leads to elitism within Native organizations
- Regardless of how we view ourselves, we're open to outside impact
- Lack of good business management; older generation not open to curiosity
- Competition for money, all are going after the same dollars; how will it affect us in the long term when funding becomes tighter
- Leadership is spread thin – it is being reactive vs. proactive
- Need new communications with people across the world;
- So many organizations – many overlapping – future funding is going to be a real issue
- The person who wins election is more often the one with the most charisma
- Empower leadership and hold them accountable
- Use Maori model of creating or own political party
- Revisit scope of legal authority in the villages, more local control of drugs/alcohol

### **COOPERATION/ WORKING TOGETHER**

- Cooperate between regions and within regions, across profit/non-profit/municipalities, etc. There is a need to break out of our “Silos” and work across boundaries.
  - Share programs, best practices, what's working across boundaries—highlight what is working/having a positive impact.
- Create our own Political Party (Maori did)
- We need more collaboration between regions
- Need to unify leaders; lack of collaboration among entities. Some have different agendas – no one wants to come forward because they get beat up – needs to be a collective effort, not just on the shoulders of one person
- Profits and non-profits staying connected to the land
- The “haves and have nots”—gap between Alaska Natives. Social stratification between Natives.
  - Education, economics, language, traditional lifestyle v corporate lifestyle...
  - Barriers between those who have left the Village to gain an education—rift between those who have not left
- Balance between two worlds (do we have to choose to be in one or the other)?
- Lack of urban-rural leadership connections.

## HEALTHY INDIVIDUALS/ COMMUNITIES ISSUES

- Dysfunction: “you know what you need to do but don’t do it”
- Without healthy individual(s), can’t have a healthy community
- Community should be able to decide their own solutions
- Created dependency, feeling as though we’re victims
- Sense of community has been lost; what had been provided by the community is now being paid by outside funding sources
- Parents connecting with children = successful education. We have to do something as Native people vs. others doing it for us
- Healthy communities encompasses everything – individuals, families, communities; what made it strong was there, in you
- At the time of land claims there were whole villages who were drunk; we’ve made positive strides since then and have seen progress – especially in our leaders.
- We need to heal ourselves; our leaders need to heal
- Lack of parent skills, substance abuse, suicides, community in grief - quality of life hasn’t changed
- Start creating healthy individuals, identify role models; hold people accountable; need to train ourselves
- Start with young kids for healthy communities
- Healthy communities encompasses everything – individuals, families, communities
- Without healthy individual, can’t have a healthy community
- We didn’t have healthy role models when growing up – women/spousal abuse, no one talked about sex, Elder abuse, suicides
- Look at communities holistically vs. in silos
- Families need to heal
- It’s up to us – reality of alcohol, substance abuse, constructed a whole lot of “stuff” but is it the right stuff?
- Lack of goal setting is missing “getting to well-being”; we’ve danced around alcoholism , need to deal with impairment before we deal with other issues
- “Getting to well being” – get to the root of why Native men are incarcerated? Just the survivors are what we see in the corporations and at AFN
- Generations of scar tissue on us; we need to create healing
- Frustrated, measured by negatives (drug use, prison, etc.); lack of a positive assessment tool
- Invest in our villages/our people to build healthy communities
- 31-33% of households are headed by single person
- Start creating healthy individuals, identify role models; hold people accountable; need to train ourselves
- Lack of parent skills, substance abuse, suicides, community in grief - quality of life hasn’t changed
- Hope—empowering
- Anger/rage/hopelessness
- Putting personal wants after community wants, difference between individual values/desires and community.
- Entitlement perspective vs. building for the future
- Need to spend time with each other. We didn’t have healthy role models when growing up – women/spousal abuse, no one talked about sex, Elder abuse, suicides

- Perceptions/misperceptions of Natives during a Native/non-Native exchange; non-Natives want to help but don't want to fight battles of 30 years ago and be blamed for past mistakes they weren't involved in
- The question is not if communities will exist, but in what form
- We're the last indigenous people on North American continent...hence villages are important – many of us live in urban Alaska...how to stay connected even when away from home?
- What does a “Healthy Native Community” look like?
- What is it we want? The answers lie within us
- Communities need to be self-sustaining
- Need for Alaska Natives to be proactive and decide what we want our communities to look like before someone else does it for us.
- Native people have always been resilient/adaptive
- Creating Native connections in an urban setting “staying in touch with who you are”.
- First step to a healthy community is to have healthy individuals
- Physical and Virtual communities –AK Native strong connection to the villages/way of life even when we are not there. Village is where heart is.

### **OUTMIGRATION/ MOVING AMONG COMMUNITIES**

- In the 70's there was a poster “Can Villages Survive?” It seems we're still asking that question. Young people are leaving the villages to experience life elsewhere, where there are opportunities they will come back
- What happens when Alaska Natives move out of villages – will we lose our access to subsistence on federal lands – and our subsistence rights we fought for?
- What makes up a community? How do we maintain our identity in Anchorage; younger people (women) leaving; leaving the young men behind issue
- Out-migration; families feel “lost” when coming to town – people don't have the skills to live in urban areas, become victims; don't have the \$ to live in villages so have to move out
- Impact of migration on Urban areas
- Out-migration is a huge issue among Native men; use our culture to get to them
- Out-migration – people are looking for a better life; Rampart – school, store closed. Kake - 40-50 students; Angoon is growing, becoming more of a subsistence economic base
- Schools close due to out-migration; past ten years two villages in Bristol Bay shut down
- Is Anchorage prepared for in-migration? We should be prepared vs. being reactive
- Out-migration won't stop; interior #1 issue/concern is out-migration; non-profits looking to Regions for help/survival
- Out-migration to urban centers – people don't have the skills to live in urban areas, become victims; don't have the \$ to live in villages so have to move out
- How can we bring the community together, large populations of Natives in Anchorage and Mat-Su . . . emphasize family relationships;
- In Kenai there are jobs and money but people are invisible; Native role models nowhere to be seen
- Are we prepared to have an urban culture? Those moving to the urban areas can't afford to go back
- Need an Uncle or Auntie in urban areas to teach young people
- Urban is even more fragmented than the villages; people are lost
- Grew up in Anchorage; attended school here didn't see much Nativeness; needs to be more visible – this is a Native community

- Not just Native people moving out of villages, other people are moving in and purchasing \$1 million homes

### **CLIMATE CHANGE**

- Climate Change – decline in species is changing the culture of our communities; the change will only intensify
- Increasing water levels; increasing temperatures in the ocean
- Need to find the “Native truth” about climate change, economy, health, status of education and share with others

### **EDUCATION**

- Drop-outs are a serious issue/problem; what worked at one time with people does not work now; we could use tutors. There’s also a problem with teacher turn-over
- Traditional and western educational issues
- Grew up as a “dumb” Native and have spent 7 years working with villages; give the opportunity to do it themselves; change will only occur when people want to do it. Move beyond dysfunction will take one student/child at a time – teaching/promoting culture – it then becomes a living culture. I’m taking exhibits to villages, they instill pride in our youth
- Need an Uncle or Auntie in urban areas to teach young people



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