Sharing Our Elders’ Wisdom

First Alaskans Institute
“Our people are going out and continuing to do their cultural ways – hunting and gathering and still having good spirits. We continue on... despite grief and hardship we’ve experienced.”

● Survival ●
“We don’t always have to follow outsider’s rules as we are opening back up. It’s important to keep our people safe, so we may have to make and enforce our own rules and extend them as necessary.”
“I imagine when diphtheria hit, people were cooperating to stay healthy. People should be willing to sacrifice a bit by using a mask.

● Survival ●
“They put a ‘Quarantine’ sign outside our house when my sister had scarlet fever. I felt ashamed, but I know now that quarantining prevents the spread of the coronavirus.”

● Survival ●
“It’s a different time right now, especially when we lose loved ones. We’re gonna have to change the way we mourn.”
“It’s hard being an immunocompromised person – getting through it and being so isolated. I’m thankful to my family and friends who have been helping and cooking for me.”
“We can’t even live like we used to. We can’t travel. I see some people do, but I’m sure they’re doing the right thing.”
“We’re trying to focus on lowering the curve of the coronavirus. Everyone should be tested before they come into the community.”
“In rural places, we are used to stocking up. I sent yeast to my relative in Anchorage when they ran out in the stores.”
“All I want do is go whaling in the springtime. I want to eat mikigaq.”

• Preparation: Our Way of Life •
“I’m sharing my cranberry relish recipe and my niece is going to pick cranberries for me this year.”
“It’s important to protect our ways of life, especially with threats to our rights and having to provide for our communities through this pandemic.”

• Preparation: Our Way of Life •
“When I feel lonesome or isolated, I reach out to others that may be feeling the same way. In that way we help each other.”

● Gratitude and Keeping in Touch ●
“We are continuing to stay home. We don’t have kids and people around, so we are starting to feel a little isolated. My daughter stopped by and just made us happy.”

● Gratitude and Keeping in Touch ●
“If you think about someone, reach out to them. That was something that we were raised with.”

● Gratitude and Keeping in Touch ●
I felt lonely and isolated when it first started. I feel better now that I am more connected with family and friends.

- Gratitude and Keeping in Touch -
“I love my culture very much and I love my people. I enjoy yuraq (dancing).”
“I keep busy by knitting and baking pies. As long as I have yarn, I’m okay.”

○ Our Languages and Culture ○
“We have to remember our traditional stories. Our Indigenous knowledge is so amazing, especially in understanding our eco-systems. There’s a level of data built into every single word.”
“Be careful when someone passes. It’s easy to cut yourself or stumble. Accidents can happen because our spirit is distracted.”

● Our Languages and Culture ●
“I miss seeing my grandnieces and grandnephews since we’ve been hunkered down. My family still didn’t do our Easter celebration, but we will do it when it’s safe.”

• Our Languages and Culture •
“It’s important to share our Native names. It’s a connection to our Ancestors, especially when we are named after them.”