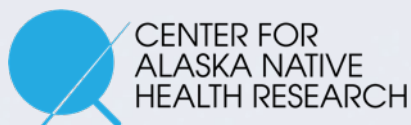


Upstream Prevention Efforts in Alaska Native Communities: Building Multi-Level Indigenous Strengths and Protective Factors

Billy Charles, Stacy Rasmus & James Allen



With respect and in acknowledgement to our Elders and the Indigenous lands we live upon.



Elders, Joe Phillip and Mary Theresa Augustine from Alakanuk and Dr. Gerald V. Mohatt, founding director of CANHR providing a blessing with the burning of iyuk.

Presentation Overview



Indigenous Alaska has a History of Health and Healing

Recognizing the ancestral strengths of Alaska Native people and cultures along with the imperilment of Indigenous communities through forced disconnection from sources of strength and structural oppression.

Alaska Native People Define the Problems and Seek the Answers

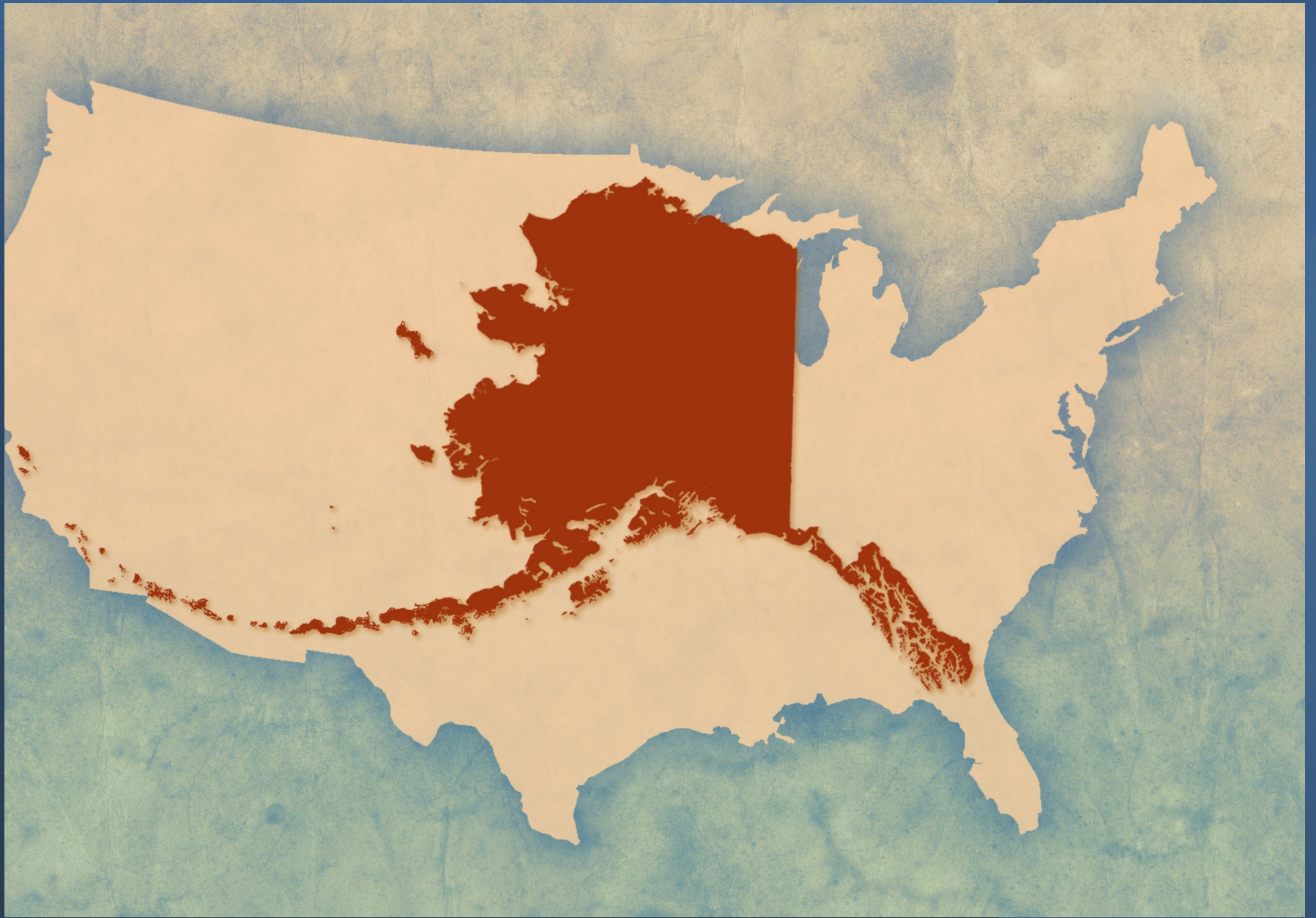
Indigenous knowledge- and theory-driven interventions address youth suicide and substance misuse within systems (social/cultural, spiritual, ecological) and move upstream, shifting the focus from individual risk to building community and cultural strengths.

Communities Drive the Solutions to End Suicide among Young People

Universal prevention engages youth in activities that draw from Indigenous expertise and cultural teachings and resources to build protection, reasons for life and reflective processes about alcohol in rural Yup'ik Alaska Native communities.

Cultural Strengths and Protective Factors are Proven

Indigenous-led research produces data supporting structural equity and community-level approaches to suicide prevention in rural Alaska.



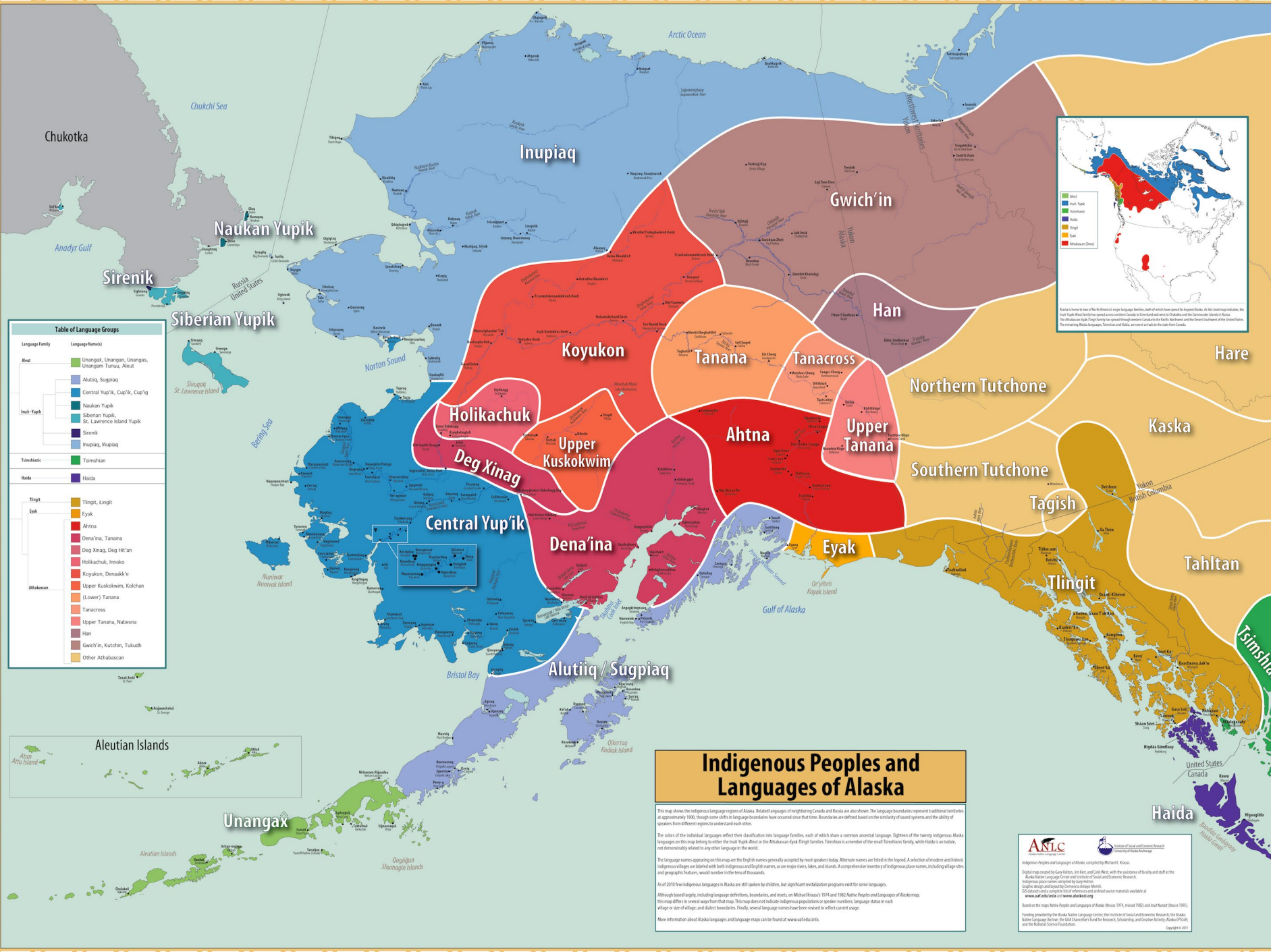


Table of Language Groups	
Language Family	Language Name(s)
Aleut	Unangas, Unangan, Unangan, Unangan Tunuu, Aitut
	Alutik, Sugpiaq
	Central Yup'ik, Cup'ik, Cup'ig
	Naukan Yupik
	Siberian Yupik, St. Lawrence Island Yupik
Inuit-Yupik	Sirenik
	Inupiaq, Iñupiaq
Tsimshian	Tsimshian
Haida	Haida
	Haida
Tlingit	Tlingit, Lingit
	Eyak
	Ahtna
	Dena'ina, Tanana
	Deg Xinag, Deg He'an
	Holikachuk, Imoklo
	Koyukon, Dena'ik'e
	Upper Kuskokwim, Kulkhan
	(Lower) Tanana
	Tanacross
Athabaskan	Upper Tanana, Nabesna
	Han
	Gwich'in, Kutchin, Tukudh
	Other Athabaskan
	Other Athabaskan

Indigenous Peoples and Languages of Alaska

This map shows the Indigenous language regions of Alaska. Related languages of neighboring Canada and Russia are also shown. The language boundaries represent traditional territories at approximately 1900, though some shifts in language boundaries have occurred since that time. Boundaries are defined based on the similarity of sound systems and the ability of speakers from different regions to understand each other.

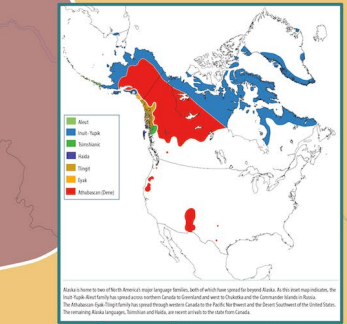
The values of the individual languages reflect their classification into language families, each of which share a common ancestral language. Eighteen of the twenty Indigenous Alaska languages on this map belong to either the Na-Dené or the Athabaskan-Yukon-Tlingit families. Tsimshian is a member of the small Tsimshianic family, while Haida is an isolate, not demonstrably related to any other language in the world.

The language names appearing on this map are the English names generally accepted by most speakers today. Alternate names are listed in the legend. A selection of modern and historic Indigenous villages are labeled with both Indigenous and English names, as are major rivers, lakes, and islands. A comprehensive inventory of Indigenous place names, including village sites and geographic features, would number in the tens of thousands.

As of 2010 few Indigenous languages in Alaska are still spoken by children, but significant revitalization programs exist for some languages.

Although based largely on linguistic definitions, boundaries, and, in some, on Michael Krauss' 1974 and 1982 *Native Peoples and Languages of Alaska* map, this map differs in several ways from that map. This map does not include Indigenous populations or speaker numbers; language status in each village or site of village; or dialect boundaries. Finally, several language names have been revised to reflect current usage.

More information about Alaska languages and language maps can be found at www.uaf.edu/indiana.



ANILC
Alaska Native Language Center
University of Alaska Fairbanks
Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-1100
Phone: (907) 475-1100
Fax: (907) 475-1101
Email: anilc@alaska.edu
Website: www.uaf.edu/indiana

Based on the map *Native Peoples and Languages of Alaska* (Krauss 1974, revised 1982) and *Native Peoples* (Krauss 1995).

Support provided by the Alaska Native Language Center, the Institute of Social and Behavioral Research, the Alaska Native Language Survey, the U.S. National Science Foundation, the National Science Foundation, and the National Science Foundation.

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Alaska Strong!



Hooper Bay mother and child
circa 1924, courtesy of Gonzaga
University, Jesuit Archives,
retrieved August 2017

Through the millennia:

- Alaska Native young people inherit the strengths and resilience of their ancestors.
- Indigenous cultures, languages and ways of living develop strengths and are protective for children.
- Alcohol and other drugs were not part of Indigenous cultures in AK and suicide among young people was unheard of in the memories of today's Elders.



Size of the state of Nebraska; no roads; highly increment weather with unpredictable access to communities

>25,000 people settled into 58 villages with over 70 Federally recognized Tribes.

Limited law enforcement and health/mental health services in the villages.

Service hub is Bethel >300 miles (1 hour+) by small plane from some communities

Most villages ban importation and sale of alcohol and vote to be 'dry' under the AK local option law.

Local option laws alone not proving effective in reducing suicide and alcohol-related disparities¹

Indigenous Health Transitions in Alaska: A People Imperiled

<https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/2018/09/13/people-in-peril-a-culture-in-crisis-a-people-in-peril/>

¹Berman M. *American Journal of Public Health*, 2014.

Hooper Bay 1968



Hooper Bay Circa 1928

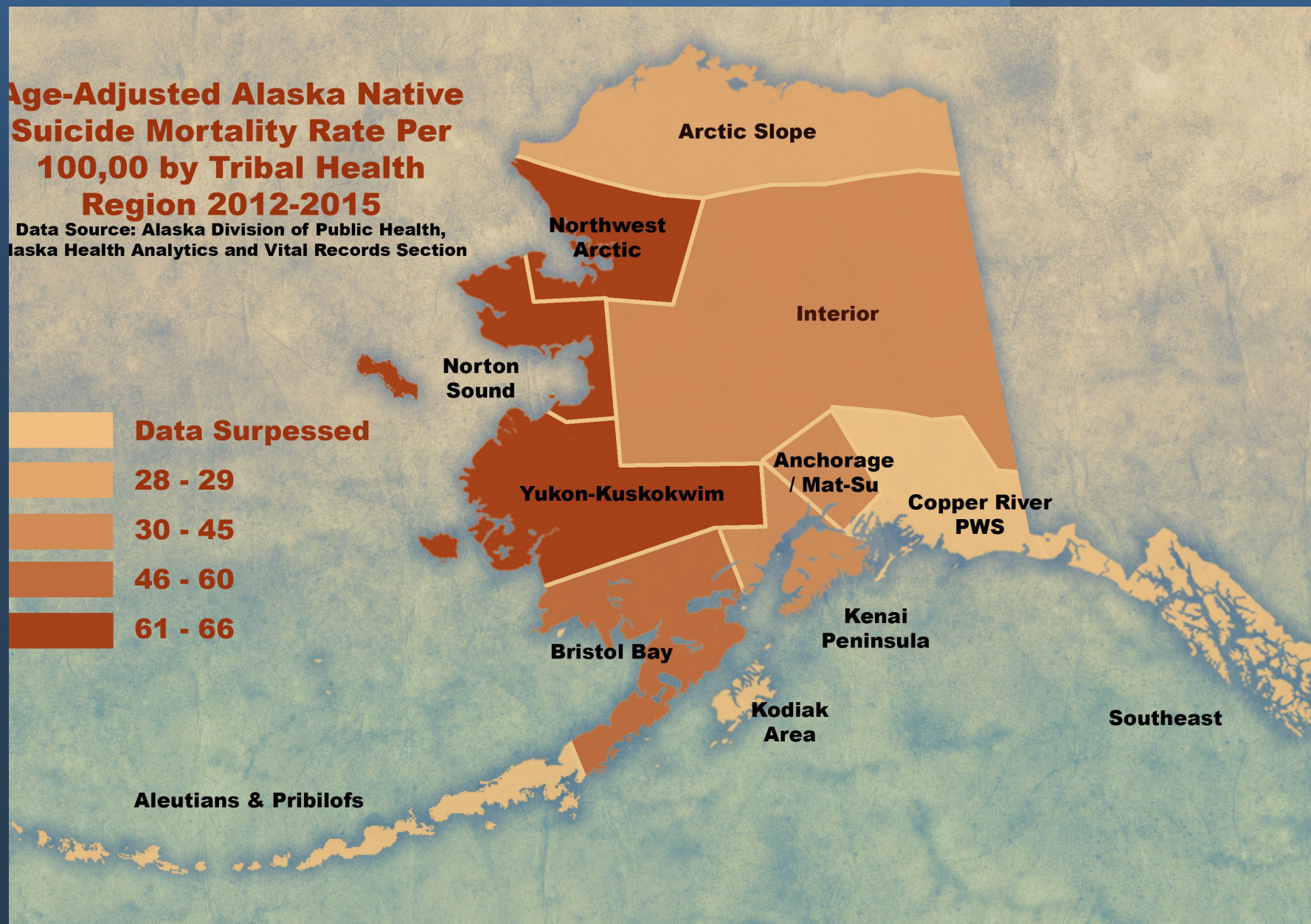
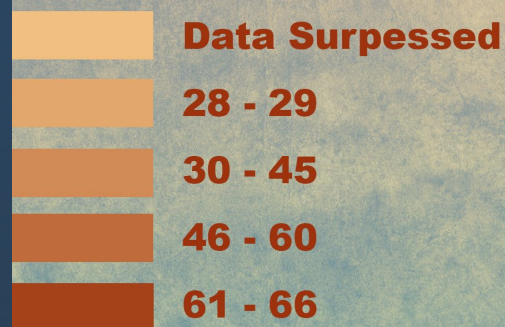


Hooper Bay 2016

As communities change, young people within them are impacted, structural racism and inequities drive disparities in suicide and alcohol misuse.

Age-Adjusted Alaska Native Suicide Mortality Rate Per 100,00 by Tribal Health Region 2012-2015

Data Source: Alaska Division of Public Health, Alaska Health Analytics and Vital Records Section

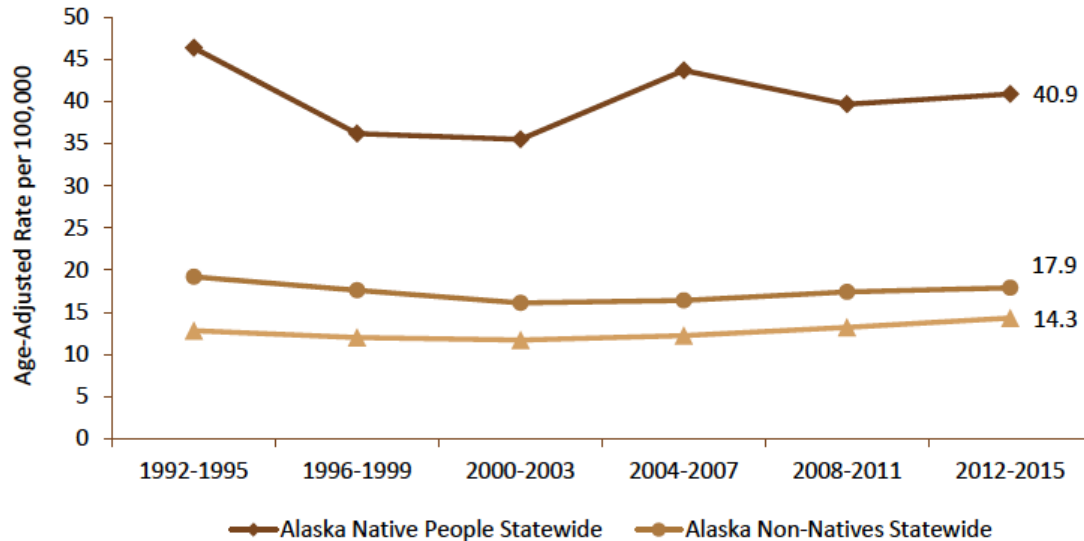


Suicide in Alaska: A Public Health Crisis

Age-Adjusted Suicide Mortality Rate per 100,000 Population, 1992-1995 to 2012-2015

Data Source: Alaska Division of Public Health, Alaska Health Analytics and Vital Records Section; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Vital Statistics System

Appendix Table C-41

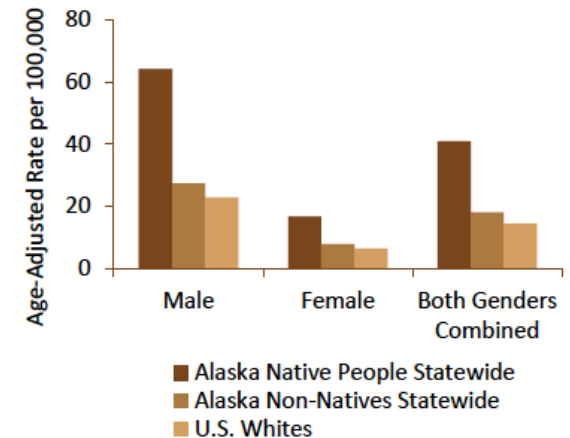


Note: U.S. Whites data are for 2012-2014.

Age-Adjusted Suicide Mortality Rate by Gender, 2012-2015

Data Source: Alaska Division of Public Health, Alaska Health Analytics and Vital Records Section; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Vital Statistics System

Appendix Table C-42



Note: U.S. Whites data are for 2012-2014.

- *Of those tested, a large proportion of Alaska Native suicide decedents were positive for alcohol (54%).*
- *Two-thirds of Alaska Native suicide decedents were younger than 29 years old*
- *The highest suicide rate was found among Alaska Native male decedents aged 20–29 years (155.3 per 100,000 persons).*

Craig, J. & Hull-Jilly, D. (2012) Retrieved Sept 26, 2020 from http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/bulletins/docs/rr2012_01.pdf.

Indigenous Knowledge Describes the Problem and Identifies Solutions

QASGIQ

OPENING A WINDOW TO OUR ANCESTORS

“Qasgiryaraq means to encircle, and in coming together around our youth in the ways of our ancestors, we are strengthening our collective spirit in an effort to cast the spirit of suicide out from our communities, forever.”

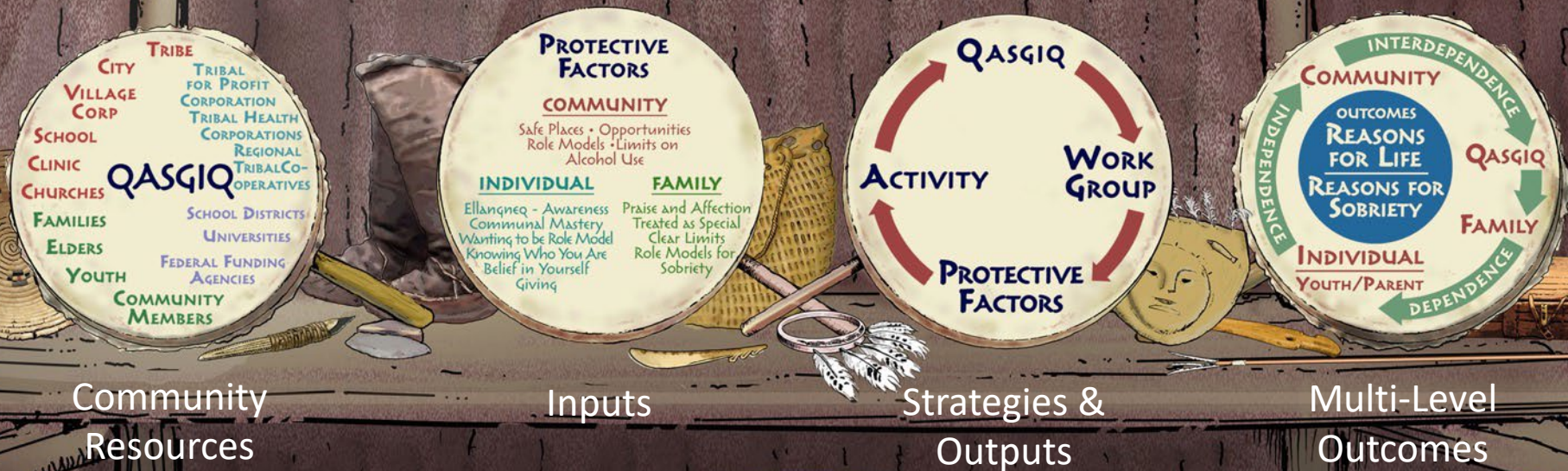
Qasgiq: An Indigenous System Supporting Structural Equity in Yup'ik Alaska Native Communities



In the qasgiq everyone had a place to sit, a role to play and a greater purpose as a person being part of a collective effort to survive.

The Qasgiq (Communal House) Model:

An Indigenous Theory-Driven Intervention Implementation for Upstream Prevention with Youth



EVERY COMMUNITY HAS A QASGIQ



The Qungasvik (Tools for Life) Projects:

Community-Directed Intervention Implementation Process



Step 1: Qasgiq Renewal

Initiating Regular Meetings and Engaging in a Yup'ik Community-Driven Process

Step 2: Work Group

Identifying Key Individuals as Instructors, Knowledge Holders and Planning Activities

Step 3: Activity

Delivering Protective Factors to Youth through Yup'ik Teachings and Practices

Step 4: Qasgiq Reflection

Coming Back to the Circle to Review, Reflect and Move through the Yup'ik Community-Driven Process

Qungasvik (Tools for Life) Manual

<http://www.qungasvik.org/home/>

Qungasvik: Toolbox — Table of Contents



Qungasvik: Toolbox



Qungasvik Introduction



The Qasig Model



People Awakening Protective Factors



Preparing for the Journey



The Land Provides for Us



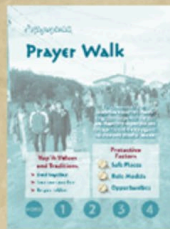
Neqpiaput Yup'ik Foods



Stories of Strength



How Powerful You Are



Prayer Walk



Crisis Response Team



Traditional Yup'ik Games



18 Modules/Teachings: Building Protection at the Community, Family & Individual Levels

- Preparing for the Journey
- The Land Provides for Us
- Neqpiaput: Yup'ik Foods
- Telling Stories of Strength
- How Powerful You Are
- Prayer Walk
- Crisis Response Team
- Traditional Yup'ik Games
- Building Tools for Life
- Survival Skills to Gain Confidence
- Where We All Come From
- Be a Friend
- The Whole Human Being
- Yup'ik Kinship Terms
- Surviving Your Feelings
- Strong and Sober
- Relationships for a Good Life
- Yup'ik Parenting Today

Communities Drive the Solutions

Scammon Bay's Qungasvik Project



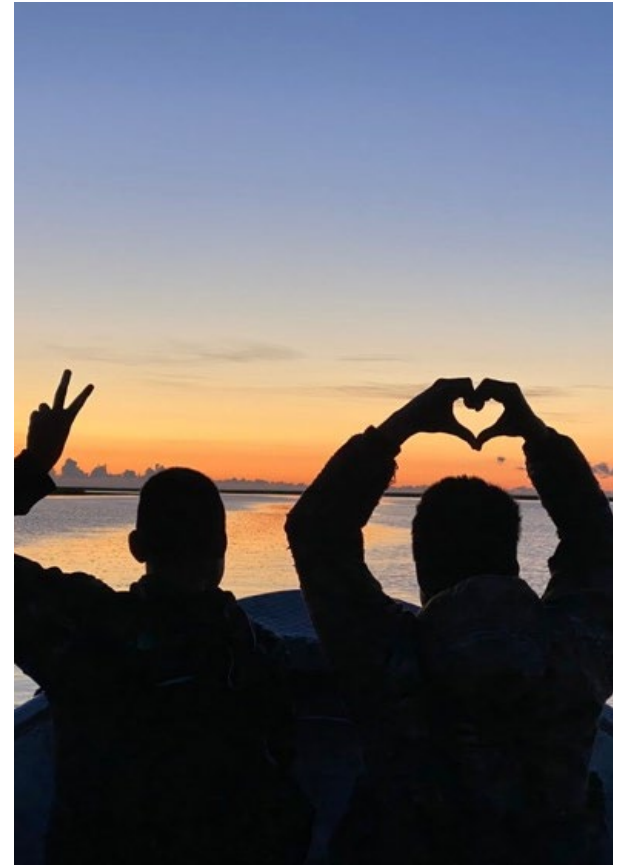
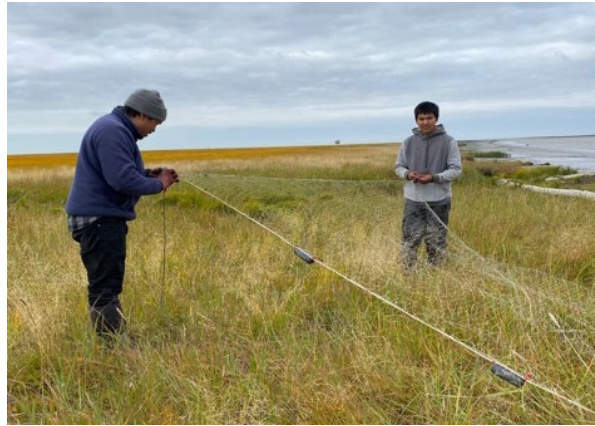
**Project Leaders: Georgianna Ningeulook
(top center and right), Abraham Rivers,
Wybon Rivers**





Our Land
Provides For Us





How Powerful We Are

First Catches







**Gathering wood for
Elders**





Neqpiaput: Yup'ik Foods



Mouse Food Hunting



Under Ice Set Net.





Building Tools for Life



Our History is Our Strength...



**We Must all Keep Pulling
Together Today for Our
Tomorrow!**



ALAKANUK: A VILLAGE OF HOPE

Elluam Tungiinun Egelruciq Ikayuulluta Agayutmek =
Movement Towards Wellness Together with the Help of
Our Creator

Community Ritual Casting out the Spirit of Suicide : Video link: <http://www.qungasvik.org/introduction/>

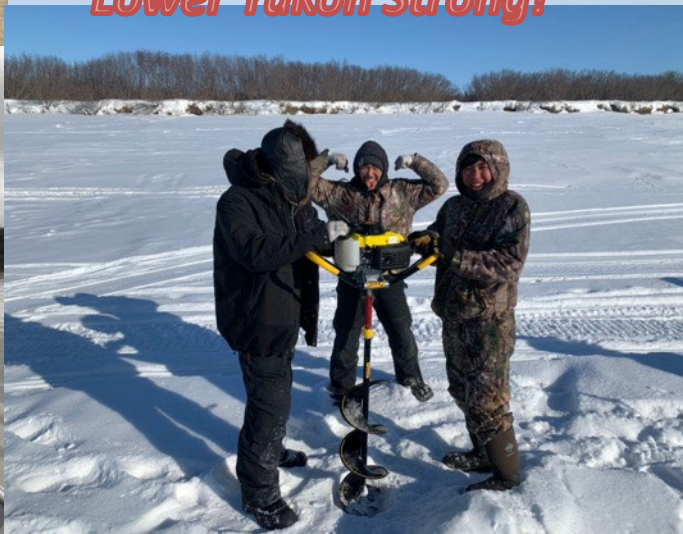




Emmonak Yuu'yaraq Project

Mark Tucker, Yolanda Kelly & Billy Charles

Lower Yukon Strong!





Yupiucimta Asvairtuumallerkaa Toksook Bay Simeon John





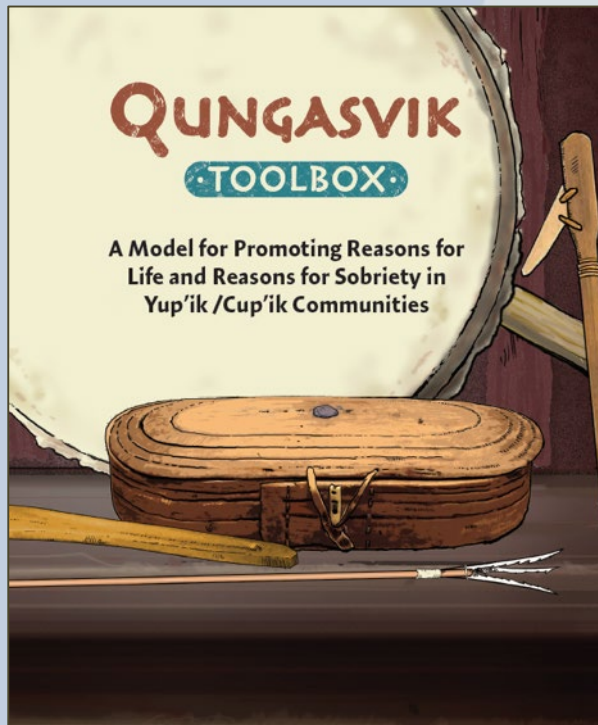
Hooper Bay Civuliamta Piciryarait Project

Jorene Joe & Auna Stone



Our Culture is Proven

Documenting the Multi-Level Impacts of Qungasvik for Young People through Indigenous-Led Prevention Science





***Murilkelluku Cikuq* = Watch the Ice**

Protective Factors Promoted:

- *Ellangneq* (Awareness)
- Communal mastery
- Self-efficacy



How Culture Builds
Protective Factors /
Qanruyutet¹



***Malignianeq* = Seal Hunt**

Protective Factors Promoted:

- *Ellangneq* (Awareness)
- Self-Efficacy
- Communal Mastery

¹Rasmus et al.
Cultur. Divers. Ethnic Minor. Psychol.,
2019

Outcomes from Qungasvik CBPR Intervention Science

- **Quantitative Analysis Team**

Carlotta Ching Ting Fok
KyungSook Lee

- **Acknowledgements**

James Walsh

David Henry

1950-2015



- Delivery of specific protective factors as the function of each Qungasvik intervention activity.
- Central role of measurement development in outcomes assessment with culturally distinct groups.
- Tests of Qungasvik protective factors model as an Indigenous theory of change.
- Feasibility of implementing Qungasvik intervention in rural Yup'ik Alaska Native communities.
- Comparative effectiveness using dose effects.
- Mechanisms of change in protection from alcohol misuse: Findings from mediation analysis.
- Ongoing prevention trials of community level intervention.

Cuqyun – Measuring

- **Ultimate Variables**

- **Reasons for Sobriety**¹ – Alcohol Protective Factors – *Umyuangcaryaraq*
 - Reflective Processes on the Consequences of Alcohol Use
- **Reasons for Life**² – Suicide Protective Factors – *Yuuyaraqegtaar*
- **Attitudes about Alcohol Use**
 - Personal, Parental, Community
- **Sobriety Timeline Followback**

- **Intermediate Variables**

- **Individual Protective Factors**³ – *Elluarrluni piyugngariluni*
 - Communal Mastery - Family, Friends; Becoming a Role Model
- **Family Protective Factors**⁴ – *Elluarrluteng ilakelriit*
 - Family Relationship
- **Community Protective Factors**⁵ – *Nunamta*
 - Support, Opportunity, Connection with Elders, Awareness of Connectedness
 - Social Network

¹Allen et al. *Assess.*, 2019

²Allen et al. *Am. J. Drug Alcohol Abuse*, 2012

³Fok et al. *Psychol. Assess.*, 2012

⁴Fok et al. *Assess.*, 2014

⁵Mohatt et al. *Cultur. Divers. Ethnic Minor. Psychol.*, 2011

The screenshot displays the 'Qungasvik Survey App' interface. It features three Likert scale questions, each with a horizontal slider ranging from 'Not at all' to 'A lot'. The first question is 'How important is this to you in living your life in the last week?' with the statement 'My Yup'ik Elders taught me that my life is valuable.' The second question is 'I believed I can fix my problems.' The third question is 'I believed I must live to be an Elder.' Each slider has a blue indicator showing the current selection. At the bottom of the app, there are 'Back' and 'Next' navigation buttons.

Comparative Effectiveness

of High vs. Low Intensity Intervention Across Two Communities

Four Measurement Timepoints (B1, B2, T1, T2)

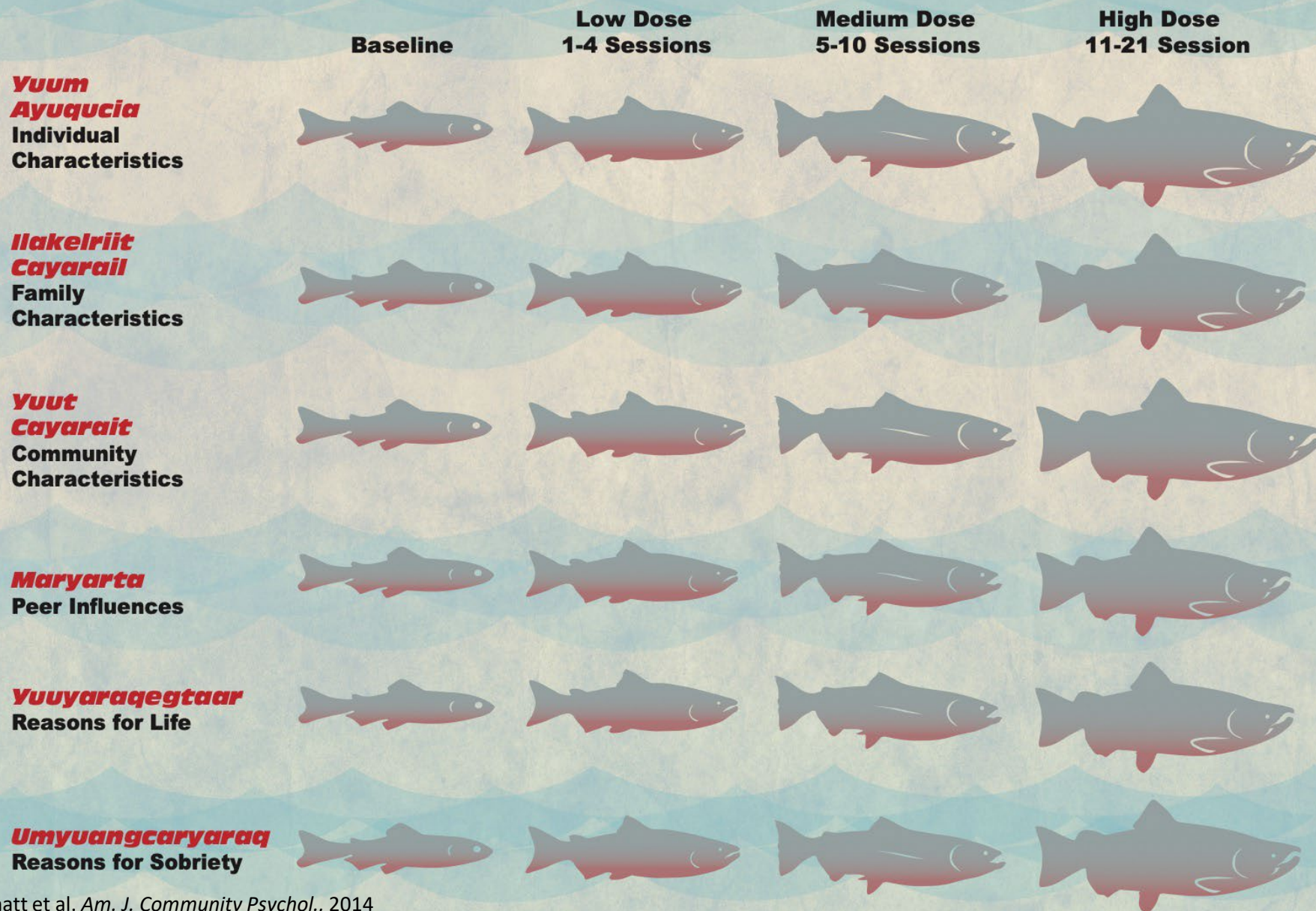
- Compares one community that completed intervention with another community at a point earlier in its intervention process.
 - Unit of analysis is intensity of intervention.
 - Treatment ($M = 6.76$ modules attended)
 - Comparison ($M = 2.31$ modules attended)
 - This is a variation of a stepped wedge design.

Summary of Mixed Model Results ($N=128$)

	Estimate	SE	df	t	Effect size (Cohen's d)
Reasons for Life					
Time	-0.0001	0.0005	310	-0.22	-0.03
TimeXCommunity	0.0040	0.0016	310	2.52	0.28*
Reasons for Sobriety					
Time	-0.00004	0.0002	309	-0.18	-0.02
TimeXCommunity	0.0007	0.0007	309	1.02	0.12

* $p < .05$

Qungasvik (Toolbox) Youth Outcomes
Elluam Tunngiinun (Towards Wellness) Feasibility Study
Growth in Protection in Response to Intervention Attendance



Summary of Current Research

- Qungasvik is a strengths-based, community-level intervention grounded in a multi-level theory of protection¹ and an Indigenous theory of change and implementation.^{2,3}
- Qungasvik can be feasibly implemented in the remote, arctic, rural Yupik Alaska Native community context to produce dose related measurable effects.⁴
- Higher intensity intervention produces enhanced protection in contrast to lower intensity intervention.⁵
- Effects are strongest among youth with lower levels of protection at baseline, and among males, particularly those under age 15.⁶

Ongoing Work:

Analysis of outcomes from a small dynamic wait-listed design (DWLD) trial.

Ongoing implementation of an NIAAA funded 5 community DWLD trial and a 4-year, 2 community interrupted time series trial of long-term outcomes that has enrolled 561 youth.



¹Allen et al. *Am. J. Community Psychol.*, 2014

²Rasmus et al. *J. Community Psychol.*, 2014

³Rasmus et al. *Cultur. Divers. Ethnic Minor. Psychol.*, 2019

⁴Mohatt et al. *Am. J. Community Psychol.*, 2014

⁵Allen et al. *Prev. Sci.*, 2018

⁶Henry et al. *Am. J. Drug Alcohol Abuse*, 2012

From a People in Peril to a People Awakening

People Awakening Project

(R01AA11446 NIAAA/NIMHD)

Cuqyun (Measurement)

(R21AA016098 NIAAA)

Ellangneq (Awareness)

(R24MD001626-1 NIMHD)

People Awakening Resilience Project

(R21AA015541 NIAAA)

Elluam Tungiinun (Towards Wellness)

(R24MD001626-4 NIMHD)

Qungasvik Youth Sobriety Project

(State of Alaska Designated Legislative Grant)

Qasgiq (Communal House)

(R24MD001626-8 NIMHD)

Qungasvik (Tool for Life)

(R01AA023754 NIAAA/NIMH/IDeA)

Emmonak, Toksook Bay, Scammon Bay, Hooper Bay Native Connections

(SM063445, 556, 557 SAMHSA)

Because We Love You (BeWeL): Brief Interventions for Suicide Risk

(SP-2020C3-20879 PCORI)

1996

2022





Qungasvik Team, 2019

Promoting Alaska Native Legacies of Strength and Resilience

- With respect, acknowledgement and gratitude to the Alaska Native Elders, youth and communities and to our partners, supporters and funders, quyana tailuci!

Contact Us!

Bill Charles: bacharles3@alaska.edu

Simeon John: sjohn@alaska.edu

Georgianna Ningeulook: gpsmith2@alaska.edu

Stacy Rasmus: smrasmus@alaska.edu

James Allen: jallen@d.umn.edu