



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Visiting and Listening

*Meaningful Participation for Alaska
Native Peoples in Conservation Projects*

A Resource Guide for Agency Employees and Partners

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Purpose and Goals | 3 |
| Why Improve Participation for Alaska Natives? | 3 |
| Who Are Alaska Native Peoples? | 4 |
| Building Blocks of Meaningful Participation | 5 |
| How To Facilitate Meaningful Participation | 6 |
| Recommendations | 8 |
| Future Steps | 14 |
| Appendix I: Alaska History at a Glance | 15 |
| Appendix II: Land Status in Alaska Post-Contact | 16 |
| Appendix III: Introduction to Alaska Native Cultures | 18 |
| For Further Study | 23 |
| References | 24 |
| Other Sources | 25 |
| Authors and Acknowledgements | 26 |

“Alaska Native culture isn’t the same as western culture and this point isn’t taken into account as much as it should be when it comes to both attitudes and meeting formats; things that work for western society won’t necessarily be successful with Alaska Native peoples.”

- Alaska Native employee of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Purpose and Goals

This publication serves as a user-friendly guide for agency managers, planners, outreach specialists, Refuge Information Technicians (RITs), community leaders, and others working in conservation planning in Alaska. Its purpose is to help increase meaningful participation in conservation planning for Alaska Native peoples. It is designed both for someone who is unfamiliar with Alaska's history and cultural diversity and for those who have extensive experience working with Alaska Native communities.

It provides the user with a historical background on post-contact landownership in Alaska and a general description of the recognized Alaska Native cultural groups (Appendices I through III).

The guide focuses on recommendations from a 2010 interview study on Alaska Native peoples' involvement in conservation planning⁴. It provides readers with a basis for enhancing communication, relationships, and involvement of Alaska Native peoples in planning and other conservation or resource management projects.

Why Improve Participation for Alaska Natives?

- Agency land managers and Alaska Native peoples agree that there is a desire for greater Alaska Native involvement in conservation planning^{4, 18}.
- Alaska Native peoples are closely linked to the land and subsistence resources, so their contribution to resource planning is essential.
- Their ways of knowing about a particular place are rooted in centuries of keen observation and direct experience with the environment.
- Their observations and understanding of the land can help focus research studies, provide historical context to data that is limited by a short time frame, and help planners and managers see interconnections that may not be apparent through western science.
- They are among the most directly affected members when it comes to land management in rural Alaska, so improving participation from Alaska Native peoples should result in plans and projects that more fully incorporate Alaska Native peoples' perspectives and better represent the rural public.



Who are Alaska Native Peoples?

Alaska Native peoples are the descendants of those who inhabited Alaska for the last 10,000 years. Many of them live on lands traditionally occupied by their ancestors³. About twenty different Alaska Native groups are recognized as having lived in the state¹. Today, about 105,000 Alaska Native individuals make up 15 percent of the state's population². The Alaska Native Heritage Center recognizes five major cultural groups based on similar traditions and patterns of subsistence behavior. These include: Athabascan peoples, Inupiat, St. Lawrence Island Yup'ik, Cup'ik, Yup'ik, Aleut, Alutiiq, Haida, Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Eyak peoples (Figure 1).

Over the past two centuries or more, Alaska Native peoples have been profoundly affected by forces of change, including enslavement, displacement, oppression, and disease. Over the last century, however, the biggest impact has come from the influx of non-Native peoples bringing western cultural values, religions, laws, education, economic systems, and new technology. Many Alaska Native peoples have chosen to move to urban centers for better employment and education opportunities. For those continuing to live in rural areas, the rising costs of energy and transportation, in particular, create economic hardships.

Although Alaska Native communities at first glance may appear westernized in that they use western tools, speak English, wear jeans and t-shirts, and eat store-bought food, their cultural values and traditions remain strong and are distinct in many ways from the state's dominant Euro-American culture. Ability to adapt and accumulated knowledge built upon direct interaction with the environment over long periods of time have enabled Alaska Native peoples to thrive in these northern lands.

**Alaska
Native peoples
make up about
15%
of the state's
population.**

Traditional territories of Alaska Native Cultures

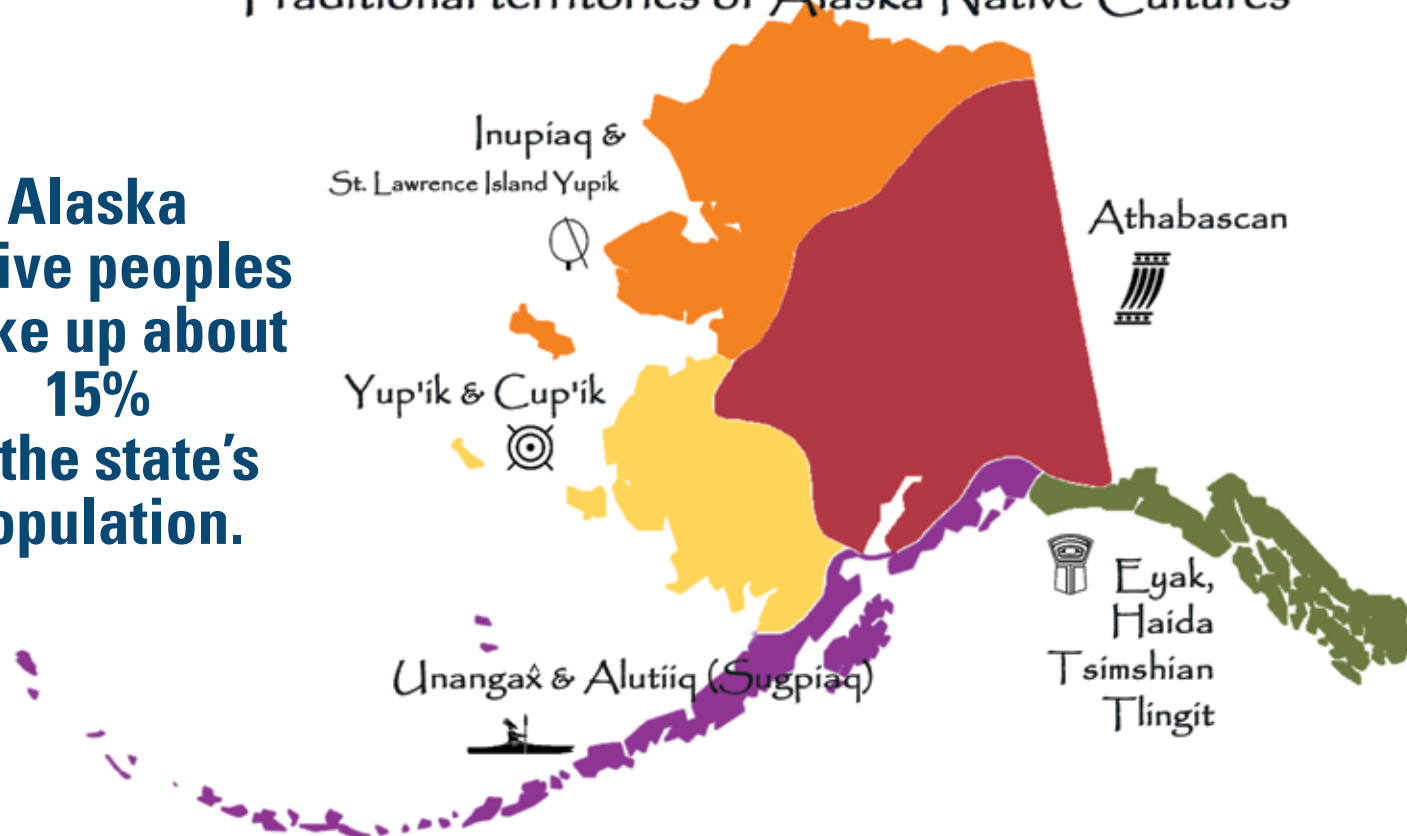


Figure 1. Alaska Native cultural regions.

Building Blocks of Meaningful Participation

The interview study referenced earlier identified important factors that affect meaningful participation by Alaska Native peoples and their communities in agency conservation projects⁴. Cultural awareness emerged from the interviews as the keystone factor that affects all interactions between agency employees and Alaska Native peoples.

Cultural awareness controls how we use the four building blocks of public participation: **communications, relations, involvement, and logistics**. The building blocks are connected and equally important for reaching meaningful public participation in our conservation work. Cultural awareness is the overarching keystone in a bridge that can lead to success (Figure 2). It holds together all parts of public participation.

Successful use of the building blocks is facilitated by culturally sensitive actions and approaches used to involve Alaska Native peoples in conservation planning and refuge management. Meaningful participation from Alaska Native peoples requires that agencies develop a greater understanding of Alaska Native cultures and flexibility in methods of communication and public involvement⁴.



Figure 2. Model of meaningful public participation for Alaska Native peoples.

Kristen Gilbert / USFWS

Cultural Awareness refers to an understanding of how other groups differ from one's own. You can be aware by recognizing differences in values, beliefs, manners of speech, relationships, and the rules for making decisions.¹⁷

How to Facilitate Meaningful Participation

Communications

- Give people time to think, by not expecting an immediate response
- Consider differences in beliefs, values, manner of speaking, and ways of making decisions for all meetings and other interactions
 - Format meetings to be informal and social with food
 - Update the public on any new information
 - Explain regulations in simple, common terms
 - Be creative in how you present information
 - Use concrete examples to describe information
 - Eliminate jargon and bureaucratic terms
 - Maintain a two-way flow of information
 - Practice true listening

What and how information is presented to Alaska Native audiences.

Involvement

Situations, conditions, and practices that create roles and opportunities for Alaska Native peoples to participate in agency projects.

- Communicate often with local contacts and Refuge Information Technicians
- Schedule meetings and public events on issues of greatest importance at the time
 - Encourage capacity building through training and workshops
 - Be willing to adjust projects and activities to accommodate Native ways of knowing and respect cultural traditions
 - Provide leadership roles in conservation projects for community leaders and other Alaska Native individuals.

Relations

Situations, conditions, and practices that create and maintain positive attitudes and trust.

- Build personal relationships with Alaska Native peoples who live in or near public lands.
- Maintain continuity in your position, your projects, and your relationships with Alaska Native peoples
 - Make yourself available
 - Increase your cultural awareness and appreciate that other cultures might have different perspectives from your own
 - Respect Alaska Native peoples' ideas and traditional ways of knowing

Logistics

- Find ways to minimize travel costs for Alaska Native peoples who attend meetings or presentations
 - When possible, hold meetings in rural villages rather than in cities
 - Be flexible when scheduling and timing public meetings, workshops, or presentations
 - Meet for more than a day without an agenda
 - Allow every participant an opportunity to speak at a public meeting
 - Allow time for both formal and informal discussions of an issue

Tangible dimensions that indirectly impact the success of all related agency endeavors.

Recommendations

Be Culturally Sensitive and Locally Smart

The use of methods and practices that are not culturally appropriate substantially impedes Alaska Native participation in agency planning processes.

“People will be involved with issues that concern them. Participants at meetings are those most affected by the current issue, whoever needs that resource most. In the spring, everyone is busy preparing for everything, so they can only deal with immediate issues, like seal and bird/waterfowl hunting ... If it’s spring and the [topic] is moose, no one will come.”

- Yup’ik employee of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Communications: Provide several opportunities for the public to participate.

Relations: Increase your cultural awareness so that you know which issues are most important to your public.

Involvement: Target meetings and public events on issues of greatest importance at the time.



The snowmachine is a common method of transportation in rural Alaska.

Recommendations, *cont.*

Provide Opportunities

Greater opportunity for Alaska Native involvement and participation strengthens relations and increases ownership.

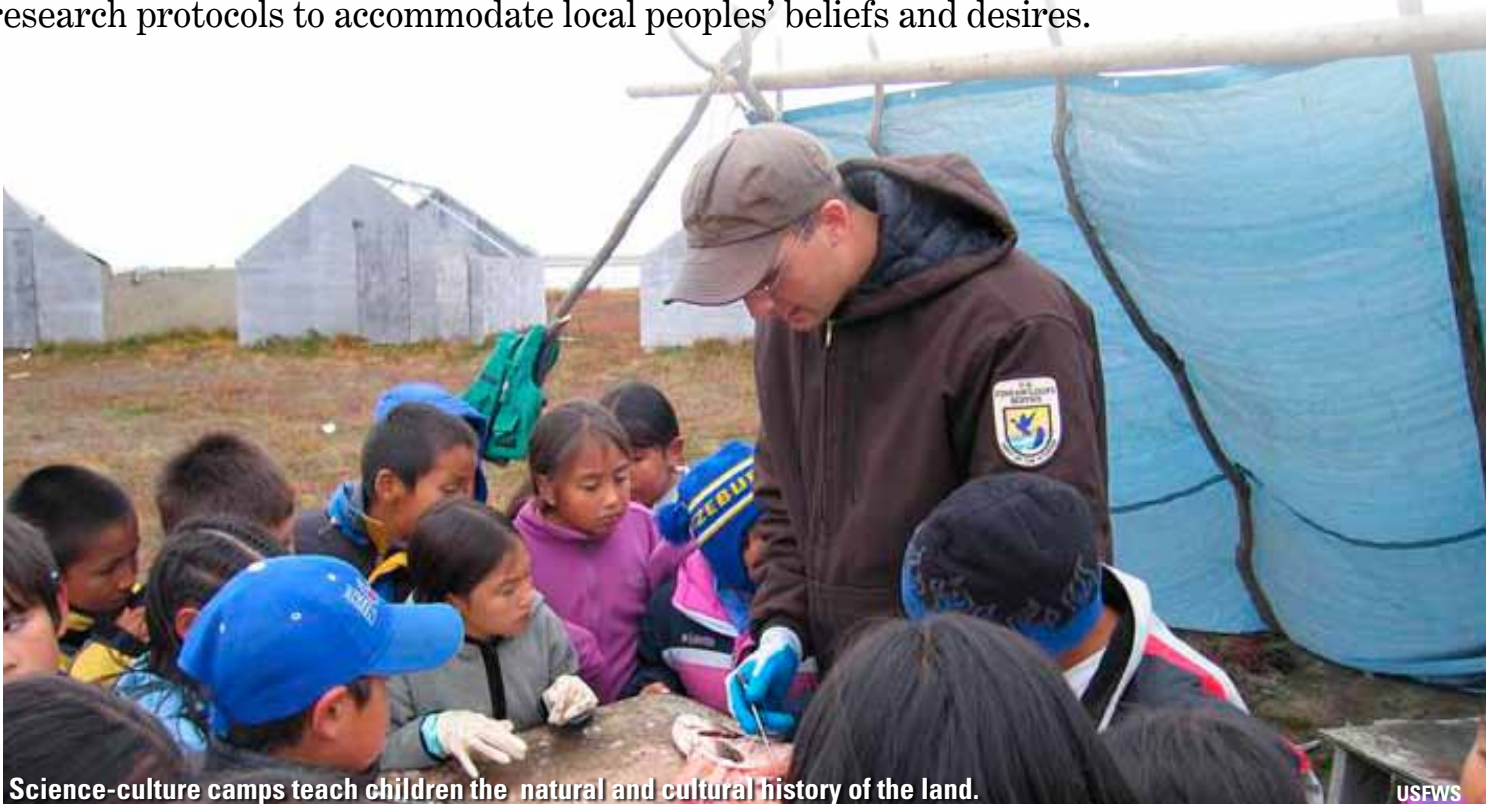
“We had done surveys of sea otters at various locations throughout southwest Alaska, and in one of those locations we had an Alaska Native organization say to us, ‘well, you already got a couple of people in the community who are working to do surveys of sea lions. Why couldn’t you train those same people to do surveys of sea otters ... they could do that ... and then share the data with us, and everyone benefits.’ We did that ... We had a 3-day training session for observers. It included aviation safety procedures for harvest surveys, and recording data and ... we took them up in the air for some test flights where we showed them ... what to [look] for ... They did the surveys and they would send us ... data sheets and ... we would import the data and send [it] back to them ... Everybody wants to see that data collected, everybody wants to share that data.”

- Supervisory Wildlife Biologist

Communications: Share with the public any recent information or results in user-friendly formats to engage them in an issue.

Relations: Build personal relationships with Alaska Native peoples in the refuges and work to establish trust.

Involvement: Provide meaningful roles for Alaska Native peoples in management; adjust research protocols to accommodate local peoples’ beliefs and desires.



Science-culture camps teach children the natural and cultural history of the land.

Recommendations, *cont.*

Build Trust

Low levels of trust between Alaska Native groups and the government impede cooperation and success.

“At least in [northwest Alaska], the Alaska Native community generally distrusts all the resource agencies in a general way and it starts from back in the game warden days in the 1940s when there were poorly thought out enforcement efforts. People said to me when I first started working around there: “Well, it’s not that we have anything against you, but in 1940 the game warden took away my father’s rifle.” There’s this long history that has not been forgotten that game wardens took away people’s rifles in the days when people didn’t have a lot of money and really needed the food ... It was an ugly history of enforcement against Alaska Natives for subsistence practices they’d done for a long time.”

- Outreach Specialist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Communications: Explain any new regulations to the public and be willing to adjust enforcement policies to accommodate cultural practices and beliefs different from the agency’s own.

Relations: Listen to Alaska Native peoples’ concerns or ideas regarding regulations and consider their needs.

Involvement: Make frequent visits to communicate with Refuge Information Technicians or other liaisons to hear concerns; when possible, train and involve Alaska Native peoples in law enforcement.



Archival image of subsistence goose hunting.

Recommendations, *cont.*

Share Information in a Simple Way

Lack of understanding of agency issues and proposed projects by those living in rural Alaska prevents participation.

“... What I find ... is a lack of understanding that harvest regulations are aimed at guaranteeing sustainable harvests into the future ... and there’s widespread misunderstanding and mistrust regarding the purpose of regulations. People think it’s just because the government wants to control them ... [You can work] with the kids and have these games where you have a moose population, or a goose population, and have some kids be predators and some kids be hunters and ... model what the population does. Kids quickly realize that if [they] harvest that much and the predators harvest that much, all the resource is gone in a few years ... Work with the kids and teach them these concepts and if they have a fundamental understanding of sustainability, that’ll transfer over into an understanding of the need for regulations ... As far as [working] with people who are in their 30s, 40s, and 50s, [what] you can do is find certain individuals who are willing to listen and [help them understand].”

- Refuge Manager with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Communications: Be creative in ways of presenting and distributing information about regulations and policies; reach out to youth, elders, hunters, and members of the community who do not routinely attend meetings.

Relations: Make yourself available to Alaska Natives for any questions or concerns they may have; be accessible in villages and at community events; take the initiative to visit with Alaska Native leaders in the region and communities.

Involvement: Present programs and free training workshops that are open to anyone who is interested in learning more about an issue.



Everyone works at a fish camp.

Recommendations, *cont.*

Work on Relationships

Agency employees who are culturally sensitive and effectively build personal relationships are more successful and efficient.

“There’s the analogy of three cups of tea ... The idea is that you sit down with some of the elders, some of the decision makers, and leaders in the community and you have a cup of tea with them, meaning you visit with them, you share stories, you talk about your family. I always encourage people when they go to communities, to introduce themselves: “My name is (name). My Native name is (name), if you don’t have a Native name that is ok. My parents are (name) and (name) from (city, state). My maternal grandparents are (name) and (name) from (city, state) and my paternal grandparents are (name) and (name) from (city, state).” That’s the first thing, introducing yourself and allowing them to understand that you also have your own culture. Then, go back to the village a second time, sit down with people and have the second cup of tea. Then go back to the village a third time and sit down and visit again. By the third time, you’ll notice a huge difference between the first time and the third time and how easy and comfortable it is to communicate, and I think that’s true probably with anybody in the world.”

- Native Affairs Specialist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Communications: Use culturally appropriate formats for all meetings, conversations, and presentations and understand that each cultural group and every individual has different ways of communicating and participating.

Relations: Value consistency in staff, jobs, and cultivate long-term relationships with Alaska Native peoples; realize that Alaska Native peoples experience a constant stream of professionals who spend only a short amount of time in villages; listen more and talk less, remembering that Alaska Native peoples may have speaking mannerisms different from your own.

Involvement: Attend Alaska Native people’s meetings and events when possible to learn about and show interest in their issues; directly and concretely involve Alaska Native leaders in projects whenever possible.



Visiting elders at home is a way to build good relationships.

Recommendations, *cont.*

Get the Mechanics Right

Logistical issues, including the location and scheduling of meetings, greatly affect participation

“In the real traditional way of meeting, you meet for however long it takes to make a conclusion, so it could be a day, it could be three days, and it could be weeks. It involves anyone in the community who wants to be a part of the discussion; everybody gets to be heard. There’s no agenda, but you talk about the topic. It’s sort of like a Socratic seminar. Those are very non-traditional ways of meeting and I did one of those “meeting the Native way” that was very successful and [had a great impact]. The Native people and the agency people went away being complete believers in what we were about to do and as a result, things got done in a matter of months whereas if we had continued to meet an hour here or an hour there with agendas and topics, it probably would’ve taken years to do. So it’s amazing what that time investment up front can save in time and money.”

- Native Affairs Specialist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Logistics:

Maintain flexibility in scheduling and timing of public meetings, workshops, and presentations.

Have more open agendas and allow for more open discussion.

When possible, hold meetings in rural villages rather than in large cities.

Find ways to minimize travel costs for Alaska Native participants.



Plan meetings when they don't interfere with subsistence activities.

USFWS

Future Steps

Alaska Native cultures are different from Euro-American cultures. Agency planners and staff must learn about Alaska Native cultures – their values, history, customs, subsistence practices, and unwritten rules – to understand the impact of agency policies and programs on Alaska Native peoples. Becoming familiar with Alaska Native peoples will also help reduce miscommunication and common pitfalls, which can have chilling effects on cross-cultural relationships. Appendix III offers an introduction to the different Alaska Native cultures, but the best way to learn is through first-hand experiences of talking with Alaska Natives and spending time in their communities.

Now more than ever, priority needs to be placed on listening to the needs and concerns of Alaska Native peoples.

For over a century, government agencies have attempted to regulate and control the lands and waters of Alaska, which Alaska Native peoples have occupied for millennia. Developing and enforcing these regulations has mostly been in the hands of non-Native people. Educational credentials and degree requirements create obstacles for many Alaska Native peoples in small villages to work for the resource agencies. This, along with a history of disregard for Alaska Native customs and ways of knowing, is one of the factors that creates a disconnect and distrust between Alaska Native peoples and conservation agencies.

There is now an emphasis across the federal government to engage with federally recognized tribes in government-to-government consultation. The premise of this guide is to get to know our closest neighbors and partners in conservation, and an excellent tool for

doing so is through consultation. Understanding our agency impacts on Alaska Native peoples through meaningful dialogue can happen especially through this government-to-government relationship²⁰.

Respecting the inherent sovereignty of tribes by involving them in the decision-making and planning processes will show the agency's sincere interest in giving Alaska Native peoples ownership.

With energy and transportation developments encroaching on protected areas, increased social conflicts, and the ever-present shadow of climate change, managing land is becoming much more complex. Now more than ever, priority needs to be placed on listening to the needs and concerns of Alaska Native peoples. Policymakers and agency leaders need to recognize the uniqueness of Alaska Native cultures and homelands, seeking opportunities to promote and celebrate these cultures and their strong ties to the land. Change has to come from both below and above. Agency workers at field stations must enhance their cultural sensitivity and intercultural communication skills. From the top, agency leadership must promote



Local radio is just one way to communicate with the community.

policies that shape the foundation of better relationships with Alaska Native peoples and others who see conservation in ways different from traditional agency leaders.

What You Can Do Now

- Work to understand the cultures, histories, and subsistence ways of life of Alaska Native peoples.
- Respect other cultures' perspectives, experiences, and ways of knowing.
- Work closely with Alaska Native peoples to include their ways of knowing in agency practices and policies.
- Look for opportunities to employ Alaska Native individuals in conservation planning, taking into consideration that a western-style education is not the only measure of ability or success.

Appendix I - Alaska History at a Glance

Time Immemorial Alaska Native peoples inhabit the lands of Alaska.

- 1741** Alexei Chirikof arrives in Alaska, representing first European contact.
- 1784** First white settlement at Three Saints Bay, Kodiak.
- 1795** First Russian Orthodox Church established in Kodiak.
- 1867** U.S. purchases Alaska from Russia. All land and waters became public domain under the control of the federal government.
- 1878** Beginning of the salmon industry; first canneries established.
- 1884** Congress passes the Organic Act which provides protection for lands used and occupied by Alaska Native peoples.
- 1906** The Native Allotment Act provides the first opportunity for Alaska Natives to obtain land under restricted title.
- 1911** The Fur Seal Treaty among the United States, Canada, Russia, and Japan regulated fur harvest.
- 1912** The Alaska Native Brotherhood is founded with goals to win citizenship and education for Native people.
- 1922** Native voting rights established through a court case.
- 1924** The Citizenship Act allows Alaska Natives to become citizens with the right to vote. Tlingit William Paul, Sr. is the first Native elected to Alaska Legislature.
- 1935** The Jurisdictional Act allows the Tlingit and Haida Indians to pursue land claims in U.S. Court of Claims.
- 1958** Congress approves Statehood Act and the right to Native lands is disclaimed. The state chooses 103 million acres.
- 1959** Alaskan statehood proclaimed and state constitution put in effect.
- 1966** Statewide conference of Alaska Natives leads to organization of Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN).
- 1967** First bills introduced in Congress to settle Native land claims.
- 1971** Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) signed into law.
- 1980** Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) signed into law.
- 1980-1989** State of Alaska manages subsistence under ANILCA mandates.
- 1989** Alaska Supreme Court throws out Alaska's rural preference law.
- 1990** Federal government assumes authority over subsistence management on federal lands and limited waters.
- 1994** President Clinton issues an Executive Memorandum on Government-to-Government Relations with Native American Tribes.
- 1995** Katie John court decision allows for federal subsistence management of fisheries.
- 1999** Federal government assumes authority over subsistence management of fisheries on federal public lands.

Appendix II - Land Status in Alaska Post-Contact

For thousands of years, Alaska Natives settled in and explored the majority of the state⁵. They adapted to extreme climates through close observation and interactions with the land and its resources. Although most Alaska Native groups were territorial and established villages, their idea of ownership differed from Europeans'. Newcomers greatly influenced their cultures and in many ways changed how Alaska Natives managed their lands for generations to come.

The early 1700s were a time of vast exploration of "undiscovered" territories. People from other nations

including Russia, Spain, England, and the United States arrived in large numbers to exploit the bountiful resources of the land. In 1867, the United States acquired Russia's interest in Alaska through the Treaty of Cession. The treaty granted the United States exclusive rights to negotiate with native inhabitants for aboriginal title to the land and allowed Alaska Native peoples the right of United States citizenship if they renounced their Native tribal allegiances⁶. Alaska was under military control between 1867 and 1884. In 1884, Congress passes the Organic Act. It was the first law that

protected Alaska Native peoples' rights to lands. The Organic Act provided that lands occupied or claimed by Alaska Native peoples would remain in their possession unless they abandoned them, but the terms under which they could acquire rights to their lands were reserved for Congress and would not be decided for almost a century⁷.

Over the next several decades, Congress enacted a series of laws designed to encourage Alaska Natives to abandon their tribal ownership claims and become private landowners. These laws were mildly



Figure 3. Boundaries for Alaska Native Regional Corporations as called for in Section 7(a) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971.

John Brewer / USFWS

unsuccessful in that few Alaska Natives obtained title to their property and only six reservations were formed¹⁶. The Alaska Statehood Act of 1959 recognized aboriginal title. It gave Alaska Natives exclusive right of use and occupancy of the land. The issue of land ownership became more pressing as the state and federal government decided how to allocate land. When the State of Alaska began selecting its share of 103 million acres of land, Alaska Native villages protested the land selections, arguing that the lands were subject to tribal claims of aboriginal title⁶.

In 1971, Congress passed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA)⁷. This law sought to resolve land claims to clear the way for land selections by the state and further development, especially for oil. The ANCSA withdrew substantial amounts of land for future inclusion in federal land management units. The ANCSA extinguished aboriginal title, which included rights to hunt and fish in perpetuity, in exchange for a land and money settlement - 44 million acres and 962.5 million dollars, respectively. The ANCSA created 12 land-based regional corporations (**Figure 3**) and over 200 for-profit village corporations that would have title to the surface area and subsurface minerals of land selected for development. The thirteenth regional corporation was non land based. The ANCSA also extinguished all reservations except for Metlakatla, which still exists today in southeastern Alaska.

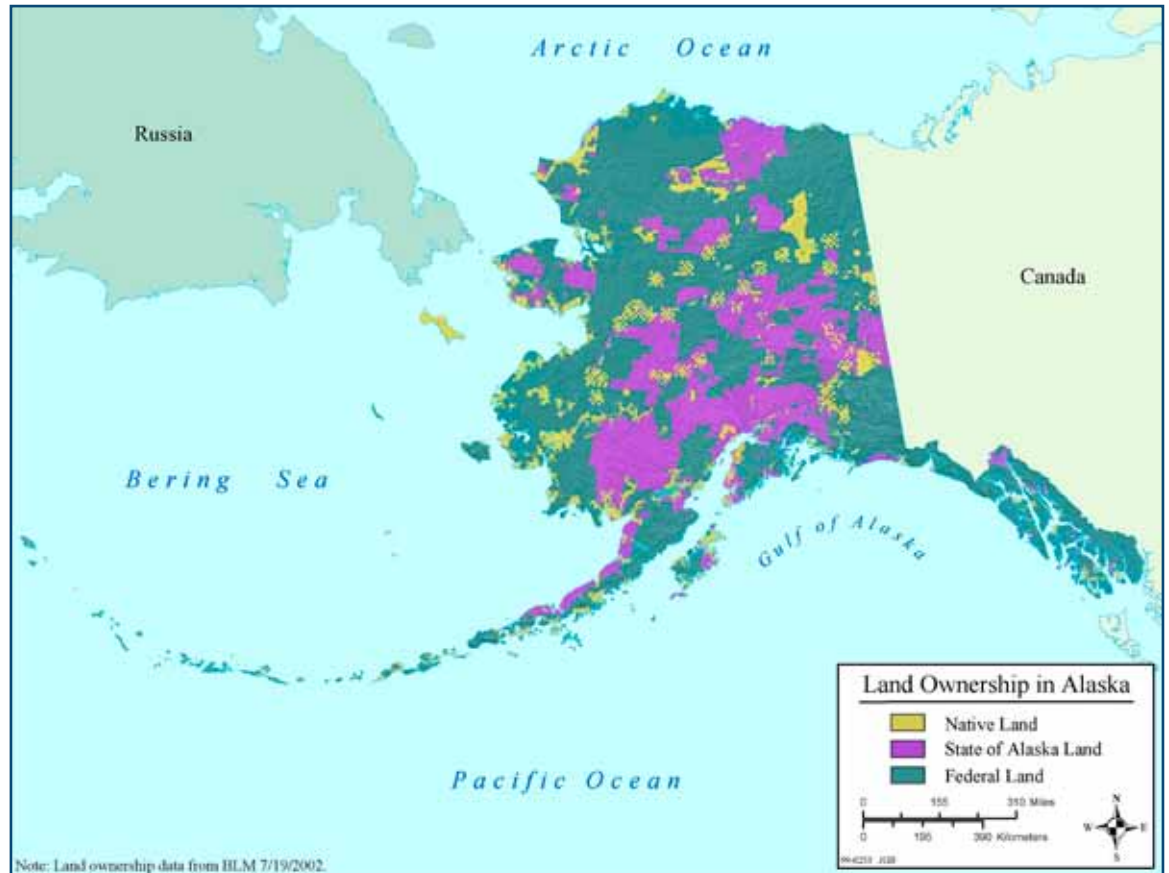


Figure 4. Overview map of land ownership in Alaska.

John Brewer / USFWS

Although it was not written into ANCSA, Congress intended that subsistence opportunities for Alaska Natives would continue to be protected. Congress enacted the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) in 1980. It designated large tracts of land for conservation, most of which were withdrawn under ANCSA for this purpose, and prioritized subsistence hunting and fishing over other consumptive uses. Title VIII of ANILCA provided a subsistence preference for all rural residents, Native and non Native, on federal public lands in Alaska⁹ (**Figure 4**).

The ANILCA defined subsistence uses, introduced the rural preference, and established Regional Advisory Councils. Subsistence on these lands is currently managed by the federal government, but between 1980 and 1989 the state of Alaska managed subsistence on these lands.

For decades, managing and protecting the land and resources of Alaska has been the responsibility of federal and state agencies. Alaska Native co-management bodies, tribes, and Native corporations also play a key role in managing lands and subsistence resources. Opportunities are on the rise today for tribes and Native groups to work with the state and federal governments to delegate and collaborate in managing and regulating the environment in Alaska. Collaboration, co-management, and meaningful public participation are the keys for unlocking sustainability and successfully managing the state's vast resources. Meaningful public participation is vitally important in remote areas of the state where the federal and state governments do not have a frequent presence.

Appendix III - Introduction to Alaska Native Cultures

Alaska Native peoples are culturally diverse. They embrace customs and traditions that are rooted in quintessential values of community and a deep respect for nature. Many Alaska Native peoples believe that all living beings have spirits and animals are revered. Historically, they have inhabited almost every part of the state and traditionally, they moved seasonally to hunting and fishing grounds to support their subsistence ways of life. Alaska Native peoples have protected their lands for thousands of years and, over time, have developed the valuable ability to detect anomalies in nature before anyone else can. Although Alaska Native people may resemble each other in the tools that they use and the English language that they speak, each Alaska Native group is a separate ethno-linguistic society and distinct in its use of the land's resources, their social interactions with other groups, and how their culture changed after contact with Europeans. Like with any other culture, Alaska Native cultures are constantly changing. People continually reshape their lives, identities, and actions in their daily course of experiences¹⁵. It is important to note that although their methods and practices may have changed from the past, they are still rooted in an idea of respect for nature, elders, and communal values.

Many Alaska Natives today live in major cities throughout Alaska. In addition to maintaining their subsistence ways of life, many Alaska Native peoples today have jobs in different fields and work as federal and state employees, corporate leaders, teachers, and in law enforcement, to name a few.

The following descriptions are of the five major cultural groups recognized by the Alaska Native Heritage Center and are based on similar traditions and subsistence patterns.

Athabascan

Athabascan peoples traditionally occupied a large part of Interior Alaska¹⁰. They inhabited the region from the Brooks Range in the North to Cook Inlet in South-central Alaska and from Norton Sound in the west to the Canadian border¹¹. They were highly mobile peoples who frequently traveled in small groups to hunt and fish along the banks of the Yukon, Tanana, Kuskokwim, Sustina, Copper, and Kenai Rivers. They built winter base camps and summer dwellings for easy access to resources like fish. Different

house types were used depending on the season and resources. People who took on leadership roles varied among the different groups of Athabascan peoples. Some groups, like the Ahtna and Dena'ina, had appointed chiefs. The Deg Hit'an had men and women elders who helped resolve disputes¹⁹. For some Athabascans, the core family unit was composed of a woman, her brother, and their families.

An important feature of traditional Athabascan life was that the mother's brother

was responsible for training and socializing his sister's children. He would be tasked with teaching his nieces and nephews the clan's history and customs¹⁰. Athabascans traded important food resources and tools for other goods that were seasonally unavailable. Athabascans are also well known for their elaborate beadwork¹⁹.



©AK Native Heritage Center



A. Athabascan Beadwork

Contact with Euro-Americans did not occur until the late nineteenth or early twentieth century when trading companies and Russian Orthodox priests arrived in the Cook Inlet area. Many traditional customs and languages still exist today¹⁹. Athabascans still schedule social and subsistence events according to the season. During the fall, they may hunt caribou and moose. In the spring they hunt geese and ducks, set beaver traps, and practice dog-sledding. In the summer, many Athabascans go fishing, berry-picking, and hunting¹⁴.

Inupiat and St. Lawrence Island Yup'ik

The Inupiat and St. Lawrence Island Yup'ik lived in the regions from St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea to the northern Canadian border. The extreme Arctic environment was not a barrier for the Inupiat and St. Lawrence Island Yup'ik peoples, but rather a habitat rich in marine and land mammals, birds, fish, and fruits that were used to support the peoples' ways of living¹². Traditional dwellings varied in design and were constructed from different materials depending on the available resources. Some common key features of the winter dwellings included an underground tunnel entrance, a subterranean structure made from sod blocks and supported by driftwood, whale or walrus bone, and seal-oil lamps for lighting, cooking, and heating¹². There were many distinct Inupiaq societies with boundaries for hunting, trapping, and settlement. Each group had a major settlement with permanent dwellings and a qarigi, or house for men's activities and meetings. In Inupiaq societies, the chief attained his position through inheritance¹⁹. The mode of transportation varied across the different regions. The umiaq, or large open skin boat, was used for hunting walrus and whale and for transporting materials for barter. The kayak, or closed skin boat, was used for hunting and transportation. The basket sled was used for land travel¹². Inupiat people are well known for their intricate ivory carvings and engravings.



B. Many Inupiat people use the hide, meat and bones of their hunt like these boys skinning a reindeer in Penny River, AK (between 1896 and 1913).

The Inupiat were not drastically affected by Euro-Americans until the whalers arrived in the 1850s. Hundreds of commercial whaling ships sailed through the Arctic Ocean and Bering Strait, taking whales and walrus for their oil and ivory, drastically depleting the subsistence resources in the process¹⁹. Whaling crews and miners introduced alcohol and disease that devastated entire communities¹³. Today, most Inupiat people speak both English and Inupiaq. The St. Lawrence Island Yup'ik culture was transformed by the arrival of the first missionaries in 1894 who replaced Native religion with Christianity. St. Lawrence Island Yup'ik peoples today speak English and Siberian Yup'ik, a language they share with Natives on the Chukotsk Peninsula in

C. This Inupiaq artist carves walrus tusks.



Inupiaq & St. Lawrence Island Yupik



©AK Native Heritage Center

Russia¹⁹. Inupiat and St. Lawrence Island Yup'ik peoples still practice subsistence hunting and fishing with marine mammals and fish typically comprising a majority of the harvest.

D. Local residents can still be found fishing for whitefish using traditional methods.



Yup'ik and Cup'ik

The Yup'ik and Cup'ik peoples lived in the inland and coastal regions of Bristol Bay along the Bering Sea coast to Norton Sound. The location of seasonal villages was determined by the availability of food and plant resources. Nomadic hunting and gathering dominated summer and fall activities and ceremonies and cultural festivities took place during winter¹⁰. Traditional houses were subterranean structures shared by close family¹². In some Yup'ik and Cup'ik communities, boys old enough to leave their mothers lived in a large community center where they learned to be men¹². Women had a separate structure where they gathered to cook and care for their children¹¹. Social rank was determined by the skill set an individual offered to the community and by gender. Men were in charge of hunting and fishing and a successful hunter often became a village leader. Women were responsible for child-rearing, preparing food, and sewing¹³. Important resources to the Yup'ik and Cup'ik peoples included marine mammals, walrus, various kinds of fish, and fur-bearing animals which they used for food, insulation, waterproof gear, and

tools. Yup'ik peoples are known for their mask making, grass baskets, and dance fans¹⁹.

Today, many Yup'ik and Cup'ik peoples still live in the same villages that their ancestors inhabited for many centuries¹². Over time, non-Native contact has changed the Yup'ik and Cup'ik culture. Today, various forms of media bring English into many households, but Yup'ik remains one of the most viable of all Alaska Native languages.

Yup'ik & Cup'ik



©AK Native Heritage Center



F. A Yup'ik Eskimo woman picks berries on the tundra.



E. Examples of Yup'ik Masks



G. Fish are an important resource for Yup'ik and Cup'ik peoples. Pictured here are women cutting fish on the beach with fish drying on the racks behind them in Tununak, AK between 1939 and 1959.

Aleut and Alutiiq

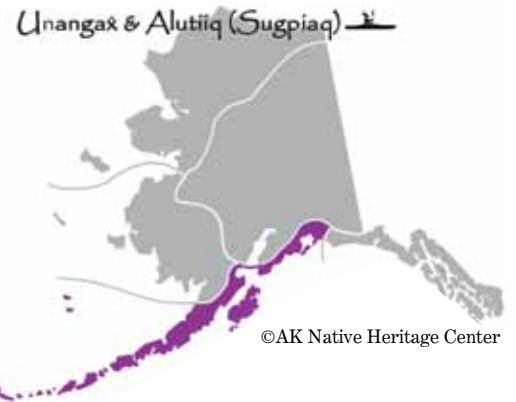
Historically, the Aleut, or Unangax, and Alutiiq, or Sugpiaq, territory extended from Prince William Sound West along the Gulf of Alaska to the tip of the Aleutian Islands and included the Pribilof Islands. They settled along the coast and inland by rivers and lakes to take advantage of the plentiful resources. The traditional dwellings of both cultures were semi-subterranean and often hard to distinguish from the surrounding terrain¹². Traditional Aleut houses were pit dwellings supported by whale bone or wooden frames and topped with a layer of sod and grass¹³. Important foods for both groups included seals, sea

from Bristol Bay, Athabascan peoples from Cook Inlet and the Copper River, and the Eyak and Tlingit peoples.

Aleut and Alutiiq peoples are well known for their skill in building kayaks. The split bow made their kayaks faster and more efficient for hunting. It prevented kayaks from sinking under a wave and made the kayak a unique craft among the Native groups¹². Aleut and Alutiiq hunters wore bentwood visors for protection from the sun, to shield the eyes from glare, for navigation, and to protect against spray in the rough seas.

The detail in the design of the visor signified the skill set of the hunter. Aleut people also had vast knowledge of the human body and they embalmed their dead before burying them¹⁹.

The Aleut and Alutiiq culture, social and political organizations were almost decimated by Russian and



American contact. Their success in hunting attracted fur traders to their settlements, including the Russians who greatly influenced their culture and language. Aleut and Alutiiq men were enslaved and forced to procure pelts for the fur trade. Leadership positions in the villages were often determined by the Russian traders or priests, and Creoles, or mixed Russian and Aleut peoples or mixed Russian and Alutiiq people, were given superior treatment in education and employment to full-blooded Aleuts and Alutiiqs¹⁹. Within fifty years of Russian contact, the population of both groups was reduced by more than 80% by disease, enslavement, and killings¹³. To this day, the Russian Orthodox Church plays an important role in the Aleut and Alutiiq peoples' lives. Russian foods are incorporated into their meals and Russian words are present in their vocabulary¹⁰.



H. Peg calendars were developed to help Native people keep track of Orthodox holidays.

lions, halibut, cod, birds, and plants¹². In Aleut culture, there were two social classes, the “free” people and the war captives or slaves. Each Aleut village had a dominant family that provided the chief. The Alutiiq peoples belong to two major groups, the Koniaq and Chugach. The Koniaq peoples lived in small groups with a leader in every village. Leadership was attained by inheritance. Each group of the Chugach peoples had a chief and assistant chief. In both cultures, the chief acted as the primary counselor or advisor in decision-making¹⁹. The Aleut and Alutiiq peoples traded among themselves as well as with Yup'ik peoples

I. An Aleut visor used for hunting and ceremonies.



Haida, Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Eyak

The Haida, Tlingit, Tsimshian and Eyak peoples share a similar culture and depended upon the ocean and rivers for food and travel. The Haida, an Indian group that emigrated from

and migrated to Annette Island in 1887, establishing Metlakatla, which later became a reservation. Eyak traditionally occupied the lands in south-central Alaska from Copper River Delta to Icy Bay¹². These groups were comprised of accomplished boatmen and built large canoes for hunting, fishing, and transportation. Tlingit and Haida peoples relied on a diet of salmon as the primary staple; game, including bear, moose, and small mammals from bow and arrow hunting; and berries and clams¹³. They built permanent winter dwellings and seasonal homes along river banks or saltwater beaches¹¹. Traditional homes were built from red cedar, hemlock, and spruce and were designed with a central fire pit for cooking¹². All four groups had a clan system in which children inherited all rights from their mothers including hunting, fishing, and harvesting rights to the land and the privilege to wear certain clan crests and regalia¹¹.

Eyak, Tlingit, Haida & Tsimshian



The two reciprocating groups are the Raven clan and the Eagle clan¹⁴. Their totem poles are unique among Alaska Native cultural groups.

The Tlingit resisted colonization by Russians and destroyed the Russian forts at Sitka and Yakutat. Contact with Americans was also unfriendly. Americans destroyed the village of Angoon in 1882. These groups were greatly affected by missionary schools, commercial fisheries, mining and timber companies, and the establishment of the Tongass National Forest. These groups are still organized by the traditional clan system and are continually working to revive their languages¹⁹.



J. *This totem pole represents respect for culture.*

the Queen Charlotte Islands of Canada, settled in Southeast Alaska and Prince of Wales Island. The Tlingit were among the first groups to migrate to Alaska¹¹. They settled on the southeast panhandle between Icy Bay and the Dixon Entrance. Traditionally, Tsimshian people inhabited the area between Skeena and Nass Rivers in Canada

K. *Many Tlingit women were expert basket weavers. Photo taken in Southeast Alaska between 1896 and 1913.*



For Further Study

Books:

Hensley, William L. 2009. *Fifty Miles from Tomorrow: A Memoir of Alaska and the Real People*. New York, NY: Farrar Straus and Giroux.

This book provides a detailed account of what life was like growing up Alaska Native during ANCSA.

Case, David S. and David A. Voluck. 2002. *Alaska Natives and American Laws*, 2nd ed. Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska Press.

This book provides a detailed description of the construction of the many laws related to Alaska Native peoples and their government. It provides a political and legal history of the relationship between Alaska Native peoples and the federal government.

Government Publications:

U.S. Department of Interior. 2001. *Alaskan Natives: A Historical and Legal Overview* (ARLIS: E78. A3A435 2001). U.S. Department of the Interior University.

This booklet is a compilation of various sources on Alaska Native peoples and the land that they traditionally occupied, the diversity within Alaska Native cultures and values, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, a short background on American Indian law, protocols for communication with Alaska Native peoples, and useful links.

U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Public Use Management. 1985. *Public Participation Handbook*. Washington, D.C.

This handbook explains the need for public participation. It describes the basics in designing public meetings, helpful techniques for effective meetings, and the analysis of public comments.

Takes Horse, Brenda. 2011. *Working Effectively with Alaska Native Tribes and Organizations* (BLM/ AK/GI-07/004+8160+910). Bureau of Land Management.

This guidebook includes a brief description of the different Alaska Native cultural groups. It also includes a historic timeline of important events in Alaska. It summarizes the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. It discusses the references between the different Alaska Native governments and organizations and provides a list of the Indian entities recognized by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Agency Contacts:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2011. Refuge Information Technicians: Directory List. <http://region7.fws.gov/rit/administration.html>

This frequently updated directory is the most current source of contact information for the Refuge Information Technicians who work as liaisons for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to provide cultural and environmental education in Alaska.

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- ⁷Korsmo, F. L. 1994. "The Alaska Natives" In: Minority Rights Group, Polar Peoples: Self-Determination and Development. London: Minority Rights Publications: 81-104. http://www.alaskool.org/projects/native_gov/ARTICLES/KORSMO/PolarPpls.htm
- ⁸University of Alaska Anchorage and Alaska Pacific University. 2008. Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and Corporations. In Do Alaska Native People Get Free Medical Care? and Other Frequently Asked Questions About Alaska Native Issues and Cultures. <http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/books-of-the-year>
- ⁹Anderson, R. T. 2008. Alaska Native Rights, Statehood, and Unfinished Business. *Tulsa Law Review*, 43, 17-41.
- ¹⁰Alaska Native Heritage Center. (no date). Cultural Descriptions of Alaska's Native Peoples [PDF handbook]. Retrieved from <http://www.alaskanative.net/data/ALASKANATIVE/Files/File/PDF/cgdescriptions.pdf>.
- ¹¹Alaska Travel Industry Association. (no date). Alaska Natives. <http://www.travelalaska.com/Things To Do/Culture Entertainment/Alaska Natives/index.aspx>
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- ²⁰U.S. Department of the Interior. 2011. Policy on Consultation with Indian Tribes. http://alaska.fws.gov/external/pdf/doi_policy_consultation_indian_tribes.pdf

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Figure 1: Alaska Native Heritage Center. Used with permission on April 19, 2012.

Figure 2: Kristen Gilbert, National Wildlife Refuge System, Division of Visitor Services and Fire Management.

Figures 3 and 4: John Brewer, National Wildlife Refuge System, Division of Realty and Natural Resources.

Photos in Appendix III:

A. Alaska's Digital Archives. <http://vilda.alaska.edu/u/?cdmg3,154>

B. Alaska's Digital Archives. <http://vilda.alaska.edu/u/?cdmg21,10340>

C. Alaska's Digital Archives. <http://vilda.alaska.edu/u/?cdmg21,7796>

D. U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

E. Flickr. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/stevelewalready>

F. U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

G. Alaska's Digital Archives. <http://vilda.alaska.edu/u/?cdmg21,5585>

H. Alaska's Digital Archives. <http://vilda.alaska.edu/u/?cdmg3,126>

I. Alaska's Digital Archives. <http://vilda.alaska.edu/u/?cdmg21,12977>

J. Minerva J. Dorantes.

K. Alaska's Digital Archives. <http://vilda.alaska.edu/u/?cdmg21,9779>



Steel shot clinics are held around the state.

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