National Resource Center for Alaska Native Elders

Jordan P. Lewis, PhD, MSW, CPG
Unangan/Aleut, Native Village of Naknek
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Introduction

- The Administration for Community Living/Administration on Aging (ACL/AoA) currently funds three Resource Centers for Older Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.
- These centers provide culturally-responsive health care, community-based long-term care, and related services.
- They serve as the focal points for developing and sharing technical information and expertise for Native American organizations, Native American communities, educational institutions, and professionals working with elders.
Personal background

- Unangan/Aleut (Alaska Native)
- Commercial fishing background
- Pivotal role of family and Elders:
  - Great grandparents, late Paul & Anna Chukan
  - Grandparents, late Gordon & Anisha McCormick
  - Elders in village of Naknek
Educational Training

- BSW - University of Alaska Fairbanks (1999)
- MSW - Washington University in St. Louis (2000)
  - Gerontology concentration
- Ph.D. - University of Alaska Fairbanks (2009)
  - Cross Cultural Community Psychology
  - Dissertation: *Successful aging through the eyes of Alaska Native Elders: What it means to be an Elder in Bristol Bay, Alaska*
- Certificate: Geriatric Care Management (2010)
Washington University in St. Louis

University of Alaska Fairbanks
Training & Skills

- Community-based participatory research
- Positive psychology
- Macro approaches to community wellbeing
- Elder Needs Assessments to mobilize community resources
  - Build on currently existing strengths
- Social Work Principles
- Community Psychology Principles
Elder Mentors
Washington, DC

- Morris K. Udall Native American Congressional Fellowship Program (Senator Tom Daschle, D-SD)
- Kaiser Native American Health Policy Fellowship (Rep. Frank Pallone, D-NJ)
- First Nations Development Institute
- National Conference of State Legislatures
- National Congress of American Indians
- National Indian Health Board
Map of AK road system
About Alaska

- Alaska is home to at least twenty distinct indigenous languages.
- Multiple cultural groups (Aleut, Alutiiq, Athabascan, Inupiat, Tlingit/Haida/Tsimshian, Yup’ik).
- 229 federally recognized villages
  - 80% of villages are off the road system and only accessible by air or boat
Challenges of rural aging

- High cost of living
- Lack of affordable and accessible health care services
- Loss of mobility, becoming more disabled
- Financial resources (fuel/gas assistance)
- Lack of caregivers/family to provide care
  - Outmigration of family
Why travel to remote villages?

- Elders know best what is needed in their community, and not every community in Alaska has the same needs.
- Listening sessions allow the Alaska NRC to directly outreach to Elder’s, their families and caregivers, and professionals in service delivery in the community.
- Establishes relationships and promotes better communication
Mode of transportation
St. George - Pribilof Islands
Unalakleet
NW Alaska (Norton Sound)
Angoon, Kake - SE Alaska
Unalaska - Aleutian Islands
Current research projects

- SAMHSA Intergenerational suicide prevention grant (2017-2020)
- NSF Arctic Social Sciences, Successful Aging in Northwest, Aleutian, and urban Alaska (2016-2019)
- AIAN CTRP Pilot Study, Alaska Native dementia caregivers and health care providers
- Traditional foods and reminiscence therapy for Alaska Native nursing home residents - AMHTA
- Walking well, aging well (AIAN CTRP)
Why healthy aging?

- Grew up with great grandparents and both sets of grandparents, who are my role models.
- Lack of AI/AN perspectives in the successful aging and addictions literature.
- Gerontology literature focuses on disease model of aging.
- My research emphasizes the positive aspects of aging.
  - Emphasize the value of our AI/AN Elders and their teachings on how to live healthy, productive, lives.
New NRC-ANE Team Members

► Jordan Lewis - Director
► Sheila Shinn - Project Manager
► Jeremiah Lewis - Project Coordination & Communication
► Thomas Moore - IT, Web design
► Two UAA MSW Social Work Practicum students - TBA
► UAA undergraduate research student
NRC-ANE Advisory Council

- Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) Elder Advisory Committee
- We are committed to honor and respecting the direct guidance and mentoring by Alaska Native Elders along with re-establishing community (tribal, local, state, federal) throughout Alaska
Overarching Goal of NRC-ANE

- It is our vision to develop and grow the NRC-ANE to be an Elder-centered and community-based resource center where Elders’ and communities’ voices are solicited, respected, and heard.
- NRC-ANE resources meet the needs of our Elders, families, communities, and agencies while honoring and respecting cultural values, teachings, and beliefs.
NRC-ANE Priority Areas

- Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementia (ADRD)
- Elder Disrespect & Elder Justice
- Successful Aging and Positive Outcomes
- Intergenerational Relationships
- Traditional Foods and reminiscence activities
- Training, education, research, and technical assistance on these topics and others
Listening Sessions

- Solicit local input and recommendations on training, education, and research needs from the Elder’s themselves.

- These sessions will also be an opportunity for us to bring the “Identifying our Needs” survey developed by NRCNAA to host discussions from communities to culturally adapt the survey questions to reflect the unique culture and subsistence practices of our communities.
“Tea and a giggle”
Upcoming priority initiative - Alaska Native Elder’s State Plan on Aging

- Partnership with the NRCNAA at the UND to secure the aggregate data on ANE from across the State of Alaska. The aggregate data will be prepared in a formal report format to be distributed to the Title VI Directors, NRC-ANE tribal and non-tribal partners, and other interested parties for review and feedback.

- Partner with the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACOA) to structure the ANE State Plan to accompany the ACOA State Plan for Elders.

- Develop a Title III and Title VI workgroup committed to developing this plan - initiative begins September 2018

- Partner with ANTHC Epi Center and others
This is part of the NRC-ANE’s initiative of providing more comprehensive technical assistance to Title III and Title VI Director’s.

Outcomes will shape the focus of the FY19 work for the NRC. Current requests for grant guidance and support, resources for local Elders, and developing local partnerships to leverage scarce resources.
Areas of Research focus for FY19

- Indigenous Foods training and education for assisted living and nursing homes, also family and community caregivers

- FY19 - the NRC-ANE, in partnership with the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority will study the effects of culturally adapting Reminiscence Therapy (RT) with indigenous foods for Elder’s with ADRD’s.

- RT has proven effective with persons with ADRD but to our knowledge, foods have never been tested for efficacy

- Goal is to create training and education in RT and indigenous foods for the Long-Term Care providers across Alaska, to reduce “challenging behaviors”

- Can be disseminated to numerous other groups
Thank you!
We look forward to working with you all in the future! Thank you for your time!

Visit our new website for updates and resources:

http://elders.uaa.alaska.edu