

RIVER-WIDE APPROACH

**Expanding Tribal Capacity to Mitigate and Adapt to Climate Impacts in
Interior Alaska Native Communities**



Submitted to: Alaska Venture Fund

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April 4, 2023

Harvard Kennedy School Master in Public Policy Candidates, Class of 2023

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Land Acknowledgment, Acknowledgment of Traditional Knowledge, and Appreciation

Our home research institution is located on the ancestral and unceded territories of the Massachusetts People, which is now referred to by some as Cambridge, Massachusetts. We were also hosted as guests on Dena'ina Athabascan land and the land of the Troth Yeddha' Dena people of the Lower Tanana River in Anchorage and Fairbanks, Alaska. We acknowledge and honor the ancestral and present stewardship and place-based knowledge of the peoples of these territories and strive to learn from their example. Readers can learn more about land acknowledgments from the Native Governance Center.

We want to acknowledge the contributions and support provided by the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development (the “Harvard Project”)— in particular, our advisor, Professor Joe Kalt, and Megan Hill, Director of the Honoring Nations Program at Harvard. The Harvard Project provided a multitude of resources and extended connections to leaders throughout Alaska and Indian Country that proved invaluable for this project.

We would also like to appreciate the collaboration with our client, the Alaska Venture Fund (AVF). Our teammates and collaborators through this effort, Program Directors Jonella Larson and Dr. Stephanie Quinn-Davidson, were incredible to work with and learn from. We respect the vision you advance through your work, and are grateful that you extended us your time, friendship, and trust. We hope our report can play a small role in supporting AVF's bold mission.

Finally, we appreciate the time that our interviewees spent sharing their on-the-ground realities. We hold your stories with care and take seriously the concerns and calls to action you shared with us. Our research is grounded in participants' deep knowledge of and relationship to Alaska's ecosystems, and the stories of their homes.



“You do this job because it’s not really just a job. It’s my home. I’ve been to almost every community on the Yukon, even in Canada.

We’re all connected to this river and the resources it provides. I hope my children can fish on the river one day.”^{1, 2}



“When you think about policies that regulate hunting and fishing on our lands and waters — all these different regulatory agencies and the models that can’t really keep up with how fast climate change is happening.”³



“We’re struggling. Our freezers are empty. Our smokehouses are empty. We’re not able to have our celebrations.”⁴



“Even when I went home, looking at indicators, it was really strange to see for myself the change in that short period of time.”⁵



“It’s like medicine. Our native food. When we get it, we feel healthier and better. Especially for our elders.”⁶



¹ Interviewee 17

² Throughout this report, we have cited interviewees, who will be referred to as Interviewee [#]. Out of respect for their privacy, we have not cited them by name. The important content is what their interviews conveyed. For a brief description of each interviewee’s identity and positionality to this research, see Appendix “Interviewee Pseudonym.”

³ Interviewee 5

⁴ Interviewee 16

⁵ Interviewee 17

⁶ Interviewee 18

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Executive Summary

While Alaska Natives have always been intimately involved in the stewardship of Alaskan ecosystems, their lifestyles and cultural practices are threatened as ecosystems rapidly decline due to climate change. Three of the most pressing risks to Interior Alaska Native tribes are wildfire, salmon decline, and permafrost melt.

Due to the fragmented nature of public funding programs and land management authorities, work to address climate impacts amongst Alaska Native communities tends to become siloed and reactionary. Because of this, community engagement also tends to be organized around one crisis and not the other. The Alaska Venture Fund (AVF) is launching a grant program to fund locally-led climate resiliency programs amongst Interior Alaska Tribes to answer: **what solutions for community resilience and better stewardship of ecosystems lay at the intersection of these three climate crises and within Indigenous communities?**

Two students at the Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) of Government attempted to answer this question through interviews with partners across grassroots organizations, state and federal government, and tribal leadership. The goal of this research is to more deeply understand success factors and pain points of existing tribally-led climate impact efforts, and to inform funding opportunities with these findings. Please note, this report is not analyzing the substantive steps that tribes should be taking in regards to climate change mitigation. Rather, this report provides an analysis of tribes' organizational capacity to be in a good position to mitigate and adapt to climate impacts.

Based on their data collection and learned lessons analysis, the research team developed the following options for AVF and possible future funders to consider:

Options Looking Forward	
Beaver-Level	Climate Mitigation Block Grants (CMBGs): A Performance-Based Block Grant
	Climate Community Champions
Crane-Level	River-Wide Data Sovereignty
	BIA Green Book: Climate Budget Advocacy Campaign
	Parallel Leadership Pipelines
Across Crane and Beaver: Target	Mobilizing Communities for Systems-Level Change

The report is structured into four overarching theme-based chapters: 1) Funding, 2) Transformative Intertribal Collaborations, 3) Tribal Advocacy, and 4) Long-Term Resilience. In each chapter the team has highlighted the pain points and needs they heard from community members and, from these, generated lessons learned, which are summarized in the table below.

Ch. 1: Funding

Pain Points	Needs	Lessons Learned
<p><i>“Most funders give money for very narrow things [...] You have to fit whatever project they want to get done in their little box. [...] Having fewer restrictions would be good for their tribes [...] What the funders want them to do is not actually what the tribes want to use it for.”</i></p> <p><i>“We’ve been doing this now for 6-7 years and we’re still competing for funds...we’re here and we’ve proven we’re here to stay, we shouldn’t have to compete anymore.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More funding opportunities in higher amounts • Non-competitive • Unrestricted • Recurring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recurring, unrestricted funding within climate and resource management would address capacity issues • Recurring funding based in BIA Greenbook would ensure that tribes can rely on annual funding and avoid competition • A block grant model may address capacity issues

Ch. 2: Transformative Intertribal Collaborations

Pain Points	Needs	Lessons Learned
<p><i>“Each org in [our coalition], before they had staff, would bring together volunteers to facilitate meetings, take notes, etc.”</i></p> <p><i>“The critical key to success that gets overlooked so often [...] is that success is impossible and will not occur unless your entire work and advocacy plan is rooted in and led by the tribal governments and tribal governmental organizations.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support for existing collaboration effort • Structures that ensure participation across villages • Improved coordination between tribes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intertribal collaborations are important for any sort of success, but are under-supported • Co-management is a potential avenue to strengthen tribal sovereignty, but must be led by the tribes themselves • Intertribal Resource Management Commissions provide formal avenues for intergovernmental relationships between tribal, state, and federal government

Ch. 3: Tribal Advocacy

Pain Points	Needs	Lessons Learned
<p><i>“Not just monitoring for monitoring’s sake. Trying to show up so we have access and keep livelihood alive. Whether or not it happens depends on all these incredibly entrenched power structures. What is data used for? For us as indigenous people, we want to shift the system that works for us.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data sovereignty • Grassroots mobilization • Community champions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community engagement organizations require additional support • Data sovereignty initiatives offer opportunities to strengthen tribal advocacy power and educational and employment opportunities • Community champions were highlighted as an effective tribal advocacy model, but further research is required to replicate such programs

Ch. 4: Long-Term Resilience

Pain Points	Needs	Lessons Learned
<p><i>“If we had more money, we’d hire more employees, buy more equipment, have a bigger office space...be able to do more in-river, locally employed, involved with fish management...build a pipeline.”</i></p> <p><i>“Projects fall off because we don’t have capacity to write these grants for projects... like youth development ones.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and youth development • Pathways to federal positions • Expanding Alaska Native Leadership in Federal Agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building talent pipelines for future climate and resource management leadership is essential • Parallel pipelines for tribal community members to take leadership and administrative roles unlocks long-term strategic change • Increasing tribal representation in federal agencies has the potential for transformative impact

Introduction

“We need a whole system option. Can’t just focus on one part of the ecosystem and think that’s going to have an impact.”⁷

Background

Climate Change in Alaska and the Yukon River

Alaska maintains most of the nation’s largest intact ecosystems and is a critical region for freshwater sources and fisheries. Alaska is also facing some of the most rapid and dangerous effects of climate change today, with impacts disproportionately falling on Alaska Native communities. Three of the most pressing harms for Alaska Native communities are fire, permafrost melt, and salmon decline.

“For the last three years we haven’t really fished. It’s caused a lot of challenges for our people. We grew up getting a ton of salmon and now there is none. Me, personally, I have seen health issues that weren’t there before — [my] vitamin D levels are low.”⁸

“Everything they do, from their subsistence activities to taking care of their home or children, really all revolved around the salmon.”⁹

“Forced participation in the food systems is what is hurting us. It makes us a stakeholder and a shareholder in this terrible industry, instead of being a stakeholder in our own food security in our own lands.”¹⁰

Alaska has the highest proportion of Indigenous peoples of any state¹¹ and, as such, is uniquely positioned to incorporate Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK) into their comprehensive climate mitigation and adaptation efforts. In November 2021, President Joe Biden released a memo indicating that, “where appropriate, ITEK can and should inform Federal decision making along with scientific inquiry [...] the Fourth National Climate Assessment recognized and incorporated ITEK as an important information source for improving the understanding of climate change and environmental sustainability over time, and for developing

⁷ Interviewee 15

⁸ Interviewee 15

⁹ Interviewee 17

¹⁰ Interviewee 14

¹¹ *Alaska Native Peoples* | *Alaska Federation of Natives*. <https://www.nativefederation.org/alaska-native-peoples/>.

comprehensive climate adaptation and natural resource management strategies.”¹² As such, there is momentum to start incorporating ITEK into national policy making as well.

Indigenous leaders and climate advocates in Alaska are faced with a difficult dichotomy: to protect subsistence resources as they have always done, or to begin new practices operating under the assumption of a permanently changed landscape. In other words, advocates and tribal leaders have different perspectives on issues of **adaptation vs. mitigation**. Much of the work currently happening in Alaska is more focused on mitigation via managing sustenance resources, such as critical species and water. Additional challenges arise, however, when so many outcomes for sustenance resources lay outside of tribes’ control. As one interviewee stated, *“it’s a challenge when most of your energy and time is spent on managing people’s use of the resource, rather than the resource itself.”*¹³

Client Information and AVF’s Broad Intersectional Work to Address these Issues

The Alaska Venture Fund (AVF) is a philanthropic partner and social-change incubator, focused on building a more sustainable future for Alaska. AVF focuses on Alaska as a “blueprint for a more just and prosperous future” because it is a place of “outsized impact” and “outsized opportunity.”¹⁴ AVF’s mission is to “pursue bold ideas and innovative partnerships to empower local talent and drive transformative change,” by embracing Indigenous principles, choosing sustainable strategies, and investing in new economies.¹⁵ The organization has set an ambitious goal of seeing meaningful, systemic change by 2030 in direct connection to their works.

Impetus for this research project came from an influx of funding AVF received from Margaret A Cargill Philanthropies (MACP) to support community- and indigenous-led work at the nexus of three climate disasters: increased wildfire risk, melting permafrost, and salmon declines. (See *Appendix F, MACP Funding Concept*.) The current problem, as outlined by AVF, is two-fold:

1. Due to the fragmented nature of public funding programs and land management authorities, much of the work to address climate impacts (wildfire, permafrost melt, and salmon decline) are siloed and reactionary; and
2. Because of this, community engagement also tends to be organized around one crisis and not the other.

AVF’s proposed solution to this problem is to support and uplift locally-led climate resiliency and adaptation programs amongst interior Alaska Tribes.

¹² Prabhakar, Arati and Mallory, Brenda. *Memorandum for Heads of Federal Departments and Agencies: Guidance for Federal Departments and Agencies on Indigenous Knowledge*. Executive Office of the President: Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Joint Statement. November 30, 2022.

¹³ Interviewee 16

¹⁴ Alaska Venture Fund. *Home | Alaska Venture Fund*. <https://alaskaventure.org/>.

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

AVF and their partners propose to develop a new and integrated, community-based approach to building community resilience and addressing climate change within the Yukon and Kuskokwim watersheds. With seed funding from MACP, AVF will: *Complete a formal lesson-learned analysis of tribal and grassroots coalitions and agency efforts in the Yukon and Kuskokwim watersheds.* The HKS research team is meant to help inform AVF’s initial outreach by providing a “lesson-learned analysis” about the following research question: **What solutions for community resilience and better stewardship of ecosystems lay at the intersection of these climate disasters, funding challenges, and within Indigenous communities?** The goals of the HKS research team are to:

1. Provide AVF with options to consider based on learnings from on-the-ground Alaska Native resource management experts and community leaders; and
2. Provide tools and support for upcoming research on these topics.

If AVF can better understand what is and isn’t working in this large geographic region and share these learnings with communities and partners, they can equip Interior Alaska Native communities to build and expand culturally-connected climate adaptation efforts, and demonstrate critical, high-impact funding needs to philanthropies.

Criteria for Options

The following criteria were selected in conversation with AVF as well as professionals engaged in resource management, climate advocacy, and tribal nonprofit administration.¹⁶

Criteria		
Foster stronger intertribal relationships and collaboration	Secure healthy lives and community wellness now and for future generations	Expand capacity to mitigate climate harms in ways that are healthy and sustainable
Strengthen self-determination and sovereignty	Promote indigenous-led and uplifting indigenous knowledge and values	Empower Alaska Native Tribes to respond to climate impacts through targeted funding

These criteria are tailored to AVF’s seven-year time frame to make systemic change by 2030 and their position in intertribal affairs, as AVF is not involved in building people’s governance structures or networking between tribes. The research team used these six criteria to develop options for consideration for AVF and other potential funders (*see Chapter 5, Options for Consideration*).

¹⁶ Notably, this set of criteria was developed in conversation with Alaska Native tribal leaders at the Tanana Chiefs Convention (TCC) Convening in March 2023. For more information about the process and methodology, please refer to Appendices.

Chapter 1: Funding

Background: How Tribes Acquire Funding for Resource Management

“Federal and state funding prescribed narratives and projects...these will never lead to the solutions we all seek for our children and fish.”¹⁷

Alaska Native tribal nonprofits receive funding through a myriad of sources. These funds are typically distributed to individual tribes or consortia of tribes to administer services to their communities. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), housed under the Department of the Interior (DOI), is the primary federal agency maintaining the federal government-to-government relationship with the federally recognized Indian tribes.¹⁸ In addition to implementing federal laws and policies, the BIA administers many of the federal funding streams available to tribal governments and nonprofits.¹⁹ Tribes also access funding through appropriations from the state government, including the Office of the Governor and State Departments of Fish and Game.

Limited State Funding

While the federal government provides significant financial support, state sources are less reliable for Alaska tribes. As one interviewee explained, *“The State of Alaska puts up a lot of barriers...the state constitution doesn’t work well with tribes...the constitution actually never recognized tribes before this year. The federal government in general is way more open, DOI in particular.”*²⁰ This comment extends beyond funding—to policy development and collaborative agreements—but illuminates why federal funding is a greater priority for tribal entities. Tribes receive certain monies from the state, but these are typically federal funds disbursed to the state and mandated to be dispersed to tribal entities.

Philanthropic Funding: Enter AVF

Philanthropy, when leveraged with public funds, has the opportunity to make large impacts with relatively small investments. Historically, philanthropy has overlooked direct funding to tribes. These trends are beginning to shift, however, as foundations and other funders see that tribes are more effective when their sovereignty is respected to administer culturally-relevant programs.²¹

Where direct private funding does exist, there are still significant challenges. On-the-ground interviewees referenced burdensome grant writing and reporting requirements, which tax already overloaded tribal entities and often exclude these entities from applying for the grant at all. One

¹⁷ Interviewee 3

¹⁸ “Frequently Asked Questions | Indian Affairs.” <https://www.bia.gov/frequently-asked-questions>.

¹⁹ The DOI has numerous other funding streams for tribes to manage natural resources, including, but not limited to, the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

²⁰ Interviewee 8

²¹ The Harvard Project on American Indian Development asserts this as a core pillar of their work.

interviewee described many existing philanthropic mechanisms as “*white-washed*” and referred to philanthropy as “*the pressure valve of capitalism.*”²²

Alaska Venture Fund is keenly aware that existing funding structures are falling short of the ideal “whole ecosystem approach,” which is why they’ve embarked on innovative approaches to fund tribally-led initiatives. Below are the most tangible pain points, needs, and findings that surfaced through interviews with front-line practitioners.

Pain Points: Siloed, Competitive, Limited, and Unreliable Funding

Interviews revealed further nuance around the ways in which current funding models are experienced as siloed, competitive, limited, and unreliable.

Natural resources, tribal courts, and other institutions focused on climate mitigation are not afforded base funding needed to operate. In fact, several interviewees shared that there is often not enough funding to employ one full-time staff person for tribal management of natural resources. Commercialization of resources has been the primary state and federal incentive historically. As such, funding for climate mitigation was categorized as “*wholly mismanaged.*”²³

In particular, multiple people referenced how restricted funding prevents tribal nonprofits from investing strategically in macro-level change, such as policy. As one interviewee engaged in ground-level efforts succinctly stated, “*there’s so much more we want to do, [like] advocacy [and] policy work, but we don’t have the money to do it.*”²⁴ Often, grant opportunities do not cover what tribal entities want to pursue: gathering local and cultural knowledge.²⁵

The siloed nature of the funding further restricts specific project areas and leaves administrators undersupported: “*Funding for general admin support is really crucial in any non-profit organization...lack of admin funding really causes burnout.*”²⁶ Lack of administrative support and the need to apply for funding year after year exacerbates burnout amongst those on the frontline. Funding also tends to be restricted to one resource or usable for specific geographic regions, particularly when coming from state or federal sources. As one interviewee stated, “*It’s funny [with] the state and the feds with the checkerboard thing...it’s like you have state and federal lands, you pass a line and all the sudden ‘it’s not a federal fish.’*”²⁷

Unreliable funding also limits long-term, creative planning. One interviewee referenced how dependable funding would allow their organization to embark upon multi-year projects and

²² Interviewee 3

²³ Interviewee 3

²⁴ Interviewee 17

²⁵ Interviewee 17

²⁶ Interviewee 17

²⁷ Interviewee 7

provide career-track employment opportunities. Instead, their organization relies on volunteers and seeks out in-kind donations to keep some programs running. As a result, their initiatives are more standalone: *“We can do cool projects, but to do a cool program is different.”*²⁸

The siloed, competitive, limited, and unreliable funding limits tribal capacity to face current crises and engage in long-term efforts. This reality is especially poignant for tribal decision-makers who repeatedly highlighted the difficult position they regularly face of having to drop projects. Per Interviewee 17, *“projects fall off because we don’t have capacity to write these grants for those projects.”*²⁹ As such, some innovative solutions to climate resiliency in Interior Alaska never see the light of day. In particular, interviewees stressed that the projects that they most frequently have to drop are those for youth and workforce development. Per interviewees, the lack of programs such as these are particularly damaging as they present opportunities to create talent pipelines for future-oriented resilience.

Needs: Alternative Funding Models

In summary, interviewees repeatedly referenced that the most effective funding is **non-competitive, unrestricted, and recurring**. Financial support with these qualities would address the repeated concern that prescribed funding mechanisms by state and federal governments leave little flexibility for tribally-led initiatives to manage resources. The following case studies provide examples for funding models that have more effectively met these needs.

²⁸ Interviewee 5

²⁹ Interviewee 17

Case Study on Block Grant Model for Tribal Infrastructure: COVID Relief Funding

“Not a lot of strings...and a lot more”

President Joe Biden signed the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), a federal stimulus bill to aid public health and economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, on March 11, 2021. ARPA allocated \$20 billion to Tribal governments, directing that (i) \$1 billion is to be allocated equally among eligible Tribal governments and (ii) \$19 billion is to be allocated to Tribal governments in a manner determined by the Secretary of the Treasury.

Consultation with over 1,200 tribal leaders across the nation yielded recommendations on how funds should be allocated across nations. Two recommendations included “wide latitude for sovereign nations to determine the best use of funds to meet the goals of the American Rescue Plan within their communities,” and that “indirect administrative costs be permitted as an eligible use of funds.”³⁰

Numerous interviewees referenced ARPA funding as a uniquely successful model that enabled greater flexibility and capacity for addressing tribal needs. As one interviewee stated, *“the money was good because it didn’t have a lot of strings attached...and was a lot more.”*³¹ Other interviewees referenced how, due to the unrestricted, flexible nature of the allocations, ARPA funding enabled tribes to invest in long-lasting infrastructure that will significantly improve service provision.³²

³⁰ *Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Allocations to Tribal Governments*. US Department of Treasury, Summary of Tribal Consultations Relating to the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. July 19, 2021.

³¹ Interviewee 15

³² Interviewee 15

Local Decision-Making through Federal Funding: Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC)

“Tribal governments in Alaska run the most successful socialized healthcare in the world.”³³

Many interviewees highlighted Indian Health Services (IHS) and Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) as a successful model of funding for researchers to examine. Per Interviewee 3, *“tribal governments in Alaska run the most successful socialized healthcare in the world.”³⁴*

In 1994, Congress authorized a Tribal Self-Governance Demonstration Project within the IHS, giving federally recognized Tribes the option of entering into self-governance compacts to gain more autonomy in the management and delivery of their health care programs.³⁵ The ANTHC model enables local tribal health organizations to assume management over IHS-service unit hospitals.

Today, Alaska Native health care is managed through a compact agreement across all 229 tribes in the state. It is funded through a combination of federal funding along with insurance and private, state, and federal grants. According to ANTHC, “In Alaska, tribal management of health care recognizes the importance of local decision making for the unique health needs of the Tribal members served.”³⁶ This funding model enables federal funding to be routed through more locally-connected tribal nonprofit service providers, who are able to provide culturally competent care to their communities.

³³ Interviewee 3

³⁴ Interviewee 3

³⁵ “*Our Health in Our Hands: The Path to Tribally Managed Health Care in Alaska, 1950s to Today.*” Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium on behalf of the Alaska Tribal Health System.

³⁶ “*Overview.*” Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, 8 Dec. 2015, <https://www.anthc.org/who-we-are/overview/>.

Chapter 1 Lessons Learned

Based on the pain points and needs highlighted by interviewees—mainly the need to correct for the siloed, competitive, limited, and unreliable funding that restricts current and future tribal capacity—and the key takeaways from successful funding model case studies in this chapter, the research team has developed the following three lessons.

1. Recurring, unrestricted, non-competitive funding to tribal partners for natural resource management and climate change mitigation would address capacity issues and mirror funding models from other disciplines.

In order to manage natural resources and engage in mitigation efforts, tribes need recurring, unrestricted, and non-competitive funding. Capital like this gives tribes the most autonomy to address their pain points, needs, and capacity issues. This takeaway came from people with many different tribal affiliations, highlighting how these partners could tailor such monies to the specific needs of their communities.

Ideal funding would have limited application and reporting requirements, and be guaranteed annually following a set of clear, tribally-set goals. This would benefit tribes because they could allocate financial resources for whatever their greatest need is at the time, such as creating full-time staff positions—a use to which many interviewees stated they would allocate additional funding, given the opportunity.

“Most funders give money for very narrow things [...] You have to fit whatever project they want to get done in their little box. [...] Having fewer restrictions would be good for their tribes [...] What the funders want them to do is not actually what the tribes want to use it for.”³⁷

While there is already significant recurring, unrestricted and non-competitive monies that go to the tribal nonprofits, they are typically not towards climate mitigation. IHS, for example, disperses millions of dollars for Alaska Native healthcare, which tribes are able to use in the way they believe is best for their communities under the umbrella of tribal wellness. Similarly, ARPA funds provided relatively high amounts of cash flow with limited restrictions so long as the funds were used for services that benefit the community.

AVF and other funders could help funnel grants to tribes that are not unrestricted within the theme area of climate mitigation and resource management. Further, AVF can help—as they currently do with other projects—alleviate some of the funders’ reporting requirements.

³⁷ Interviewee 15

2. Recurring funding through the BIA Green Book would ensure that tribes don't have to compete for funding and can accept annual influx.

“Ideally they'd be put in the Green Book — appropriated money that's there every single year, instead of having to compete against it.”³⁸

One way to help ensure that tribes are receiving recurring funding would be for AVF to utilize their connections in the federal government (including, but not limited to, their federal delegation) to advocate for federally allocated money. It's important to note that, as a 501c3, AVF is not able to lobby or advocate for specific pieces of legislation or for candidates. The Green Book is a comprehensive guide for financial institutions that receive and send payments to the federal government. There could be significant long-term impacts of having BIA commit a budgetary line item in its Green Book.³⁹ Having appropriated money—i.e., funds tribes can expect to receive—frees up time and energy typically needed to apply and compete for that funding. With climate mitigation and resource mitigation resources allocated through BIA's Green Book budget, tribes could begin planning and engaging in proactive rather than reactive measures.

3. Unrestricted, recurring, performance-based funding allocated to climate through the block grant model may address capacity issues amongst tribal partners.

A block grant is a grant-in-aid from a larger government to a smaller regional government body.⁴⁰ Compared to other types of grants, block grants tend to have less oversight and requirements and provide recipients with more flexibility and freedom in terms of designing and implementing programs.⁴¹ There's strong and growing evidence that funding that maximizes tribal control over the details of projects (like balancing overhead and functional monies, for example) tends to produce far better outcomes than funding that is more dictated by benefactors who exert line-item expenditures to manage micro-level implementations.⁴²

“We're constantly seeking funding. Having annual agreements in place and not having to compete for funds would be huge. We've been doing this now for 6-7 years and we're still competing for funds...we're here and we've proven we're here to stay, we shouldn't have to compete anymore.”⁴³

³⁸ Interviewee 8

³⁹ For example, climate impacts and community's response will change over time: The money needed in 10 years will be put towards different challenges than it will be in 50 years.

⁴⁰ Finegold, Kenneth; Wherry, Laura; Schardin, Stephanie. *Block Grants: Details of the Bush Proposals*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute. 2004.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Jorgensen, Miriam. *Rebuilding Native Nations: Strategies for Governance and Development*. University of Arizona Press, 2007, p. 15.

⁴³ Interviewee 8

More ground-level implementation control with fewer requirements does not mean a complete lack of monitoring or oversight or reporting, but encourages performance-based assessment rather than process-based assessments.⁴⁴ For a **Climate Mitigation Block Grant (CMBG)**, in particular, this would entail a bucketed allocation of funding to be used on climate adaptation, mitigation, and resiliency projects.

Metrics for the necessary substance and outcomes under this model are guided by conversations between the funder and beneficiary, i.e., outcomes are set in collaboration with tribes. As such, discussions grounded in tribal capacity and based on community-specific needs would generate outcome targets to meet baseline conditions that the whole team—benefactor and beneficiary alike—want.⁴⁵ This creates:

1. More adaptive funding needs, which is especially crucial in climate resiliency work;
2. Reduced burden on communities with excessive (and often outdated) reporting requirements; and
3. Accountability without micromanagement, as good outcomes would provide the necessary rationale for future funding.

While block grants are a model that untie strings often associated in tribal funding schemes and can result in better performance, these grants are typically done through the federal government. As such, there are programmatic limitations in replicating this model through philanthropic measures and AVF would likely not be able to reproduce it exactly. Fortunately, the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development (the “Harvard Project”) has done research into the block grant framework and could present an area of overlapping interest and collaboration for AVF and future benefactors looking to fund Alaska Interior climate resiliency and tribal autonomy projects.

⁴⁴As mentioned earlier, AVF is already engaged in supporting reporting requirements tribes have to produce for grants they receive and could continue to perform these tasks to alleviate the burden on tribal partners under a block grant model.

⁴⁵ In other words, specific outcome targets would be the product of negotiations between tribes and their funders.

Chapter 2: Transformative Intertribal Collaborations

A consistent theme across interviews was the need for more intertribal collaborations. This chapter explores why, despite high general interest in and recognition of the importance of intertribal collaborations, significant barriers persist. While many respondents referenced barriers to collaboration, however, they did not want to share specifics as to how these obstacles were currently impacting and/or preventing the success of intertribal alliances. Due to interviewees' hesitation in broaching the subject and the limited and subjective insight the research team has into the political and personal complications at play, inferences about the interpersonal barriers to collaboration are not included in the *lesson-learned analysis* portion at the end of the chapter. Before covering the lessons learned, Chapter 2 outlines critical context for intertribal collaborations, highlights the pain points and needs from interviewees, and explores three topics related to successful intertribal work (cultural match, participation structures, and co-management).

Background and Context

While sharing many things in common, Alaska Native communities are distinct in their experiences of climate impacts. For example, tribes highly dependent on salmon for subsistence in areas that are disconnected from the highway system will be more vulnerable to food shortages than those who can import food alternatives from an urban center.⁴⁶ Some tribes can more easily access urban centers to lobby at the state and federal level, while others in deeply rural villages are unable to get facetime with their elected officials.

There are also conflicts of interest between communities. Tribes who rely on certain resources for revenue generation are often in direct conflict with tribes who want to protect the use of those resources. As explained by Interviewee 16, their *“more traditional economy is hitting someone else’s cash economy. Instead of trying to figure out what that root cause is, we fight against each other. They need a cash economy and we need a traditional one to feed our families and sustain our culture.”*⁴⁷ These relationships between tribes can impact the foundation of tribal alliances. Alaska tribal corporations also have decades-long political histories that can conflict with one another.⁴⁸ The tribal corporation model has created artificial borders between communities that impede collaboration efforts: *“Since ANCSA, we all think regionally.”*⁴⁹

⁴⁶ “Climate Impacts in Alaska | Climate Change Impacts | US EPA.”
<https://climatechange.chicago.gov/climate-impacts/climate-impacts-alaska>.

⁴⁷ Interviewee 16

⁴⁸ For the purposes of this analysis, the research team decided (in conversation with AVF) not to outline the complexities of the regional and village corporations. For more information on the role and function of Alaska Native Corporations or ANCs, see subsection “Alaska in Comparison to Lower 48” in the Appendix.

⁴⁹ Interviewee 19

Finally, Alaska Native tribes have a long history of attempting to collaborate with federal and state agencies, only for their sovereignty to be undermined—a pattern that created a lack of trust when establishing cross-governmental agreements. While this context helps illuminate some of the difficulties of intertribal collaboration, there are certain pain points and needs which can be addressed through targeted funding and improved coordination and participation structures.

Pain Points: Underfunded Coalitions, Burnout, and Unequal Participation

Despite collaboration between tribes and with outside agencies highlighted as a key priority, interviewees shared many pain points on this topic. The research team repeatedly heard that organizations supporting coordination between tribes are sparsely (if at all) funded and that people are burnt out and spread thin.

Many tribal collaboration efforts are run by volunteers serving in unpaid positions. Interviewee 8 shared that *“before [their organization] had staff, [they] would bring together volunteers to facilitate meetings, take notes, etc.”*⁵⁰ Agencies that are staffed reported challenges of burnout and job creep—a phenomenon in which organizations continually require increasing amounts of work relative to normal requirements at similar agencies.

Needs: Financial Support, Balanced Participation, and Improved Coordination Efforts

A consistent theme across interviews was the need for Alaska Native tribes to approach policy change or advocacy with a unified voice. Interviewees highlighted the importance of coordination roles for keeping track of all of the work happening on the ground across villages. One interviewee shared:

*“Bringing together multiple stakeholders in the same room is incredibly powerful—corporations, tribal leadership, etc. [The work] often happens in silos and turns into a fight when it doesn’t need to be. These organizations are creating a pathway to come together, so people can see that they are going on the same path [..] Offering a space is a big step for information sharing, for strategy sharing.”*⁵¹

One interviewee in particular noted how once one intertribal commission obtained funding to hire full-time staff—for positions that had previously been volunteer-led—coordinating tribal partners was much easier.⁵²

⁵⁰ Interviewee 8

⁵¹ Interviewee 12

⁵² Interviewee 8

Intertribal Governance Structures: What Works?

Interviewees shared that intertribal governance structures work best when led by people on the ground. For Alaska Native tribes in the Interior, there have been successful collaboration efforts to protect salmon from decline: *“We choose to work together to find solutions for all of us to be able to fish again.”*⁵³ This section will explore factors that lead to successful collaboration and, in particular, the topics of cultural match, participation across villages, and co-management.

Cultural Match

Early in this project, the research team had inferred that structures that ensured equal representation across tribal villages was key to effective collaboration. During consultation with Alaska Native leaders in resource management, however, the team received feedback that securing “representation” across tribal villages mirrors a western model of democracy that does not effectively fit with their cultural values. In order to be successful, intertribal governance structures must have **“cultural match”** with the involved Alaska Native tribes.

The Harvard Project defines cultural match as institutions that: i) embody the values important to Indigenous peoples, ii) reflect indigenous contemporary conceptions of how authority should best be organized and exercised, iii) are developed through Indigenous efforts, and iv) are supported by those they govern.⁵⁴ As a result, communities will have a “sense of ownership about the institutions themselves.”⁵⁵ This means models cannot be imposed from outside, non-Indigenous worldviews.⁵⁶

⁵³ Interviewee 16

⁵⁴ Begay, Jr., Manley A., and Cornell, Stephen. “*What Is Cultural Match and Why Is it So Important?*” The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development.

⁵⁵ Cornell, Stephen, Jorgensen, Miriam Kalt, Joseph P., and Spilde. Katherine A.. “*Seizing the Future: Why Some Native Nations Do and Others Don’t*,” The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development. 2003.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Case Study on Cultural Match: Northwest Intertribal Court System

Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, Muckleshoot Tribe, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, Sauk-Suiattle Tribe, Shoalwater Bay Tribe, Skokomish Tribe, Stillaguamish Tribe, Tulalip Tribe

A 1974 piece of legislation secured Washington tribes' right to 50% of the state's anadromous fish. However, the tribes lacked the capacity to enforce the required amount of legislation to exercise their sovereignty. In response, in 1979, a consortium of thirteen western Washington tribes created the Northwest Intertribal Court System (NICS), an organization that supports tribes in establishing tribal courts. NICS is overseen by a governing board composed of representatives from each of its seven member tribes.

NICS now supports tribal courts in their handling of civil and criminal matters. One branch provides operational support to their tribal members, through recruiting and hiring judges to preside over tribal courts. Another group of NICS's units provides assistance in the development of tribal law and codes. This unit works with tribal committees to draft codes and regulations for each member tribe that reflect the unique culture, values, and traditions of the people to whom the law will apply.⁵⁷

Critically, NICS prioritizes deference to tribal norms. Its staff members act as guests of member courts, reflecting the attitude of the NICS governing board, which is made up of tribal representatives who establish its policy and select its administrators and judges. Individual tribal governments retain the power to make critical decisions, such as to choose which of the program services they will accept, which judges can serve on their appellate courts, and what issues their codes will address. All of these features of member tribes' participation reinforce NICS's deference to individual tribal cultures, which is a major component of what makes this tribal collaboration a success.⁵⁸

Participation Across Villages

It is critical that intertribal collaborations are structured in a way that invites participation across member tribes and villages and mirrors cultural practice. This may not always mirror western models of democracy. Rather, organic models will arise that allow certain tribal partners to take the lead while ensuring participation from other involved villages and communities.

⁵⁷ "Northwest Intertribal Court System | Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, Muckleshoot Tribe, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, Sauk-Suiattle Tribe, Shoalwater Bay Tribe, Skokomish Tribe, Stillaguamish Tribe, Tulalip Tribes," Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development. 2003.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

This is particularly important in Alaska, where communities are geographically spread, with some closer to urban centers connected to the road system. For example, a study conducted by the Tanana Chiefs Convention (TCC) revealed that resource advisory committees more accessible to urban centers had up to 100 times more meetings per year with the State Department of Fish and Game than advisory committees representing areas less inaccessible to Anchorage and Fairbanks.⁵⁹ It is key for tribes to adopt participation models that incorporate more remote villages and direct political resources strategically. When tribal leaders have the flexibility to establish governance structures that fit closely with their preferred community practices, they can sustain more effective collaborations. It's essential that funders recognize the importance of flexibility for tribal partners to establish their own governance structures.

Case Study on Participation from the Ground, Up: Federal Subsistence Management Program's Regional Advisory Councils (RAC)

The Federal Subsistence Management Program's Regional Advisory Council (RAC) structure was raised as a potential successful example of establishing a cross-sectional, tribal approach to fisheries management,⁶⁰ as it *"provides an on-the-ground perspective."*⁶¹ In Alaska, there are ten subsistence resource regions, with each region being represented by a subsistence RAC. The purpose of these councils—which generate proposals to change federal subsistence regulations—is to provide an opportunity for rural Alaskans to contribute to the management of their subsistence resources.⁶² Per Interviewee 15, the process for RAC selection is as follows: tribes submit an application, list which subsistence resources will be used and commercial resources in their area, and appointees are given a quick reference check.⁶³

Interviewees favored RAC's approval process because *"money allocated as grants that agencies and organizations apply for to do fishery sciences,"* go directly to *"people on the ground [who] are supposed to set it [up]"*⁶⁴ While the prevalence of RAC across interviews could mean these councils present Alaska-specific arrangements that work well for tribes, many of the interviewees focused on Federal Subsistence Management Programs in their interviews due to their specific roles and the nature of this climate-related project. Although there are benefits and lessons to be gleaned from RAC, this also represents a very specific structure with limited funding with which interviewees who participated in this project are more familiar.

⁵⁹ "Number of Meetings by Advisory Committee and Type, 2000 - 2017," Tanana Chiefs Convention. See Appendix I, *Meetings Held*.

⁶⁰ "Federal Subsistence Management Program," May 31, 2015. <https://www.doi.gov/subsistence>.

⁶¹ Interviewee 15

⁶² Each council usually conducts two public meetings a year; one in the fall and one in the winter. *Regions*. 7 Aug. 2015, <https://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regions>.

⁶³ Interviewee 15

⁶⁴ Interviewee 15

Ensuring Participation Across Member Tribes: Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission⁶⁵



The Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (YRIFTC) was founded in 2014 when Yukon River Tribes came together in St. Mary's and formed the Fish Commission in response to low king salmon returns. YRIFTC works with a variety of partners to oversee 28 federally recognized villages. This organization was founded in partnership with the Tanana Chiefs Conference.

Each member Tribe appoints a Fish Commissioner through a Tribal resolution and the Fish Commissioner is then authorized to represent the Tribe at relevant fisheries meetings and make decisions on behalf of the Tribe. The Fish Commission meets annually each spring to develop fishery management recommendations for the upcoming season and in the fall post-season to develop positions on other relevant fisheries issues. In order to achieve unified objectives that protect, conserve, use, enhance, and restore subsistence fisheries resources, the 28 member tribes make consensus-based decisions. The Fish Commission has collaborated with the University of Alaska—Fairbanks' Tribal Management Program to begin developing community and tribal-based stewardship plans to guide fishery management recommendations moving forward.

Co-Management: Model of Success for Some

Co-management refers to formal collaborations between tribes and federal or state agencies to manage lands and waters and is an increasingly popular way to involve tribal governments in management of lands.

Co-management models introduced through this project's research typically involved a combination of management responsibilities. One was sharing responsibilities for research and data collection in regards to monitoring an ecosystem's wellbeing. A collaborative approach to monitoring and data collection typically creates more opportunities to integrate traditional ecological knowledge from communities. Often, co-management comes with agreements that formally delegate authority to the tribal partner and involve them in decision-making. Throughout interviews, it was mentioned that unsuccessful co-management partnerships result when the involved federal or state agency fights for singular control.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ "Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission." *Tanana Chiefs Conference*, 25 Mar. 2021, <https://www.tananachiefs.org/tribal-resources-stewardship-program/fish-commission/>.

⁶⁶ Interviewee 8

Our interviewees pointed out that successful co-management requires initiatives be led by the tribes. According to one interview: *“The critical key to success that gets overlooked so often [...] is that success is impossible and will not occur unless your entire work and advocacy plan is rooted in and led by the tribal governments and tribal governmental organizations.”*⁶⁷ He continued, referencing that the state often fails to consult tribes early on, saying:

*“A lot of the big resource campaigns have struggled most often because the model comes out and then the tribes don’t like it and can’t work alongside it. There’s not an appreciation for the people that live in these places and getting their input early enough—[instead], they’ve already made a decision, and only after the fact, knock on the door to see what people think of it. In the climate world, this same thing continues to happen.”*⁶⁸

One interviewee mentioned that successful co-management models between tribal governments and other jurisdictions do, in fact, mirror traditional governance structures. She states:

*“What you hear in the climate realm [...] we have these multi-jurisdictional arrangements, because that’s the traditional governance structure—before statehood, before the city, before oil money... If you have all three of the entities — city, tribe, and village corp — this is typically more representative. The communities doing this well are able to access more resources. What bothers me is that state and federal governments call it multijurisdiction, but this was actually our traditional governance structure. The agencies may not recognize that.”*⁶⁹

The research team also heard that a firm, shared understanding between tribes of the mission and vision led to stronger long-term partnerships. One interviewee mentioned that, for co-management efforts amongst Native communities in the lower 48, the most successful way to align on this shared vision was to have the process led by the involved communities’ spiritual leaders.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Interviewee 11

⁶⁸ Interviewee 11

⁶⁹ Interviewee 9

⁷⁰ Interviewee 12

Co-Management in Action: Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC)

“Our River, Our People, Our Fish”



“What we bring to the table is more of an ecosystem approach across the entire migratory path of the salmon, this is what [traditional knowledge] brings.”⁷¹

KRITFC is a nonprofit intertribal commission that is well known within Alaska. The Kuskokwim River has experienced a major salmon decline in recent years.⁷² The KRITFC is a collaboration of thirty-three tribes working towards unified salmon co-management,

research, and monitoring to protect Kuskokwim salmon and traditional ways of life. Formed in 2015, KRITFC works to develop a meaningful role for tribes and rural residents engaged in the management of Kuskokwim fisheries from the headwaters to the sea.⁷³ The Commission also prioritizes employing youth and local residents in their research.

Per interviewee 8, *“there was a period where the salmon populations were declining and people were protesting. People wanted something different.”⁷⁴*

The result was the development of this commission and co-management system. KRITFC took over the Yukon Delta, as can be seen in the figures above and below taken from KRITFC’s website. Through KRITFC, 28 tribes of the watershed work collaboratively with federal and state agencies to manage the fisheries along the river. KRITFC has a signed memorandum of understanding or MOU (2016) that authorizes co-management of Kuskokwim salmon populations with US Fish and Wildlife Services within the bounds of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. Outside of federal waters, KRITFC works with Alaska Department of Fish and Game to manage state waters.



BIA funds the base budget of the organization. The funding available is competitive, and typically, each fish commission in Alaska applies to it. The unrestricted base budget enables more flexible research on climate impacts.

⁷¹ Interviewee 8

⁷² “Post.” *Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission*, 26 Oct. 2022, <https://www.kuskosalmon.org/news/2022situationreport>.

⁷³ “Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.” *Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission*, 31 Mar. 2023, <https://www.kuskosalmon.org>.

⁷⁴ Interviewee 8

Chapter 2 Lessons Learned

Although interviewers were hesitant to share some of the interpersonal barriers with the research team, they emphasized the lack of financial backing to intertribal coalitions, burnout, and uneven participation pain points. Interviewees also shared necessary changes—increased financial support, stronger participatory structures, and improved coordination efforts—to achieve a more unified voice. Building off work being done by the Harvard Project, the team provided research into case studies representative of cultural match and co-management structures, which have helped inform their three main lessons learned.

1. Intertribal collaborations are important for any sort of success, but are under-supported.

The need for formal intertribal collaborations throughout the Interior was emphasized across interviews. Existing intertribal collaborations—in the form of tribal nonprofits, intertribal resource commissions, and organizations that convene tribes along the river—are financially undersupported.

Due to budgetary constraints, many of these organizations utilize volunteers to staff intertribal convenings. Interviewees stressed the need for volunteer roles to be paid positions. When organizations received funding to employ full-time staff, they commented on how they were able to coordinate their efforts with those of other agencies and tribes. Embarking on successful collaborative processes requires tribes to expend resources—for staff, time, community engagement, meetings with relevant government agencies, and more.

2. Intertribal Resource Management Commissions provide formal avenues for intergovernmental relationships between tribal, state, and federal government.

Alaska Native Intertribal Resource Commissions have demonstrated success in creating political momentum for disparate Alaska Native villages throughout the Interior. Resource Commissions have established procedures for interfacing and lobbying for tribal interests at the state level. They have also created governance structures that enable participation and engagement across remote Alaska Native villages.

Intertribal resource commissions have successfully established co-management programs in partnership with the state and federal government. Numerous interviewees referenced the importance of these intertribal governing bodies, while also emphasizing that they are typically under-resourced and stretched thin. Funders interested in promoting meaningful change in Interior Alaska should consider Intertribal Resource Management Commissions as an effective avenue for tribally-led resource advocacy.

3. Co-management is a potential avenue to strengthen tribal sovereignty over Alaskan resources, but must be led by the tribes themselves.

While co-management is a potential avenue to increase tribal stewardship over land and provide more formal authority in matters related to climate impacts, co-management agreements are only successful when tribes are at the forefront of the agreement process. Tribes must be involved at every step of developing co-management agreements—not simply consulted at various points once the process is already underway. As one interviewee said, *“it just has to start with tribes. It just has to.”*⁷⁵ Alaska Native tribes and intertribal commissions have demonstrated success in building and structuring partnerships and several of these stories included in this chapter.

⁷⁵ Interviewee 11

Chapter 3: Tribal Advocacy

Under effective tribal advocacy, the researchers found three themes mentioned across interviews: 1) data sovereignty, 2) grassroots mobilization, and 3) community champions. This section highlights case studies of tribes working within these subject areas to provide a lesson-learned analysis related to tribal advocacy.

Pain Points and Needs: Data Sovereignty and Grassroots Mobilization

We heard repeated concerns over interviewees not being able to share their traditional knowledge readily or use their own research to advocate for themselves. Per partners, these limitations made it hard to make their voices heard at the state-level, to decision-making bodies, and/or potential funders. Respondents called attention to a very clear set of needs to correct for these problems: specifically, more levers for advocacy and increased coordination across villages. Pain points and needs fell under two subject areas: ***data sovereignty*** and ***grassroots mobilization***. Given the intertwined nature of the concepts, researchers structured this chapter by these two issue-specific topic areas rather than “pain points” and “needs” sections. The research team also devoted another section to ***community champions***—a third need area highlighted by many respondents.

Data Sovereignty

Indigenous data sovereignty is “the right of a nation to govern the collection, ownership, and application of its own data”⁷⁶ and is rooted in a tribe’s right to self governance. Data is a powerful tool that has immense impacts on policy decisions. It is widely accepted that data collection and application is necessary for implementing equitable policy.⁷⁷

Data has been used against Indigenous populations.⁷⁸ For example, traditional western research and data collection has extracted from tribes, causing harm to Native populations both on and off reservations as a result of underfunding, limited access to support services, and widening disparities generally.⁷⁹ Data collected in more traditional means is often not funded nor respected as scientific knowledge in western academies. Per Interviewee 17, “[*our work is*] *labeled not useful in western science.*”⁸⁰ In fact, insufficient data on Native tribes has often been cited as the cause for limited evidence-supported decision making for these groups.⁸¹

⁷⁶ *Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance* | Native Nations Institute.

<https://nni.arizona.edu/our-work/research-policy-analysis/indigenous-data-sovereignty-governance#:~:text=Indigenous%20data%20sovereignty%20asserts%20the,peoples%2C%20lands%2C%20and%20resources>.

⁷⁷ Tammaro, Alex. “*Native Data Sovereignty Can Address Data Gaps and Improve Equity*,” Urban Institute. June 13, 2022. <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/native-data-sovereignty-can-address-data-gaps-and-improve-equity>.

⁷⁸ “*Data Sovereignty – Native Land Information System.*” <https://nativeand.info/about/data-sovereignty/>.

⁷⁹ Tammaro.

⁸⁰ Interviewee 17

⁸¹ Tammaro.

Over a quarter of this project's interviewees referenced data autonomy and ownership of their data. Ideally, data collection sovereignty could be restored to Native Alaskans through a variety of approaches, including, but not limited to, material support, and technical assistance.⁸² Yet, there is also a need to reinforce Indigenous peoples' presence and voice in data and research through ethical, responsible, and empowering partnerships.⁸³ Pursuing these data sovereignty efforts, and others like them, was stressed by interviewees as a main means to effective tribal advocacy.⁸⁴

One interviewee voiced the importance of elevating local ecosystem knowledge for policy change: *"If you're monitoring the rapid change right now with the climate...you're not just gathering it for gathering sake. You have to figure out how you collect that and how do you take it to the policy level."*⁸⁵ Data collection, and tracking climate change in particular, has been a traditional Native practice for milenia.⁸⁶ In fact, multiple interviewees mentioned the unique ways their elders are able to track and observe changes in their ecosystems: *"We have meetings with elders all the time regarding climate change, especially as it relates to land changes...Elders are the first people to notice changes, elders and the hunters."*⁸⁷

This monitoring has been ongoing, and tribes are seeking opportunities to do so in ways that speak to western government systems. Interviewee 7 highlighted how it's *"sad that we have to hire these professionals to quantify what we have to say. We've been saying it for many years, but they don't hear us. A couple projects that have started with elders asking questions... have turned into significant research projects."*⁸⁸

Interviewees referenced the importance for Native peoples to be able to share their historic and cultural understandings of their ecosystems in western platforms and have their knowledge be accepted as fact. They also stressed that the lived realities of many subsistence lifestyle Alaskans do not match with western data: For example, western guidelines and metrics may show levels of salmon are sufficient for subsistence living, those relying on the salmon for their primary food source know this to be untrue. In regards to monitoring fish populations, Interviewee 9 stated:

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ For more work on indigenous-led, best data practices, check out Max Liboiron and their work at Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research (CLEAR)—a feminist, anti-colonial laboratory, where research methods foreground values of humility, equity, and good land relations. The link to their website is here: <https://civiclaboratory.nl/>. An example of best research practices are best exemplified in Dr. Liboiron's book, *Pollution Is Colonialism*, Duke University Press, 2021.

⁸⁵ Interviewee 9

⁸⁶ Bressan, David. "Native American 'Winter Counts' Serve As Unique Archives For Climate Research." Forbes, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidbressan/2017/06/07/native-american-winter-counts-as-unique-archives-for-climate-research/>.

⁸⁷ Interviewee 18

⁸⁸ Interviewee 7

“Interior villages have long wanted to monitor our fisheries because the state only has 2 or 3 monitoring points along the Yukon river. That’s not enough. It’s a huge huge river. Our villages have been saying we need the resources to do this. How do you maintain that [monitoring] over time? Establishing your own data. You can show up at the table and show your own numbers against the state system.”⁸⁹

In one case, an interviewee highlighted how *“the State of Alaska [was] telling us we’re meeting our subsistence needs for salmon...there’s all these charts...according to their measures, it’s all good.”⁹⁰* The community knew this to be false, however, because they could both quantify the difference in yearly catch, and also feel the health impacts of a significant nutrient deficit. This interviewee’s research team collated existing data from the State Department of Fish and Game to demonstrate subsistence needs were not being met:

“We put it all together, and saw that the subsistence needs were only met twice in ten years [...] We used THEIR [emphasis added] numbers to do this. But our ability to synthesize that data and tell it to them is big. Not to trust the information that’s out there, but to better inform [ourselves] and quantify what our elders are telling us.”⁹¹

There are numerous other examples of indigenous researchers identifying gaps between federal and state regulations and the lived realities of locals. One individual noticed a disconnect between tribal subsistence gathering and state licensing, leading to inaccurate measures of species counts year over year. A researcher also identified a mismatch between sport hunters and subsistence gatherers. Tribal members have noticed sport hunters returning with only a part of the hunted animal (e.g. horns), which indicated that there might be unutilized subsistence opportunities for tribal members. In order to evaluate this, tribes and the state of Alaska would need to collect and share data on non-indigenous hunters’ usage of animals.

Tribes are increasingly partnering with government agencies and research institutions to collect data in a way that includes ITEK as well as provides workforce opportunities for indigenous communities. While knowledge co-production has potential, one interviewee cautioned that sometimes “co-produced” research can be co-opted by the non-indigenous party: *“We see people working in science who want to help but are opportunists and then run with things that not all of us want, maybe they ‘co-produce’ research but not in a very inclusive way.”⁹²*

⁸⁹ Interviewee 9

⁹⁰ Interviewee 7

⁹¹ Interviewee 7

⁹² Interviewee 9

Data Sovereignty in Action: Environmental Program, Native Village of Kotzebue⁹³



Tribal citizens have managed the land and resources in the Kotzebue Sound area—a bay of the Chukchi Sea on the coast of northwest Alaska—for generations. Researchers would rarely contact the Native Village of Kotzebue about the purpose, scope, or details of their activities. Around 1997, the Village government utilized funding from the EPA’s Indian General Assistance Program to launch an Environmental Program rooted in long-held Iñupiaq values.

Based on responses from a community survey, the tribe established the Tribal Environmental Action Plan, which it regularly updates and publishes. They also established a research protocol (1999) requiring all third-party researchers to submit a formal request to the Village before embarking on projects that use tribal resources or that are conducted with tribal citizens, which tribal members can offer feedback on. The entire process is collaborative and ensures that researchers properly cite tribal citizens for their work and contributions.

The tribe is now a full research partner in the majority of projects concerning its land and waters to the benefit of its citizens. The Environmental Program has also changed the way its Indigenous knowledge is recognized in scientific research and produced best available science through the integration of Indigenous knowledge with western science.

Positive Outcomes Since Launch

- The tribe has participated in over 30 major research and environmental projects.
- Research participation has become an economic force in the region: over 120 community members have participated in research efforts, supplementing the income of tribal citizens.
- The program promotes Indigenous-western science collaborative approach to research, standardizing the practice for universities, federal agencies, and the state of Alaska.
- Kotzebue Village now has a more significant leadership role in resource management and a strengthened position to advocate for its interests.

Lessons Learned

- Tribal authority over environmental research helps address tribal priorities in research plans and management of natural resources.
- Training community members to conduct high-quality research can support tribal economies.
- Recognizing Indigenous knowledge as valid and credible informs better decisions and policy-making

⁹³ “Environmental Program | Native Village of Kotzebue,” The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, 2018.

Data as a Building Block for Partnerships: Red Lake Walleye Fishery Recovery Project⁹⁴

The Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians confronted a crisis in the late 1990's: the walleye population of Red Lake had been driven to near extinction. This was due to a combination of overfishing on behalf of both non-Native and Native fisherman. Walleye prices had increased and a flourishing black market incentivized fishing well above the lake's capacity. The State and tribe also lacked legitimate data on the fish populations.

The Red Lake Band government responded with a multi-pronged plan that included scientific study, data collection, monitoring, and analysis. In 1997, the tribal council voted overwhelmingly to ban fishing in the lake, a sacrifice felt hard by the community. The Band's concentrated investment on scientific research on the lake's biological health allowed them to make informed decisions about their fishing as well as use this data to advocate to non-tribal governments.

The Band then approached the State and proposed a fish restoration partnership, resulting in a historic agreement with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in 1997. The intergovernmental agreement "prohibited walleye fishing in Red Lake's state waters, mandated strict regulation of the moratorium on both sides of the lake, and established a multi-partner technical committee to develop and manage the walleye recovery effort."⁹⁵ The technical committee of scientists from the Band, State, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the University of Minnesota unrolled an aggressive enforcement of the fishing ban as well as comprehensive data collection. Critically, the Band and the State agreed to equally share the cost of the restoration.

Most importantly, their efforts proved to be effective. The walleye returned rapidly and well ahead of schedule. This case offers an example of a tribe effectively asserting sovereignty when backed by data, credible public policy, capable tribal administration, and sound governing institutions.⁹⁶

Grassroots Mobilization

Numerous interviewees emphasized the importance of engaging Alaska Natives on the ground, particularly those in rural and subsistence communities, in advocacy whenever possible. However, as is often the case in Alaska, this is much easier said than done. With villages located tens and hundreds of miles from one another, often accessible only through small-scale aviation, in-person engagement is expensive, time-consuming, and unreliable. Some communities have

⁹⁴ "Red Lake Walleye Fishery Recovery Project | Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians," Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, 2006. ("Red Lake").

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

turned to virtual efforts to ensure local residents are able to offer their perspectives. Yet consistent Wi-Fi connectivity is a significant challenge, particularly for remote regions most impacted by climate. One interviewee conveyed an urgent need to *“build stronger understandings in our communities of what is occurring and where the gaps are.”*⁹⁷

In spite of these challenges, when organizations have managed to successfully mobilize grassroots voices, tribes have been able to create stronger unified platforms to advocate at the state and federal levels. As one interviewee stated:

*“What does community engagement look like? First, making sure that people know meetings [with fisheries] are happening through online portals, and showing them how to get there in person and connect with people. But, also listening to people about stewardship and indigenous knowledge—to figure out what is the best way to move forward with fisheries according to their knowledge and beliefs.”*⁹⁸

We also heard from interviewees that while many tribes have their own advocacy platforms and relationships with government officials, there is much greater success when tribes are able to advocate in a more unified voice.

⁹⁷ Interviewee 3

⁹⁸ Interviewee 16

Grassroots Mobilization in Action: Native Peoples Action⁹⁹

Native Peoples Action was founded in 2016 in response to increasing conflict with the federal government regarding resource extraction on Native lands. According to their website, Native Peoples Action “initiates and participates in grassroots community organizing, social media awareness campaigns, and direct advocacy organizing on issues that affect Alaska Native populations and communities.”¹⁰⁰ They advocate on local, state, and federal levels. The organization is primarily Alaska Native-led, directed by a 15-member steering committee to facilitate an Alaska Native statewide grassroots movement to protect Native ways of life and promote the wellbeing of Alaska Native peoples.¹⁰¹

Critically, NPA has both a 501c3 arm, the Native Peoples Action Community Fund, along with a 501c4 titled Native Peoples Action. This 501c4 arm enables the organization to engage in direct political lobbying. The organization collates events at the state level where on-the-ground resident perspective is critical, and also supports tribal members in identifying local and state commissions to participate in.

Native Peoples Action has a Community Outreach team, who make calls and take note of issues happening around the state. The organization is able to note specific needs from different regions, and understand how ecosystems are changing from perspectives on the ground. According to a Native Peoples Action representative, the organization is able to “*hold space for [Alaska Native] stories and make sure their narrative comes through.*”¹⁰²

Community Champions: Possibilities and Challenges

The research team heard repeatedly that having one community champion within tribal villages overseeing climate-related work tends to be the most effective way to 1) distribute financial resources efficiently and 2) ensure that projects are being identified and moved forward. AVF’s Igiugig community champion project (*see case study below*) was a model interviewees not connected to AVF highlighted as one to replicate in other tribes.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Native Peoples Action. <https://nativepeoplesaction.org/>.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Interviewee 16

¹⁰³ Interviewee 3

Case Study: Identifying a Community Champion in Igiugig¹⁰⁴

The Alaska Venture Fund established a partnership with the village of Igiugig through identifying a community champion—AlexAnna Salmon (Yup'ik, Aleut)—with deep roots in the region. The Village of Igiugig is a small community (with approximately 70 year-round residents) located on the banks of Lake Iliamna in southwestern Alaska in the Bristol Bay region. Strong cultural and environmental values drawn from Igiugig ts Dena'ina, Yup'ik, and Alutiiq peoples and their commitment to self determination underpins the Village Council. Currently, Igiugig is undertaking a series of projects in the following topic areas: 1) renewable energy, 2) tribal sovereignty and land protection, 3) business ventures and start-ups, 4) cultural preservation and revitalization. Through their many initiatives Igiugig strives to create a prosperous present and future for their village and for the greater worldwide community. Igiugig has emerged as a leader in the Bristol Bay region for its ongoing commitment to sustainability, self-sufficiency and self-determination, while uplifting generations of Indigenous knowledge.

The success of their many projects would not be possible with AlexAnna, a Partner at AVF who grew up in Igiugig and who comes from a generational lineage of stewards who have cared for Igiugig. Due to AlexAnna's tireless work, AVF's Igiugig program was highlighted as a success story to be replicated in other tribes during interviews with individuals not associated with the organization or with the Village of Igiugig.

“Locally driven solutions are the only ones that will be sustainable and draw upon our ancient lived wisdom in place. We can use that, rooted in our Indigenous values system, to come up with self-determined solutions to the challenges we face. Whether it be climate, or sustainable economy, language revitalization, cultural revitalization, we need more holistic approaches, and we're capable of that at a local level.”¹⁰⁵ – AlexAnna, Community Champion

One interviewee expressed their willingness to utilize their resources and respective agencies to facilitate workshops and training to best replicate the Igiugig model (in a non-prescriptive way) in as many tribes that might be eager for a program like this.¹⁰⁶ Another interviewee who oversees administration for a large tribal nonprofit highlighted how such a program would be good for tribes as well as intertribal collaborations: *“My goal in each of the 42 villages [that our organization works with] would be to have one person be the delegate and one person be the alternate on all of these boards. [Right now,] I've got this guy doing birds, this guy doing*

¹⁰⁴ *The Village of Igiugig Project Overview Document*. Can be found at Fund, Alaska Venture. *Ventures | Alaska Venture Fund*. 28 May 2021, <https://alaskaventure.org/ventures/>.

¹⁰⁵ Fund, Alaska Venture. *Alaskans Driving Change: AlexAnna Salmon | Alaska Venture Fund*. 1 Feb. 2022, <https://alaskaventure.org/alexanna-salmon/>.

¹⁰⁶ Interviewee 3

hunting, this guy doing fishing... We would be creating a position for someone to oversee this all.”¹⁰⁷

When interviewers asked follow-up questions about how to develop such a program, she said, *“These tribes already have the one person... who is doing all this work for their community... they already know who it is. [We would] let the council know at their monthly meetings.”¹⁰⁸*

This interviewee asserted that the holdup on having a program like this is money: *“If I had the money: then we would have 42 people going to all of these meetings. [We] would employ better subsistence practices.”¹⁰⁹*

¹⁰⁷ Interviewee 6

¹⁰⁸ Interviewee 6

¹⁰⁹ Interviewee 6

Chapter 3 Lessons Learned

Hogg and Kessler conducted research on data sovereignty and grassroots mobilization after learning about the community obstacles and necessities interview respondents presented. The case studies in this chapter highlight two tribes who were able to steward data in a way that strengthened their sovereignty over critical resources as well as case studies on effective grassroots mobilization and community champion programs. These case studies underscore the key takeaways from interviews and inform the team’s lesson-learned analysis below.

1. Community engagement organizations involved in direct lobbying or enhancing community-led advocacy efforts require additional support.

Given the experiential divide between political leaders, living primarily in urban areas, and Alaska Natives who often live in remote region, it is essential for Alaska Natives to have avenues to express their interest to their governing bodies. Alaska has a variety of Indigenous-led organizations providing political education to communities, which enable subsistence-lifestyle Alaska Natives most impacted by climate change to voice their stories to political officials.

Moreover, these organizations facilitate a more unified voice amongst Alaska Natives, a role that is urgently needed as communities advocate across hundreds of miles of river. As one interviewee stated in regards to a grassroots advocacy nonprofit:

“[We need] partnerships that help us bridge the work and make it more impactful. We’re all doing the work in different corners in Alaska – these help bring it all together.”¹¹⁰

By engaging residents on the ground to provide public comment, attend listening sessions, and foster general civic engagement, these organizations help Alaska Natives build and attain political power. Our research team hopes to bring attention to 501c3 and 501c4 organizations that are involving on-the-ground subsistence lifestyle Alaska Natives in public affairs whose hard work has yielded positive outcomes for tribal interests.

2. Data sovereignty initiatives strengthen tribal bargaining power while dually providing educational and employment opportunities.

For Alaska Natives working in climate impacts and resource management, having the ability to collect and use data in a way that incorporates traditional knowledge to advance tribal objectives is of high priority. Data sovereignty initiatives—including, but not limited to, tribally-led data

¹¹⁰ Interviewee 3

collection and management and collaborative research initiatives—have shown immense potential for strengthening tribal advocacy across all sectors.

These initiatives also lead to opportunities for employment, education, and workforce development. Interviewees who are currently pursuing data sovereignty initiatives highlighted this as a major success. One interviewee’s organization ensures local young people are involved as researchers whenever possible. His organization has also provides an avenue for tribal members experienced in ecosystem management to build a career while also exercising their traditional knowledge. Per Interviewee 8, *“We hire mostly local people and bring their subsistence voice to the table.”*¹¹¹

Given the frequency with which this topic came up in interviews—more than ¼ of interviewees emphasizing as a priority—there is clearly significant community support and momentum for data sovereignty measures of which AVF and donors should be aware. While the research team highlighted some success cases as blueprints, further research is needed in this area.

3. Community champions were highlighted as an effective tribal advocacy model, but further research is required to replicate such programs as they face scaling challenges.

Through this project’s interviews and site visit, a distinct need arose for coordinators across climate programs within and between villages. As one interviewee shared: *“[We need] partnerships that help us bridge the work and make it more impactful. They’re all doing the work in different corners in Alaska – these help bring it all together.”*¹¹²

There are no proven methods to identify special community members like AlexAnna from Igiugig. Moreover, successful community champions will look different across tribes, and not every tribe is ready to run programs and initiatives through a community champion. Per Dr. Quinn-Davidson, determining which tribes and tribal members are ready and how best to support those individuals, will be key.

During the researchers’ presentation at the Tanana Chiefs Conference Convention in March 2023, several audience members echoed the sentiment of the interviewees—that they would like to see these models replicated across other villages. When Dr. Quinn-Davidson asked for community members who might fit the profile of a community champion, however, there were not enough names listed to start such a program at this time. Given these limitations, researchers have left this insight as a lesson learned and present further research into this model as an option.

¹¹¹ Interviewee 8

¹¹² Interviewee 3

Chapter 4: Long-Term Resilience

One thing that differentiates indigenous-led approaches to natural resource management is an emphasis on long-term resilience. With Alaska Natives continuously occupying land for over 10,000 years, knowledge of how ecosystems remain healthy across generations is deeply interwoven into cultural practice. Alaska Native communities are confronting a myriad of challenges to long-term sustainability. The following chapter addresses approaches to ensure long-term sustainability for Alaska Native communities in addressing climate impacts.

Pain Points: Issue fatigue; Desired, but Outside of Capacity; Lack of Funding for Employment Opportunities

Issue Fatigue

Alaska Natives balance an overwhelming list of administrative affiliations. As Interviewee 11 described, *“on any given day a tribal council of seven or eight people in tribe have to tackle service provisions, infrastructure, etc...they have to, for example, call into fish meetings, at the same time as meetings from BLM about regional management plan, and at the same time Army Corps of Engineers has another project.”*¹¹³ Alaska Native tribal leaders in particular must navigate excruciatingly complex sets of regulations and bureaucratic systems that require engaging across agencies at all levels of government. This leads to what one interviewee described as *issue fatigue*.¹¹⁴ Moreover, because of what sometimes feels like a constant siege upon Alaska Native rights, tribes are often denied the *“privilege of proactivity”*¹¹⁵ as they utilize their resources to take care of immediate crises.

Desired, but Outside of Capacity

Engaging youth came across interviewees as a priority to ensure long-term resilience. Our interviews revealed that one of the greatest barriers to youth engagement is simply lack of capacity within tribal governments and nonprofits to establish additional programs. Several interviewees expressed that their organization is already operating above capacity, and despite the desire to prioritize youth development, it is impossible to establish additional programs without increased funding and staff. According to one interviewee, *“We know we need to [engage youth], but we don’t have the capacity to get money for or run this program now.”*¹¹⁶ They also mentioned that the projects that fall off once organizations reach capacity are typically youth development programs.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Interviewee 11

¹¹⁴ Interviewee 11

¹¹⁵ Interviewee 11

¹¹⁶ Interviewee 17

¹¹⁷ Interviewee 17

This is due, in part, to the time required to apply to multiple small grants rather than larger, more flexible ones. This burden presents an additional barrier to creating youth development opportunities, as Interviewee 17 explained: *“We can’t cover this in one big grant - we have to do it in lots of little ones. It’s too bad. We could do more. Youth outreach and engagement would do wonders. If I had \$500,000 to do more [youth engagement], I would do it.”*¹¹⁸

Amidst the challenges, Alaska Natives have developed innovative programs to connect youth to climate justice and resource management where possible—some of these examples are highlighted in this chapter’s case studies. One space where youth are involved in climate issues is through grassroots organizing, as explained by Interviewee 12: *“Grassroot movements and young voices coming up... [that’s] one of the first places they’re heard and can use their skills.”*¹¹⁹ Where opportunities do exist, young people fill the spots available to strengthen their leadership. Below are examples of existing programs working to fill this gap.¹²⁰

Building a Talent Pipeline: Emerging Leaders Program (EMYAC)¹²¹

The Emerging Leaders Youth Advisory Council (EMYAC) was formed in 2017 at the Tanana Chiefs Conference Annual Convention. The Youth Advisor on the Executive Board serves as the Chairman to the Emerging Leaders and is meant to update the Executive Board on youth efforts, accomplishments, hardships in communities, give opinion on issues, and present quarterly progress of the Youth Advisory Council. The Emerging Leaders keep the Youth Advisor to the Executive Board accountable by ensuring they are provided agendas, deadlines, and advocacy items pertaining to the youth in the Tanana Chiefs Conference Region. The intent is for the Youth Advisor to be engaged, dedicated, and motivated to advocate for the youth of the TCC region to the Executive Board.

In practice, the EMYAC provides youth within the TCC region with leadership development opportunities. Young people are exposed to a wide variety of tribal leaders within their region. They are provided opportunities to observe and listen to governance meetings and familiarize themselves with governance processes related to the Interior. Some youth are highlighted in local news outlets for their efforts. By participating in this council, young people are able to see and be seen as Alaska Native leaders amongst their peers, elders, and potential future colleagues.

¹¹⁸ Interviewee 17

¹¹⁹ Interviewee 12

¹²⁰ One note worth mentioning is that the research team did not have an opportunity to speak with Alaska Native youth themselves. However, several interviewees engaged in youth development work as volunteers, or offered insights as parents of young people.

¹²¹ “Resolution 2018-20: Request to Amend Article Seven of the TCC Bylaws.” *Tanana Chiefs Conference*, 6 Feb. 2018, <https://www.tananachiefs.org/resolution-2018-20/>

Case Study: Yukon First Nations Climate Action Fellowship¹²²

The Yukon First Nations Climate Action Fellowship — the Children of Tomorrow presents an interesting and in-process success story that funders could consider as a blueprint for similar leadership development models. In February 2020, the first-ever Yukon First Nations Climate Action Gathering was held at Whitehorse, Yukon in Canada. The mission and purpose is premised on the idea that “reconnection is climate action,” as seen from the web of reconnection (*seen in the figure to the right*) from their published materials. Youth who were present during this gathering worked together to develop their own Youth Climate Declaration, which outlined their climate priorities. Upon presenting their vision to the convening, the Yukon First Nations Leadership decided that a Yukon First Nations Climate Vision and Action Plan should be youth led, stating *“it is their future at stake and they will inherit the decisions made now.”*¹²³ As a result of leadership’s direction, the Assembly of First Nations Yukon Region, the Council of Yukon First Nations, the Youth Climate Lab, Yukon University, and RIVER,¹²⁴ have partnered to co-create the ***Yukon First Nations Climate Action Fellowship***.



In its current form, this is a 20-month Fellowship that “aims to uphold youth as they connect with climate-related challenges as well as their culture and identity.”¹²⁵ The Fellows are 13 young people across the Yukon and Northern British Columbia who are supported by a Steering Committee and Elder Advisors. These Fellows work alongside Yukon First Nations to co-create Yukon First Nations Climate Vision and Action Plans, which can guide Yukon First Nations and other communities and organizations responding to the challenges of climate change in a way that reflects a Yukon First Nations perspective.

Lack of Funding for Employment Opportunities

One interviewee referenced that the grant funding received is not enough to hire a full-time person employed in natural resource management. Another mentioned that many of the roles within his organization are filled by volunteers rather than staff. In his words:

¹²² “Yukon First Nations Climate Action Fellowship.” *Yukon First Nations Climate Action Fellowship*, <https://www.yfnclimate.ca>.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ RIVER | Circle. <https://www.weareriver.earth/>.

¹²⁵ Yukon First Nations Climate Action Fellowship.

“The funding isn’t enough, to build capacity, to hire researchers...If we had more money, we’d hire more employees, buy more equipment, have a bigger office space...we’d be able to [get more people] in-river, locally employed, involved with fish management...to build a pipeline.”¹²⁶

While this lack of funding is a theme that crosses multiple chapters of this report, the financial limitations stagnate Alaska Native employment opportunities and limit tribal economic development. American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) unemployment rates are much higher than the national unemployment rates: right now, the Native American Labor Market Dashboard estimates the unemployment rates among AIAN to be at about 10.3 percent, compared to the national average of about 5.2 percent.¹²⁷

Needs: Education and Youth Development; Resource Management Training and Employment Opportunities; Expanding Alaska Native Leadership in Federal Agencies

Education and Youth Development

From interviews and conversations with Alaska Native tribal leaders and AVF, it is apparent that supporting programs that are specifically focused on expanding the capacity of Alaska Native young people from an early age is the priority. There are numerous programs of this nature that already exist, including leadership development programs run by large tribal nonprofits and programs for STEM education through academic institutions.

Resource Management Training and Employment Opportunities

Outside of youth development, workforce development and specialized training for workforce-aged adults is another key priority. The first barrier to advancing this priority is a lack of funding for resource management professionals—a pain point reiterated by interviewees that is detailed above. More granularly, interviewees referenced two primary needs:

1. More professional biologists and technical trades related to resource management; and
2. Capacity-building for existing or incoming tribal staff on engaging with regulatory structures.¹²⁸

In regards to the first priority of creating more resource management positions specifically, interviewees were clear that they need to build pipelines within tribal communities, rather than bring in outside talent. Supporting current staff would require additional capital and trainings to be able to manage their high workloads without burn out.

¹²⁶ Interviewee 8

¹²⁷ *Native American Labor Market Dashboard* | Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

<https://www.minneapolisfed.org/indiancountry/resources/native-american-labor-market-dashboard>.

¹²⁸ Interviewee 5

Expanding Alaska Native Leadership in Federal Agencies

An additional theme surfaced regarding the importance of increasing Alaska Native representation in federal agencies over the long run. Multiple frontline interviewees brought up the significance of new Alaska Congresswoman Mary Peltola providing a direct avenue for advocacy in DC.¹²⁹

This need was mirrored by interviewees working in federal agencies, who shared with the research team how policy falls short due to a lack of tribal perspective at the table. After entering the federal agencies, several interviewees found that the largest problems faced by their communities were because of existing federal administrators who lacked a nuanced understanding of tribal communities.¹³⁰ One interviewee who liaises between the State of Alaska and tribal governments shared the degree to which state officials have a fundamental lack of understanding of village communities: most have never been to a village themselves, do not live in rural Alaska, and, therefore, do not directly experience the ecosystem impacts of resource extraction industries.¹³¹ When Native people are able to participate in high-level federal decision-making, often simple conversations can make a huge difference.

One interviewee, who has played a significant role in advancing co-management opportunities between tribal governments and federal agencies, also emphasized that one becomes much more effective working in federal government over time by understanding the unspoken avenues to access funding and move projects along the pipeline.¹³² For this reason, it's that much more urgent for Alaska Natives to attain federal leadership positions now to be effective in the long-term.

¹²⁹ Interviewee 8

¹³⁰ Interviewee 2

¹³¹ Interviewee 11

¹³² Interviewee 10

Meeting Ambitious Goals: The Māori and Indigenous Doctoral Support Programme (MAI) ¹³³

Māori doctorates were severely underrepresented in New Zealand prior to 2000. Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga set a goal in 2002 of contributing to 500 new Māori PhDs in only five years. While this goal seemed ambitious and perhaps impossible, it was achieved. The Māori and Indigenous Doctoral Support Programme recognized that Māori scholars typically moved through the academic process in a different way. Often, they will not have gone straight to doctoral studies after completing a degree: many are middle-aged, balancing study with community, family, and leadership responsibilities.

MAI provides wide-spread support and generates a coordinated effort to get Māori researchers over the finish line and into successful careers. Some highlighted objectives of their organization included establishing a national network of Māori doctoral students, enhancing institutional infrastructures in universities, support leadership development, and foster development of policy through their work.¹³⁴ MAI accomplished these objectives through mentorship programs, courses, retreats, workshops, leadership training, and financial opportunities for grants, fellowships, and international study. MAI successfully approached this issue of underrepresentation through a lens that was culturally aware and holistic. In studying this impressive achievement, Richard Caulfield isolated the following factors as necessary for success:

1. Building critical mass of university faculty;
2. Effective indigenous leadership within the university; and
3. Innovative partnerships that acknowledge desires for indigenous self-determination.¹³⁵

Numerous Alaska Native universities have studied and implemented learnings from the Māori case.¹³⁶ In considering developing pipelines to federal positions, this case may provide insights into what would be necessary to increase Alaska Native representation in government agencies.

¹³³ *Meeting a Target of 500 New PhDs | Ngā Pae o Te Māramatanga.*
<https://www.maramatanga.ac.nz/project/meeting-target-500-new-phds-0>.

¹³⁴ *About | Te Kupenga o MAI.* <https://www.mai.ac.nz/about>.

¹³⁵ Caulfield, R. “*Strengthening indigenous higher education in Alaska: Some insights from Aotearoa/New Zealand.*” University of Alaska Fairbanks. 2003.

¹³⁶ Jones, Alberta J. “*Indigenous Factors Contributing to Successful Attainment of Doctoral Degrees by Alaska Native Scholars: A Mixed Methods Study.*” 2015.

Chapter 4 Lessons Learned

Interviewees emphasized three pain points regarding sustainability: issue fatigue, lack of capacity, and lack of funding. These pain points were coupled with distinct needs presented in this chapter—additional education and youth development programs and resource management employment opportunities. Non-Alaska Native federal interviewee referenced the importance of expanding Alaska Native leadership in federal agencies. As this learning from federal-level partners complemented ground-level experiences, the research team included this as a main need of which AVF and other funders should be aware. There are three case studies included in this chapter that could offer prototypes of pipelines for Alaska Native youth and working adults to reach leadership positions. The lessons presented below stem from an analysis of these pain points, needs, and case studies.

1. Building talent pipelines for future climate and resource management leadership is essential for long-term sustainability.

Planning for long-term leadership is a priority. Interviewees shared that without higher amounts of less restricted funding, youth programs will be forced to the back burner in lieu of more immediate crises. Tribal governments and nonprofits need flexible funding that enables long-term programmatic youth development.

While this was a need shared by many of the respondents, it's important to note that AVF has not been directly involved with youth development work. For example, while AVF supports and houses the Igiugig Community Champion case study in Chapter 3, the youth development programs are driven by AlexAnna, not AVF. While substantially funded youth development programs have the potential for the system-wide transformation AVF is looking for, there are several avenues and youth development specific grants that might be better suited to meet the needs of tribes in the Interior.

2. Increasing tribal representation particularly in federal agencies has the potential for transformative impact.

In speaking with high-level administrators in federal agencies, the research team heard that increased indigenous representation in the federal government makes a significant difference. Non-indigenous federal administrators often lack a nuanced understanding of tribal communities. Particularly for Alaska, decisions are most often made by people who have never been to a village. While rural Alaska is where the state's resources come from, most decision makers neither live in these places nor face the human costs of decisions made. This disconnect permeates all climate-related issues across Alaska. While this issue is intimidating, cases from

other U.S. regions and nations provide a blueprint for rapid increases in representation through targeted investment.

3. *Parallel pipelines for tribal community members to take on leadership and administrative roles unlocks more effective change*

Numerous interviewees referenced the importance of greater administrative strength within their tribal agencies. Funding scarcity restricts all types of development programs, employment opportunities, specialized and vocational training, and limits tribes administrative capacity. For example, one takeaway the research team gleaned from conversations about long-term resilience was that the limited number of administration roles and oversight in tribes is limiting communities ability to respond in time to present crises. As Interviewee 6 illuminated, *“You can contact the tribe over and over, but they won’t listen until you show up and show them.”*¹³⁷ Administrative oversight, supporting tribal youth, and offering well-paid staff positions is necessary to plan strategically for the future.

In a conversation with Dr. Quinn-Davidson, the research team discussed the pain points and needs of partners they were hearing. Per Dr. Quinn-Davidson, she corroborated that she had heard the need of tribes to have 4-5 village-based administrative roles. In seeing the quotes listed together, however, she presented a higher-level possibility of *parallel talent pipelines*. Building out concurrent pipelines that enable young people, tribal entrepreneurs, Alaska Native political leaders, future resource managers, and the like towards leadership positions could bolster indigenous stewardship.

¹³⁷ Interviewee 6

Chapter 5: Options for Consideration and Next Steps

The research team was able to highlight pain points, needs, and lessons learned from over 20 interviews, and further developed these learnings with outside research of case studies. This analysis was strengthened through ongoing conversations with AVF and tribal climate leaders at the Tanana Chiefs Conference Convening in March 2023. Based on this data collection, research, and input from AVF and the Harvard Project, the team was able to develop the following options for AVF to consider.¹³⁸



Beaver-Level Options for Consideration

The research team has provided two *beaver-level* options for AVF to consider, or suggestions that target ground-level ecosystem changes.

1. Climate Mitigation Block Grants (CMBGs): A Performance-Based Block Grant

This report suggests that providing unrestricted, recurring, performance-based funding through Climate Mitigation Block Grants could unlock indigenous sovereignty of resource management and strengthen tribally-led mitigation and adaptation initiatives. This option would have an immediate impact on humans, flora, and fauna—creating widespread ecosystem change from the ground up. Grants provided under this more flexible structure are more adaptable to the present-day needs of a diverse group of tribes as well as the variety of future crises climate change will unleash in Interior Alaska.

Funding should be contingent on a set of clear outcomes set in conference with tribal grantees. Performance would be determined by metrics connected to target outcomes rather than micro-level procedural oversight. While AVF is in a position to help with the reporting requirements of the grant, these would be limited and manageable under a block grant allocated specifically for climate projects.

2. Climate Community Champions

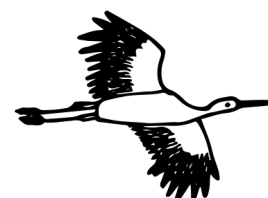
A “community champion” refers to a foresighted individual who can provide on-the-ground insights into allocating funds, coordinate a variety of climate and resource management programs, and manage the type of innovative initiatives AVF is looking to fund. This model has proven effective in some communities, but requires further research to replicate. Specifically, creating methods and best practices to locate individuals who fit the description of a community champion and developing training modules—in collaboration with tribes—to help these leaders succeed will be crucial. While the research team does not have the best insight into how to proceed, this report shows that many folks are interested in seeing such a program come to fruition. Several of the interviewees offered to provide resources (time, energy, and

¹³⁸ For an explanation of the language used to differentiate these suggestions, reference Appendix section “Language Use.”

agency-specific tools) to support AVF in creating a community champion program, should AVF consider doing so. Tapping into the resourcefulness of AVF's partners and network will be key in pursuing this option. If successful, AVF could start investing in more remarkable change-makers and leaders in the Interior who hold the key to the systems-level change they are hoping to be a part of.

Crane-Level Options for Consideration

Below are three *crane-level* options—geared to high-level, system-wide change—for AVF to consider.



1. River-Wide Data Sovereignty

Data sovereignty initiatives is a broad category that includes collaborative research efforts, tribally-led data collection and monitoring, creating data storage infrastructure, and more. This report provides success stories to use as blueprints when developing this proposal. Creating the infrastructure to espouse coordinated river-wide data sovereignty policies will require time and investment from partners. Fortunately, there is significant buy-in: this was an area of high interest across interviewees and a topic discussed at length at the recent TCC Convention in March 2023. If AVF and donors can provide the capital to undertake a data sovereignty project, there is potential to create far-reaching, crane-level change in Interior Alaska.

2. BIA Green Book: Climate Budget Advocacy Campaign

The Green Book is a comprehensive guide for financial institutions that receive and send payments to the federal government. Having appropriated money tribes can rely on would free up their time and energy; enable communities to plan strategically rather than react to one crisis and not the other; and advance more creative and future-oriented efforts. While AVF can not engage in these lobbying efforts themselves (due to their classification as a 501c3), they can lean on their federal delegation connections, support advocacy organizations that are better positioned to lead this work, and consider other creative ways through donor channels to indirectly advocate for a BIA Green Book budgetary line item for climate mitigation, adaptation, and resiliency.

3. Parallel Leadership Pipelines

This option refers to a targeted funding approach to support leadership development across climate and resource management positions, ranging from administration, to public policy and federal government, research, and other areas. The goal is a high-level strategic approach to establish long-term Alaska Native leadership positions with the mission of strengthening indigenous sovereignty across fields. Each pipeline will be structured differently, with insight from different tribal and thought leaders. From its crane-level perspective, AVF is well-positioned to help coordinate and synchronize these efforts. Systematizing talent pipelines in this manner could unleash massive potential in Interior Alaska, benefitting tribal communities across the state.



Looking Across Crane and Beaver View

In evaluating options that can be developed from on-the-ground ecosystem changes with a crane-level perspective, this report offers a north star, to which these options lead to.

North Star: Mobilize Communities for Systems-Level Change

By engaging grassroots organizing, parallel pipelines, and broadly working with people on the ground to expand their skills, AVF can help their partners achieve systems-level policy change. The report collates the innovative enterprises underway, whether through individual change-makers, organizations, or community-led efforts. While the resourcefulness of its partners will not be news to AVF, considering ways to mobilize them to action is an area AVF should consider acting upon. This can be done through task forces, steering committees, or other structures that embody some of the best practices outlined in Chapter 2—specifically, cultural match, co-management, and other lessons about how to ensure participation across villages.

Recommended Immediate Next Steps

The research team recommends the following immediate next steps in regards to this project:

1. *Send this report to list of partners, provided by Hogg and Kessler¹³⁹*

All interviews proved to be extremely valuable in this research process. Moreover, there are numerous individuals who were informed of the project and who were not interviewed but are invested in the result. In the spirit of transparency and relationship, the research team suggests sharing this report with a recommended contact list of interviewees and possible future partners, which will be provided to AVF upon submitting this report.

2. *Coordinate initial steering committee meeting with relevant partners with use of PAE report, appendices, and handouts*

Given interest, the options provided will require collaboration across funders, tribal leaders, nonprofit administrators, and more. Most options will require engagement with organizations outside of AVF. The appendix provides a bibliography of resources, as well as tools for further interviews to support AVF's continued work with MACP. The research team recommends gathering a steering committee to continue momentum from this project.

3. *Leverage Harvard Project expertise on block grants, data sovereignty initiatives, community champions, and other areas that require further research*

The Harvard Project holds an immense collection of case studies across tribal nations. Several case studies included in this report were pulled from the Harvard Project's archive, and current staff may be able to offer direction on further investigating the topics posed in this report.

¹³⁹ Note, this list will be sent separately to respect individuals' private contact information.

4. Share report with funders in AVF network

Making meaningful impact in supporting tribes in mitigating and adapting to climate impacts will take a strategic and coordinated effort from funders. Philanthropy has unique potential to provide the flexible, direct funding that has been discussed throughout this report. The research team hopes for this report to serve as a platform for discussion amongst philanthropic funders looking to create positive impacts in Alaska.

Conclusion

Conversations with partners—indigenous climate scientists, local indigenous leaders in Interior Alaska, legal experts of Alaska Native land management, and federal experts in climate and tribal policy—yielded a plethora of insights. Pain points, needs, and other information gleaned from those on the ground, supplemented with case study research, surfaced a lesson-learned analysis of tribally-led approaches to mitigating and adapting to climate impacts and culminated in this report's options for a river-wide approach for interior Alaska Native communities.

There are several next steps listed to translate these suggestions into action and, eventually, reality. Overall, this report has found an overwhelming body of ITEK evidence and stories that support beaver- and crane-level options worthwhile of funding.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Background

The State of Indigenous Alaska

The state known as Alaska has been continuously occupied by indigenous peoples for approximately 10,000 years. The state has roughly 20 distinct language groups that live across rural villages and urban areas (Figure 1). Today there are 229 federally recognized tribes in Alaska, with the state Native American population being over 18%. Federally recognized tribes have **tribal sovereignty**, or inherent rights of self-government, which comes with certain responsibilities, powers, limitations, and obligations.¹⁴⁰

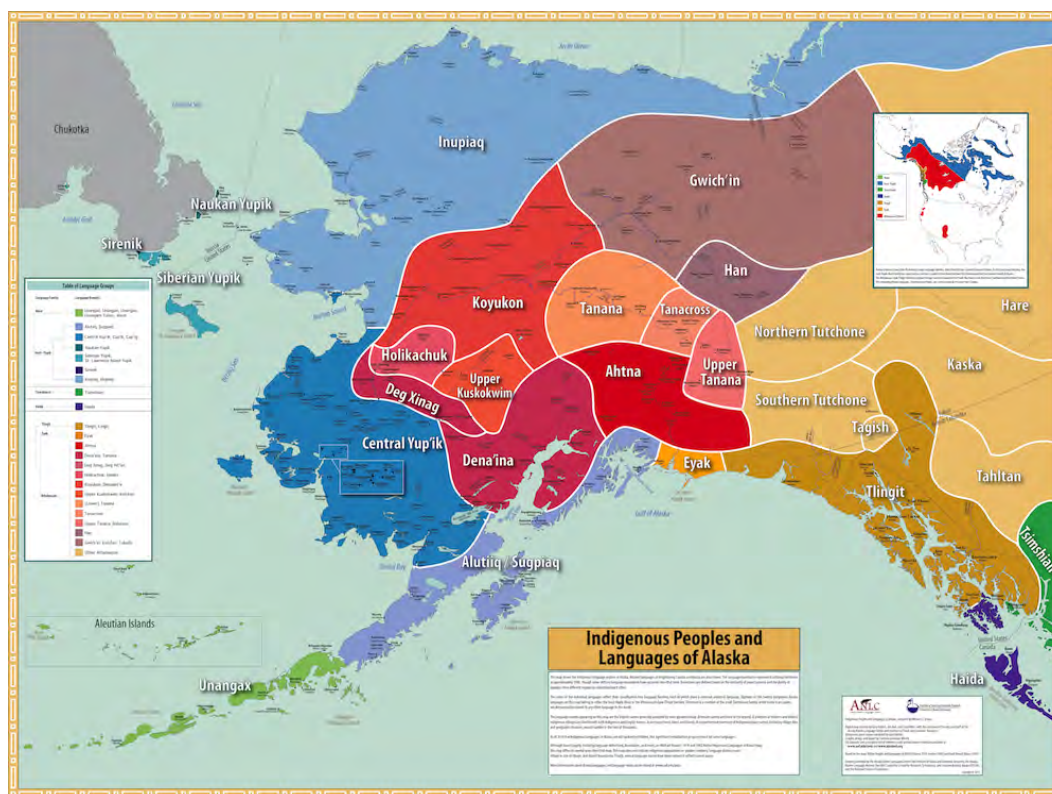


Figure 1: Alaska Native regions broken down by language. Source: University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska Native Language Archive

Alaska in Comparison to Lower 48

The political state of Alaskan tribes looks quite different from that of tribes in the lower 48.¹⁴¹ Typically, tribes are able to exercise their powers within a **reservation** (or land base). Alaska federally recognized tribes are unique because aboriginal land title was extinguished through the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) in 1971 and reservations were not created.

¹⁴⁰Map | Alaska Native Language Archive | Alaska Native Language Archive.

<https://www.uaf.edu/anla/collections/map/>.

¹⁴¹ This term refers to the 48 continuous states (all of them except for Hawaii and Alaska) and will be used throughout this paper.

Instead, ANCSA established Alaska Native corporations (ANCs), approximately 45 million acres divided between 13 regional and village corporations that qualify as business entities under Alaska legislation.¹⁴² As such, Indigenous land went to these specially constructed ANCs rather than into trust for tribes themselves.¹⁴³ ANCs are directed by ANCSA and Alaska state corporate law.¹⁴⁴ Once they receive land titles under ANCSA, the land is considered private property (unlike tribal lands outside of Alaska). When it passed, extinguishing Alaska Natives claims to over 360 million acres of land with which they lived for generations, ANCSA was the largest land claims settlement in American history.¹⁴⁵

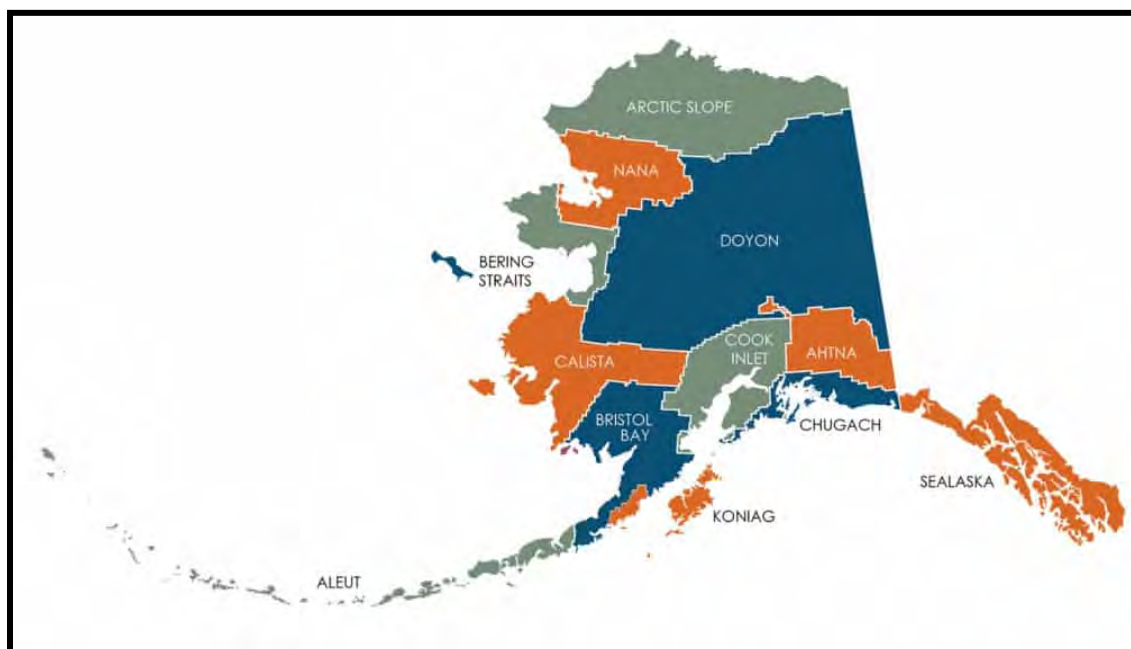


Figure 2: Alaska broken down by ANCSA corporation. Source: ANCSA Regional Association.

ANCSA created split estates where one entity owns all or part of the subsurface estate, while another entity owns the surface estate. Village corporations, for example, primarily own surface estates while regional corporations own titles to the subsurface estates on the same land. There are also estate splits between ANCs and the federal government.¹⁴⁶ As such, ANCs own the subsurface land (oil, drilling, etc.). Indigenous hunting and fishing rights were never settled by ANCSA.¹⁴⁷ These estate splits under ANCSA have created serious land and natural resource management considerations for both ANCs and the federal government, specifically the Department of the Interior's (DOI's) Bureau of Land Management and DOI's Bureau of Indian

¹⁴² "Alaska Native Lands and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA): Overview and Selected Issues for Congress," Congressional Research Service, December 2021. ("CRS ANCSA Overview. 2021").

¹⁴³ Jaeger, Lisa, *A Few Differences between Alaska and Lower 48 Tribes*. November, 2004.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ CRS ANCSA Overview. 2021.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Jaeger, Lisa.

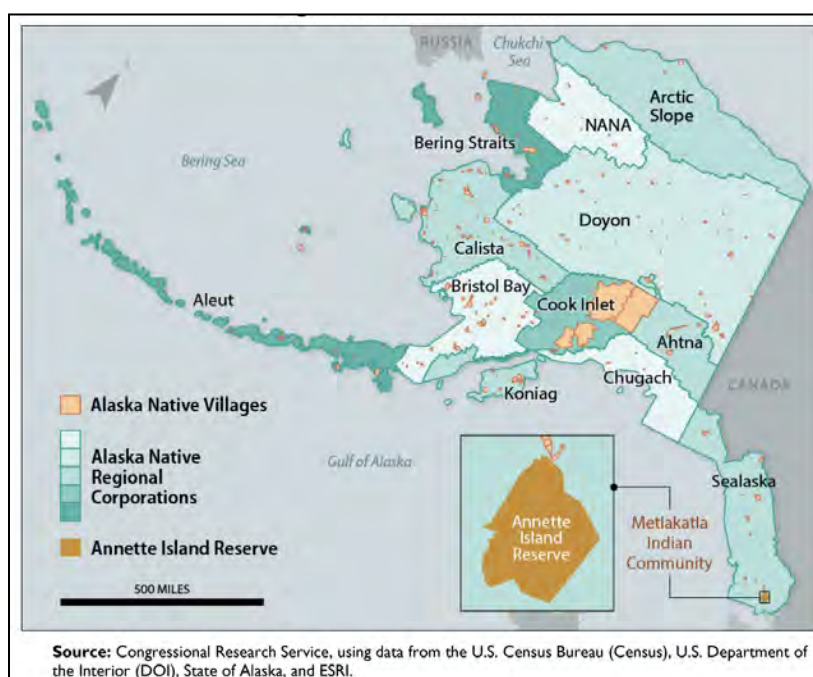
Affairs (BIA).¹⁴⁸ These agencies oversee a variety of ANCSA-related lands programs. Federally recognized tribes are also eligible to receive certain federal benefits, services, and protections, such as funding and services from the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Alaska Native Tribal Sovereignty

Alaska Native tribes are able to enter into government-government relationships. All government agencies are required to consult with Alaska Native tribes any time there are activities that may impact tribal welfare. Tribes are also able to enter into government-to-government agreements with the federal and state government, including co-management. Despite the legal ability to enter into government-to-government agreement with the State, due to the political landscape in Alaska, these agreements are infrequent and deprioritized.

Landscape Mapping: ANCs and Tribal Nonprofits

Furthermore, the over 200 tribes in Alaska tend to be smaller than those in the lower 48, averaging around 800 individuals. Due to their small size, Alaska tribes face additional advocacy challenges, which they have dealt with by congregating through tribal nonprofits like the Tanana Chiefs Conference. These tribal nonprofits represent tribal interests and are separated from mandates to generate profit. Each tribal chief participates in voting on critical issues. These nonprofits elect executive board members, typically elected by the Chiefs, who then represent and advocate for interests across federally-recognized tribes.¹⁴⁹



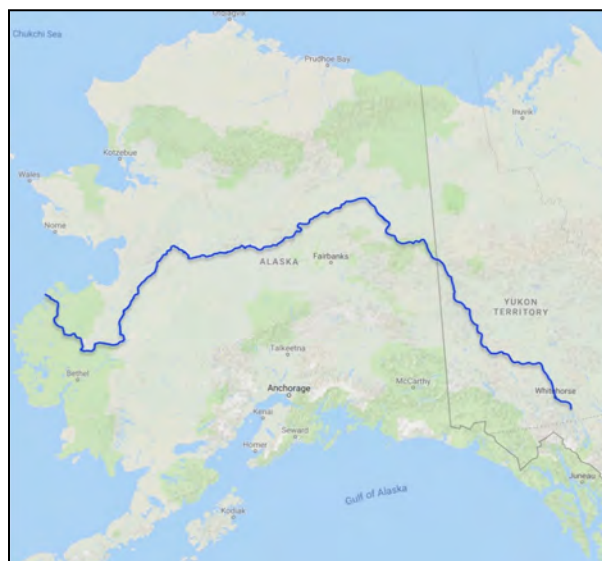
Tribal nonprofits are most often the service providers for Alaska Native villages, coordinating services such as healthcare, childcare, and more. Tribal nonprofits receive funding from the federal government to provide such services. While ANCs are corporations, they are still defined as a tribe after being established under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 and are

¹⁴⁸ CRS ANCSA Overview. 2004.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Dr. Quinn-Davidson. For a more complete list of differences between Alaska tribes and those of the Lower 48, see Jaeger, Lisa, *A Few Differences between Alaska and Lower 48 Tribes*.

also eligible for any special programs entitled to Native American Tribes.¹⁵⁰ Increasingly, ANC's are accessing funding sources that have typically been distributed to service-providing nonprofits.

ANCSA regions overlap with regions covered by tribal nonprofit services. ANCs engage in development ventures to obtain revenue for their shareholders. However, they do not directly provide services, as do tribal nonprofits, which can cause challenges when tribal service providers are not able to access the same funding opportunities. Sometimes ANCs and tribal nonprofits are in agreement over issues, such as the fight against the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples epidemic. In other cases, often around resource management, ANCs and tribal nonprofits are opposed. It is important to note that ANC's are the landholders within the Alaska Native context, and while ANC's are affiliated with tribes, land ownership does not directly translate to usable land by tribal members for housing, economic development, or otherwise. The image here details the difference in land owned by Alaska Native villages themselves compared to land holdings by ANC's. These complex and overlapping affiliations mean that Alaska Natives balance a huge diversity of political, legal, and cultural interests in their lives. One interviewee stated, *"Being an Alaska Native is very unique, not just in the hats I wear. I am a corporate shareholder; a tribal member; a US citizen; and I live in a national wildlife refuge"*¹⁵¹ — one example of the many layers of identity and experience one Alaska Native might hold.



The Yukon River is 1800 miles long and crosses over both British Columbia, Canada and Alaska. It is also home to over one hundred Alaska Native village communities, and a critical component of Alaska's diverse ecosystems. Communities along the Yukon have largely depended on the subsistence resources from the river for survival. The Tanana Chiefs Conference, the state's largest tribal nonprofit, includes communities that represent 2/3 of the river.

¹⁵⁰Haake, Kelsey. "Alaska Native Corporations Are Considered Indian Tribes Under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act." Snell & Wilmer. July 15, 2021.

¹⁵¹ Interviewee 16

Language and Definition of Terms

“Partners” not “Stakeholders”

Our report refers to individuals and organizations that are involved in climate and resource management work in affiliation to AVF as “partners.” We consciously have avoided using the term “stakeholder,” which does not convey the relationship-based values that AVF approaches its collaborative partners with.

“Tribe,” “Indigenous,” “Native,” and “Alaska-Native”

This report uses “tribe” and “tribal” is used flexibly throughout this report, in recognition that these words can refer to both a political entity (i.e. a tribal government) and to a larger social group with shared language, ancestry, and cultural practices. Typically, our report refers to tribes as political entities.

It’s important to note that our research prioritized Alaska Native leaders on the ground in the state’s Interior. We also interviewed people who identify as Indigenous but are not Alaskan, and Alaskan but not Indigenous. “Indigenous” and “Native” are used in reference to someone who claims ancestry to a tribe anywhere outside of Alaska.

“Options for Consideration” not “Recommendations”

At the end of the report, the research team has provided AVF with “options for consideration.” This language was intentionally used in lieu of the more typical policy framed “recommendations.” The rationale for this framing was done with the with assistance from the research team advisor and because the research team, simply put, is not in a position to make recommendations. We are far removed (geographically, culturally, relationally, spiritually, etc.) from the ground-level experiences of Alaska Interior tribes and, as such, can at best provide options for AVF to consider. These options were developed by bringing the pain points, needs, and lessons the research team learned from interviewees into conversation with AVF team members, Larson and Quin-Davidson. Moreover, the research team has broken their options for consideration into three buckets: 1) beaver-level, 2) crane-level, and 3) beaver-crane crossover. These groupings are further explained below.

“Beaver-level” and “Crane-level”

“What is the world we really want in 30-40 years and how do we want to get there?”¹⁵²

AVF uses this language framework in reference to possible solutions to issues they are working to address. *Beavers* change the water system, flora and fauna of their ecosystems and are classified as keystone species, i.e. those that have a disproportionately large effect on their natural environment relative to its abundance. Beavers represent ecosystem change happening on

¹⁵² Interview with Dr. Quinn-Davidson.

the ground, while *cranes* represent the high-level perspective and solutions across systems. AVF's goal is to fundamentally change the system by funding big, system-level changes.

Methodology

The research team formally and informally interviewed over 20 individuals from the following groups: 1) federal experts in climate policy and tribal policy, 2) indigenous climate scientists, 3) legal experts of Alaska Native land management, and 4) local indigenous leaders in Interior Alaska, with a focus on learning from stories on the ground-level. Despite outreach efforts, the research team was unable to interview State officials working in Alaska's Department of Fish and Game or congressional offices. This creates a knowledge gap in how the state would respond to increased, tribally-led initiatives to address climate change.

The research in this PAE treats indigenous stories as academic sources, through the framework of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), which refers to “the evolving knowledge acquired by indigenous and local peoples over hundreds or thousands of years through direct contact with the environment.”¹⁵³ This knowledge is location specific, drawing on a region and people's relationships between flora, fauna, natural phenomena, landscapes and timing of events, and practices such as hunting, fishing, trapping, agriculture, and forestry.¹⁵⁴

Lessons Learned and Options for Consideration

At the end of each chapter, researchers provide a synopsis of the lessons they learned in each topic area. These lessons were developed through semi-structured interviews, research, case study and literary analysis, and in collaboration with AVF. Specifically, Hogg and Kessler would highlight main takeaways for Jonella/Ququngaq (Yupik) Larson (the Partner and Program Director for Justice40 Initiatives at AVF), and Dr. Stephanie Quinn-Davidson (AVF's Program Director for Fisheries and Communities); incorporate AVF's feedback; and work iteratively and collaboratively with Larson and Dr. Quinn-Davidson to synthesize the lessons learned. The purpose of structuring the PAE this way and integrating cross-cutting themes from interviews in a “lessons learned” model comes from language through the MACP funding concept for AVF, which states:

Through formal interviews, outreach, and on-the-ground partner engagement, AVF will seek to better understand what is working and what isn't in various parts of these large watersheds and share these learnings with communities and partners.

Moreover, the method researchers used to choose lessons were based on 1) the needs and pain points highlighted by interviewees, and 2) how frequently these lessons came up during interviews. Simply put, lessons learned are insights for AVF to consider as they fund projects.

¹⁵³ Traditional Ecological Knowledge for Application by Service Scientists Fact Sheet.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* Several Alaska services, including, but not limited to, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game Subsistence Division, Federal Subsistence Management Program, and Yukon River subsistence users often use TEK.

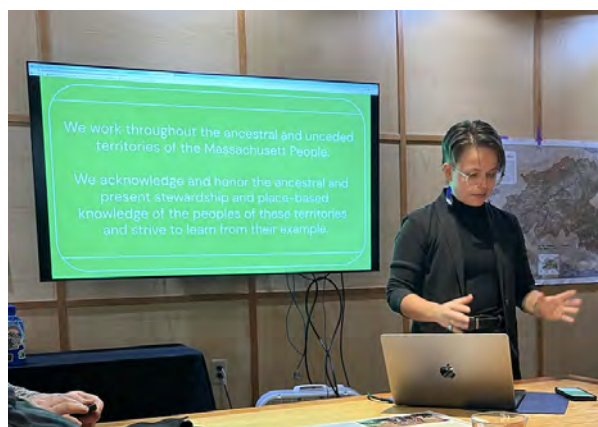
Due to limitations (lack of information, current barriers to scaling success stories up, and other implementation challenges), Hogg and Kessler have distinguished these from options for AVF to consider implementing in their seven-year timeframe. In particular, AVF's driving question is how do we move Alaska away from a resource-extraction colony to a global model of sustainability and equity in ten years? To help answer this driving question, AVF has developed the following theme areas: i) indigenous sovereignty, ii) clean ecosystems and environments, and iii) supporting democracy. As such, the options for consideration that the research team has included for AVF under the crane-level classification fall under these three themes and are geared towards their driving question to shift systems.

Evolution of TEK Semi-Structured Interview

The original interview questions incorporated language around “climate change” into our prepared semi-structured interview questions. However, the research team found that using language around “protecting [our] ways of life,” methods of “resource management,” and “subsistence” were more culturally relevant and yielded more productive conversation. As one interviewee noted succinctly put it, researchers needed to further investigate efforts to “indigenizing natural resource management,”¹⁵⁵ which refers to efforts Alaska Native leaders are making to incorporate traditional knowledge and storytelling into resource management and research at the state and federal level. This feedback had to change the way we were asking/framing some of our questions and our interviews changed over time.

TCC Convention

Researchers Hogg and Kessler attended the Tanana Chiefs Conference Convention that took place from March 13 - 16, 2023. The purpose of attending the convening was 1) to meet and thank our interviewees in person, 2) to speak with a broader array of Alaska Native tribal leaders in the Interior, and 3) to share our preliminary findings with folks on the ground to check for accuracy and timeliness. Hogg and Kessler presented our preliminary findings to a group of 10-15 people engaged in resource management, climate advocacy, academia, and tribal nonprofit leadership. The presentation was followed by a 45-minute facilitated discussion to solicit feedback on the findings' wording and accuracy. For the following two days of the convening, Hogg and Kessler conducted a series of informal interviews, many of which inform this report but are not included as “Interviewees.”



¹⁵⁵ Interviewee 5.

Appendix B: Pseudonym Guide

Hogg and Kessler Policy Analysis Exercise - Interviewee Guide, Anonymized		
<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Brief Description</i>
Interviewee 1	--	Indigenous, Alaska Native, resource management and tribal government expertise
Interviewee 2	November 30, 2022	Indigenous, non-Alaska Native, federal government experience
Interviewee 3	February 5, 2023	Non-indigenous, non-Alaska Native, Alaska expertise in academia
Interviewee 4	February 17, 2023	Indigenous, non-Alaska Native, federal government experience
Interviewee 5	December 19, 2022	Indigenous, Alaska Native, resource management and tribal government expertise
Interviewee 6	March 15, 2023	Indigenous, Alaska Native, tribal non-profit
Interviewee 7	February 12, 2022	Indigenous, Alaska Native, resource management and tribal government expertise
Interviewee 8	November 23, 2022	Indigenous, Alaska Native, resource management
Interviewee 9	December 19, 2022	Indigenous, Alaska Native, resource management and tribal government expertise
Interviewee 10	February 17, 2023	Non-indigenous, non-Alaska Native, federal government experience
Interviewee 11	February 17, 2023	Non-indigenous, non-Alaska Native, Alaska Native legal expertise
Interviewee 12	February 15, 2023	Indigenous, non-Alaska Native, academia
Interviewee 13	December 22, 2022	Non-indigenous, non-Alaska Native, federal government experience
Interviewee 14	March 15, 2023	Indigenous, Alaska Native, tribal nonprofit and cultural education
Interviewee 15	December 15, 2022	Indigenous, Alaska Native, tribal government official
Interviewee 16	December 15, 2022	Indigenous, Alaska Native, community advocate and nonprofit leader
Interviewee 17	December 22, 2022	Indigenous, Alaska Native, non-tribal specific resource management
Interviewee 18	December 15, 2022	Indigenous, Alaska Native, tribal nonprofit and academia
Interviewee 19	March 15, 2023	Indigenous, Alaska Native, resource management and tribal government expertise

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Information ahead of time:

- NAME:
- CURRENT ROLE:
- PAST ROLES:
- CONTACT THROUGH:

Interview Template

Introduction & Consent

Thanks so much for speaking with us today. I know that you are ____ and are connected to AVF through Stephanie. My name is [Vic/Leah] and this is my partner [Vic/Leah]. We are both in graduate school, getting our masters in public policy at the Harvard Kennedy School and are working on a project with Alaska Venture Fund to better understand what has and has not been successful in regards to federal investments in climate mitigation efforts in collaboration with inland Alaska Native tribes. Your perspective and insights will support Alaska Venture Fund's work funding inland Alaska tribes in climate-related resource management. We plan to share our findings with Alaska Native organizations when we complete the project in April, and hope it will benefit your work related with _____. Individually, you will also receive a payment of \$250 for participating, that will be paid through check from the Alaska Venture Fund.

Any information you share may be included in our final project, as general information or as direct quotations. All data will be anonymized, and we will run any quotes by you.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you are welcome to stop at any time or choose to not answer any questions if you would like. We've set aside about 45 minutes for today's interview. Does that still work for you? Do you have any questions about anything I've mentioned so far?

[general flow: opening/general question → specific questions → ending with open-ended questions and questions for other people]

*Note: **Bold** indicates priority for the section

Opening Question

- **Could you tell us a little bit more about yourself/introduce yourself?**
- **Could you tell us a little bit about *[your organization]* and the work you do for them [if they don't answer specifically before in first Q]? In what ways does *[enter organization/tribe/collaboration]* work relate to climate change and resource mitigation?**

Funding Mechanisms

- **What examples of climate mitigation and resource management efforts are incorporated into your organization's current resource management programs?**
 - **If not: Are there plans to incorporate climate mitigation efforts into your rm programs?**
 - **If not: Have you considered funding opportunities that address both climate mitigation efforts with current salmon/fire/permafrost melt?**
 - **If so, how have those been funded?**
 - **What was the process of receiving that funding?**
 - How has that funding for climate mitigation efforts differ from funding received and used for other programs?
 - What did collaboration look like between the funder and recipient during the grant lifecycle?
 - How did the funding come to fruition? What was the origin story of the funding program? How does that affect the amount of funding?
 - How much does this funding come from the federal government? Which agencies have you worked with? Who do you feel like you have a good relationship with?

Organizational-specific Questions

- What prompted your move from working in state and federal agencies to working outside of them? What does your current role enable you to do that your previous roles did not?
 - What percentage of your funding comes from state and federal agencies? Have you considered working outside of them?
 - What has helped to build successful relationships between tribes and funders for climate initiatives or other programs? What hasn't worked? Ultimately, what does success look like for you and who you represent (citizens/community)?
 - **What partnerships have you found to be most fruitful? How did you decide who the right people were to bring on board?**

Success Factors

- In your experience in these multiple roles, what makes federally funded programs in collaboration with tribes successful/not successful?
 - How does climate change affect all of these things we've been asking about: the way you are working with others; creative ways to work together/projects to work on; relationships to feds and non-profits? Getting at climate change as a relationship crisis with indigenous people. How is the climate crisis shifting what you do
 - Question about values? Would you say that the climate crisis is a relationship crisis with Indigenous peoples who have strong relationship ties to the land and environment? Are funders on board with supporting this understanding? (not

pivoting away)? How are the best partnerships able to do that? How do people really measure success? What does success look like for this commission? ← start with this question - how do you define success? What has led to that kind of success?

- What does success look like for climate mitigation efforts with tribes?

Management Structure

- **Could you tell us a little bit more about the management structure of the [organization]? What is the decision-making structure of the corporation, and how has that worked? Do people serve formally? How do new people get selected?**
- What's going wrong? What would you like to change?

Intertribal Collaboration

- **What do you find to be the biggest barrier to collaboration between tribes? What difference would it make if there was more collaboration?**

Ending Questions

- We've spoken about a lot today. Is there anything you think we failed to ask or missed?
- Is there anyone else you would suggest us reaching out to for an interview?
- Would you be willing to share ___ that you mentioned for us to read?

Notes:

Appendix D: Interview Synthesis Guide

NAME: CURRENT ROLE: PAST ROLES: CONNECTION THROUGH:	
Key notes / quotes:	
Recurring Themes / Takeaways	
Name of other interviewee they gave us contact information for	
Lingering Questions	
Follow Up Tasks	
Thank you email: Sent/Unsent	
Follow ups needed to be included in email/ or later for interviewee	
If applicable, who will follow up with the other person they provided contact for and by when	

Riverwise Approach: Alaska Native-led initiatives to address impacts of climate change

By Vic Hogg and Leah Kessler

Research Question and Goal

Due to the fragmented nature of public funding programs and land management authorities, work to address climate impacts (wildfire, permafrost melt, and salmon decline) amongst Alaska Native communities tends to become siloed and reactionary. Because of this, community engagement also tends to be organized around one crisis and not the other. The *Alaska Venture Fund* is launching a grant program to fund locally-led climate resiliency programs amongst interior Alaska Tribes to answer: **what solutions for community resilience and better stewardship of ecosystems lay at the intersection of these three climate crises and within Indigenous communities?**

Two students at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government attempted to answer this question through interviews with stakeholders across grassroots organizations, state and federal government, and tribal leadership. The goal of this research is to more deeply understand success factors and pain points of existing grassroots, tribally-led climate impact efforts, and to inform upcoming funding opportunities with these findings. **Our ambition over the course of the TCC Convention is to ensure that a broad variety of Alaska Native community members and climate experts can contribute to these recommendations.**

Findings

Ch. 1: Funding

Pain Points	Needs	Recommendations
<p><i>“Federal and state funding prescribed narratives/projects – these will never lead to the solutions we all seek for our children and fish.”</i></p> <p>Repeated concern that prescribed funding programs by state and federal government leave little flexibility for tribally-led initiatives to manage lands.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More funding opportunities in higher amounts • Non-competitive • Unrestricted • Recurring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide recurring, unrestricted funding with no strings attached • Fund advocacy for federal budget lines • Replicating funding models for regional tribal healthcare

Ch. 2: Representation

Pain Points	Needs	Recommendations
<p><i>“Each org in [our coalition], before they had staff, would bring together volunteers to facilitate meetings, take notes, etc...”</i></p> <p>People are burnt out and spread thin, taking on lots of responsibilities and tasks that are either beyond their job description and/or that they are volunteering and not being paid for.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support for existing collaboration effort • Structures that ensure representation across villages • Committees/agencies specifically designated to coordinate tribal efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support intertribal resource management commissions • Research and replicate community engagement nonprofits that are involving communities in state advocacy

Ch. 3: Tribal Advocacy

Pain Points	Needs	Recommendations
<p><i>“Not just monitoring for monitoring’s sake. Trying to show up so we have access and keep livelihood alive. Whether or not it happens depends on all these incredibly entrenched power structures. What is data used for? For us as indigenous people, we want to shift the system that works for us.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data sovereignty • Grassroots mobilization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund grassroots community engagement organizations that are doing lobbying at the state level • Develop community champion program • Support data sovereignty initiatives

Ch. 4: Long-term Resilience

Pain Points	Needs	Recommendations
<p><i>“The funding isn’t enough, to build capacity, to hire researchers...If we had more money, we’d hire more employees, buy more equipment, have a bigger office space...be able to do more in-river, locally employed, involved with fish management...build a pipeline.”</i></p> <p><i>“Projects fall off because we don’t have capacity to write these grants for projects... like youth development ones.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and youth development • Training and employment opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build talent pipelines of young people who are training for resource management and tribal leadership positions in the future • Fellowship Program • Apprenticeship and resource management programs for youth and adults

Methods

Our research team conducted interviews with the following stakeholders:

- Local indigenous leaders in Interior Alaska
- Indigenous climate scientists
- Legal experts of Alaska land management
- Federal experts in climate and tribal policy

Questions for TCC Presentation

1. What criteria do you think is most important to evaluate these recommendations on? What are we missing?
 - a. Are all of these of equal importance? How would you prioritize these?
 - b. Is there a sense of timing? Short-term, long-term?
 - c. Existing criteria:
 - i. Fosters stronger intertribal relationships and collaboration
 - ii. Secures healthy lives now and for future generations
 - iii. Expands capacity to mitigate climate harms in ways that are healthy and sustainable
 - iv. Strengthens self-determination
 - v. Indigenous-led and uplifting indigenous knowledge and values
2. If we have this money and we’ve identified the pain points correctly, how would you envision the future?
 - a. What are we missing if we move forward with these recommendations?
 - b. What is keeping you from realizing the future you want?



Concept to the Margaret A Cargill Philanthropies (MACP)

The ninety federally recognized Tribes of the vast, largely roadless watersheds of the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers of Alaska are among the most vulnerable communities in Alaska and the world. Economically disadvantaged and historically marginalized, these communities face three new intersecting disasters fueled by climate change: 1) collapse of the king and chum salmon fisheries 2) increasing wildfire, and 3) melting permafrost. Individually, these disasters are formidable; collectively, they have the potential to devastate Indigenous people, their communities, and their cultures as well as the lands and waters they have stewarded for millennia. The great boreal forest ecosystem—[now increasingly recognized as one of the most important forests globally for climate change](#)—and its life-giving arteries of wild salmon rivers are staggering under warming rates up to three times greater than the rest of the planet, with profound consequences to Indigenous peoples:

Collapse of Wild Salmon Fisheries. For millennia, the Indigenous peoples of this region have relied first and foremost on wild salmon as their most important food source and the heart of their cultural identities. In recent decades, drying wetlands, increasing freshwater temperatures, mobilization of contaminants by melting soils, changes in ocean conditions, and other factors have resulted [in a series of run failures and, last year, the simultaneous collapse of both the king and chum fisheries](#). Without local harvest, food must be flown or barged in, making the cost of groceries among the most expensive in the US. Without salmon, generations of culture, tradition, and knowledge are being lost.

Increasing Wildfires. Wildfires in the continental US get more attention than those in Alaska, but [fires in Alaska amplify climate change more](#) than others. Fires in Alaska are increasing in frequency and size, as the fire seasons lengthens due to a feedback loop of earlier snow melt, later winters, higher temperatures, spruce bark beetle infestations, more frequent lightning strikes, and changing vegetation. These wildfires pose increasing threats to local communities through reduction in air quality, economic opportunity and subsistence resources and their magnitude is threatening the larger ecosystem and the planet. Nowhere is the wildfire risk in Alaska greater than in the Yukon-Kuskokwim watersheds.

Thawing Permafrost. In the Arctic and Subarctic, thawing permafrost is [one of the most significant climate change feedback loops with global consequences](#). As perennially frozen ground melts, both carbon dioxide and methane, a greenhouse gas 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide, are released, hastening warming and more permafrost melt. Much of the Yukon and Kuskokwim watersheds is underlain by permafrost, presenting an environmental justice crisis for its residents whose homes, villages, food sources, transportation, economies, cultures, and ways of life are increasingly imperiled as the grounds shifts, riverbanks erode, and contaminants are increasingly mobilized.

Due to the fragmented nature of public funding programs and land management authorities, much of the work to address these crises from a government perspective is relatively siloed and reactionary. As a result, community engagement also tends to be organized around one crisis and not the other (for example, several watershed-wide coalitions focus only on salmon/water management) even though from a community experience these issues intersect and create cascading crises in food security and local economies.

The most powerful solutions for community resilience and better stewardship of these ecosystems likely lies at the intersection of these issues and within Indigenous communities empowered to shape and lead holistic approaches for their futures. For example, a co-management regime on public lands might facilitate an Indigenous guardians program, weaving specific community interests together with monitoring of water quality, salmon runs, permafrost thaw and other ecosystem dynamics, wildfire management training, restoration of placer mining sites and new food security programs. Such a program might provide jobs that

generate economic activity, sustain families yearlong rather than seasonally, build community resiliency over time, and result in greater conservation and stewardship outcomes.

AVF and our partners propose to develop a new and integrated, community-based approach to building community resilience and addressing climate change within the Yukon and Kuskokwim watersheds. With seed funding from MACP, AVF will:

1. *Complete a formal lesson-learned analysis of tribal and grassroots coalitions and agency efforts in the Yukon and Kuskokwim watersheds.* Through formal interviews, outreach, and on-the-ground stakeholder engagement, AVF will seek to better understand what is working and what isn't in various parts of these large watersheds and share these learnings with communities and partners.
2. *Investigate and pilot a subregional, community cluster approach.* In watersheds this vast that cross so many Indigenous language groups and even geopolitical borders, focusing on clusters of communities sharing traditional language, kinship ties, and key landscape features may provide an essential organizing mechanism for greater resilience and impact. AVF and our partners will pilot at least one cluster and share learnings across the entire region.
3. *Leverage the opportunities of the Justice40 Initiative of the Biden Administration, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and private funding streams to strengthen long-term community and ecosystem resilience.* There is an immediate, time-limited opportunity over the next three years to tap into this once-in-a-generation funding stream and translate it into long-term community resilience for Yukon and Kuskokwim communities.
4. *Connect Yukon and Kuskokwim efforts with other place-based approaches in Alaska and beyond.* AVF conducted an [Indigenous Ecosystem Stewardship Exchange Program](#) that allowed Alaska Native leaders from Bering Strait, Bristol Bay, and Southeast Alaska to learn from global efforts and each other. AVF will expand that network to include information sharing, idea generation, and pilot programs in the Yukon and Kuskokwim watersheds.

AVF is well positioned to undertake this effort and to connect and leverage MACP funds. Our team is uniquely networked both within this region and with allied efforts across Alaska. Dr. Stephanie Quinn-Davidson, for example, leads our Fisheries and Communities work. An Indigenous woman formally trained as a fisheries biologist and with extensive experience directing the Yukon River Intertribal Fish Commission, Dr. Quinn-Davidson bridges scientific, community, and Indigenous perspectives. AVF's overall team has extensive experience in seeding successful community-based efforts, such as the Sustainable Southeast Partnership, and we have strong relationships with agency and university partners. Nascent efforts in several communities provide grassroots platforms for growth. In the village of Nenana, for example, efforts to [reduce fire hazards while increasing food security](#) involve building community greenhouses powered by biomass generators run on beetle-killed spruce.

Climate change is happening earlier and more quickly in Alaska than other parts of the world, providing a map of what we will face elsewhere. It is imperative that we listen and invest in leaders and ideas that show how Indigenous-led solutions for mitigation, adaptation, and resilience can be replicated to help people throughout Alaska and around the world. This opportunity in the Yukon and Kuskokwim region of Alaska provides a compelling opportunity to do so. Support from MACP will allow us to work more deeply with Indigenous leaders and federal agencies in this region to further develop the ideas that have the greatest potential for scalable, long-term impact for these communities and for the world.

Local Initiatives to Address Climate Impacts in Interior Alaska Native Villages

Vic Hogg and Leah Kessler

We work throughout the ancestral and unceded territories of the Massachusetts People.

We acknowledge and honor the ancestral and present stewardship and place-based knowledge of the peoples of these territories and strive to learn from their example.

Introduction to the Policy Analysis Exercise (PAE)

A client-based project that takes place over two semesters involving direct research



HARVARD
Kennedy School

Client



Alaska Venture Fund is a philanthropic partner and social-change incubator building a more sustainable future for Alaska and beyond.

Impetus for this project

Problem:

1. Due to the fragmented nature of public funding programs and land management authorities, much of the work to address climate impacts (wildfire, permafrost melt, and salmon decline) are siloed and reactionary.
2. Community engagement also tends to be organized around one crisis and not the other.

Solution:

AVF is driving philanthropic initiatives to locally-led climate resiliency programs amongst interior Alaska Tribes.

Research Question

What solutions for community resilience and better stewardship of ecosystems lay at the intersection of these issues and within Indigenous communities?

Interviews



Federal experts in
climate policy and
tribal policy



Indigenous climate
scientists



Local indigenous
leaders in Interior
Alaska



Legal experts of
Alaska Native land
management

Goal for Today's Presentation

Our ambition over the course of the TCC Convention is to ensure that a broad variety of Alaska Native community members and climate experts can contribute to these recommendations, and to make sure we clearly understand what's being suggested by our interviewees.

Lessons Learned & Recommendations

Chapter 1: Funding

“Most funders give money for very narrow things [...] Have to fit whatever project they want to get done in their little box. Might not be what is best for your community. Having fewer restrictions would be good for the tribes.”

“...A lot of our work involves gathering local knowledge. A lot of the grants we apply for – our work doesn’t fit into what they are asking for. They want quantitative data, ‘make sure you do this, or the information you gather means nothing and won’t be usable’.”

Chapter 1: Funding

Recommendations:

1. Provide recurring, unrestricted funding with no strings attached
2. Fund advocacy for federal budget lines
3. Replicating funding models for regional tribal healthcare

Chapter 2: Intertribal collaboration and representation

Recommendations:

1. Support intertribal resource management commissions
2. Research and replicate community engagement nonprofits that are involving communities in state advocacy

“What does community engagement look like? First, making sure that people know meetings (with fisheries) are happening [...] but also listening to people about stewardship and indigenous knowledge – to figure out what is best way to move forward with fisheries according to their knowledge and beliefs.”

Chapter 3: Tribal Advocacy

Recommendations:

1. Fund grassroots community engagement organizations that are doing lobbying at the state level
2. Develop community champion program
3. Support data sovereignty initiatives – collaborative / tribally-led research

“Our ability to synthesize that data and tell it to them is big. Not to trust the information that’s out there, but to better inform [ourselves] and quantify what our elders are telling us.”

Chapter 4: Long-term Resilience

Recommendations:

1. Build talent pipelines of young people who are training for resource management and tribal leadership positions in the future
2. Fellowship Program
3. Apprenticeship and resource management programs for youth and adults

“The funding isn’t enough, to build capacity, to hire researchers...If we had more money, we’d hire more employees, buy more equipment, have a bigger office space...be able to do more in-river, locally employed, involved with fish management...build a pipeline.”

Visioning

- If we have this money and we've identified the pain points correctly, how would you envision the future?
- What are we missing if we move forward with these recommendations?
- What is keeping you from realizing the future you want?

Criteria for Recommendations

1. Fosters stronger intertribal relationships and collaboration
2. Secures healthy lives now and for future generations
3. Expands capacity to mitigate climate harms in ways that are healthy and sustainable
4. Strengthens self-determination
5. Indigenous-led and uplifting indigenous knowledge and values

Questions

- What criteria do you think is most important to evaluate these recommendations on? What are we missing?
- Are all of these of equal importance? How would you prioritize these?
- Is there a sense of timing? Short-term, long-term?

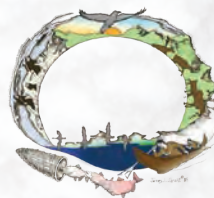
**Thank you for
sharing with us!**

THE FUTURE IS INDIGENOUS



AGENDA

2023 TCC Annual Convention &
Full Board of Directors Meetings



Tanana
Chiefs
Conference

The Future is Indigenous

Tanana Chiefs Conference's 2023 Annual Convention and Full Board of Director's theme is *The Future is Indigenous*. We hope that this year's theme empowers our people and our tribes to continue to thrive and occupy spaces where indigenous people have not had the opportunity to before. When we look toward the future – we see strong indigenous voices rising up and empowering one another.



Watch the Live Broadcast

The 2023 TCC Annual Convention will be broadcast live on our website at www.tananachiefs.org/live



Join The Conversation

Are you posting about the Annual Convention on social media? Use #TheFutureIsIndigenous to let others join the conversation and see what others are posting!

Westmark Rooms:

Harper Room: Yukon Koyukuk Caucus Room / H&FTF
 Chena Room: Lower Yukon Caucus Room / Communications Room
 Yukon Room: Yukon Tanana Caucus Room / staff & overflow
 Minto Room: Yukon Flats Caucus Room / staff & overflow
 Gold Room: Upper Kuskokwim Caucus Room with iPads
 Rampart Room: Upper Tanana Caucus Room / staff & overflow
 Room 108: Behavioral Health Client Room
 Room 110: TCS Client Room
 Room 112: Realty Client Room

Honoring Dinner

Saturday, March 11, 2023 • 6:00pm

Westmark Gold Room – Limited to the first 300 people

The following awards will be presented: Patti Hyslop Sobriety Award, Operator of the Year, Utility Manager of the Year, Public Safety Awards, Foster Parents of the Year and TCC Employees of the Year.

TCC Services Fair

Monday, March 13th-Tuesday, March 14th
 Northern Latitudes Room

Arts and Crafts Bazaar

Wednesday, March 15th – Thursday, March 16th
 Northern Latitudes Room

MONDAY, MARCH 13

Delegates Meeting

- 8:30 am** **CALL TO ORDER – ANNUAL DELEGATES MEETING**
 Rev. Dr. Trimble Gilbert, 1st Traditional Chief
 Brian Ridley, Chief/Chairman
Invocation – TBD
- 8:40 am** **Presentation of Colors**
 Alaska Native Veterans Association
- 8:55 am** **Welcome Address**
 Rev. Dr. Trimble Gilbert, 1st Traditional Chief
 Brian Ridley, Chief/Chairman
- 9:25 am** **Welcome Andrew Jimmie as 2nd Traditional Chief, Minto**
- 9:45 am** **In Memoriam**
 Charlie Wright, Secretary/Treasurer
- 9:55 am** **Committee Assignments**
 Brian Ridley, Chief/Chairman
- RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE**

<p>Lower Yukon: Robert Walker</p> <p>Upper Tanana: Daisy Northway</p> <p>Yukon Koyukuk: Charlie Green</p>	<p>Upper Kuskokwim: Vernon John</p> <p>Yukon Flats: Rhonda Pitka</p> <p>Yukon Tanana: Lori Baker</p>
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ELECTIONS / CREDENTIAL COMMITTEE

<p>Lower Yukon: Robert Walker</p> <p>Upper Tanana: Karma Ulvi</p> <p>Yukon Koyukuk: Don Honea, Jr.</p>	<p>Upper Kuskokwim: Thomas Abraham</p> <p>Yukon Flats: Rhonda Pitka</p> <p>Yukon Tanana: John Demientieff</p>
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- 10:00 am** **BREAK**
- 10:15 am** **Welcome Address**
 Aaron Schutt, President / CEO, Doyon, Limited
 Steve Ginnis, Executive Director, Fairbanks Native Association
 Orie Williams, Executive Director, Interior Regional Housing Authority
- 11:00 am** **Welcome Address - Mayors**
 David Pruhs, Mayor, City of Fairbanks
 Bryce Ward, Mayor, Fairbanks North Star Borough
 Michael Welch, Mayor, City of North Pole
- 11:30 am** **Elders Report**
 Sharon McConnell, Executive Director, Denakkanaaga
 Jack Wholecheese, Huslia, 1st Chief, Denakkanaaga Board of Directors
- Emerging Leaders Report**
 Alex Hanna, Youth Advisor, TCC Executive Board of Directors

MONDAY, MARCH 13

Delegates Meeting

12:00 pm **WORKING LUNCH – LUNCH PROVIDED**

1:00 pm **Congressional Delegation**
Congresswoman Mary Peltola, US House of Representatives

1:30 pm **Introduction of Theme and Keynote Speaker**
Brian Ridley, Chief/Chairman

Keynote Address
Quannah Chasinghorse, Eagle

2:45 pm **BREAK**

3:15 pm **Candidate Speeches**
Chief/Chairman Seat
IRHA Open Seats

4:30 pm **IT Security Update**

5:00 pm **RECESS**

5:30 pm **Welcome Reception**
Hosted by the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce
Chief David Salmon Tribal Hall



TUESDAY, MARCH 14

Delegates Meeting

8:30 am	Reconvene Invocation Shirley Lee Moment of Silence for Missing and Murdered Loved Ones FNA & TCC MMIP Response Update Shirley Lee, Strategic Development/Justice Director, Fairbanks Native Association Brittany Madros, Tribal Government and Justice Division Director, TCC
8:40 am	Elder Housing and Services Amber Vaska, Executive Director of Tribal Government and Client Services – Moderator Paul Ostbloom, TCC Home Care Manager Orie Williams, Chief Executive Officer, Interior Regional Housing Authority Karma Ulvi, First Chief of Eagle Alaska Housing Finance Corporation Question & Answer
10:00 am	BREAK
10:15 am	Responding to Challenges in Rural Education Amber Vaska, Executive Director of Tribal Government and Client Services Stephanie Hinz, Education & Indigenous Learning Manager Dr. Kristi Graber, ELA Content Specialist, Alaska Department of Education and Early Development - <i>virtual</i> Deborah Riddle, Division Operations Manager, Alaska Department of Education and Early Development - <i>virtual</i> Lon Garrison, Executive Director, Association of Alaska School Boards Sarah Sledge, Executive Director, Coalition for Education Equity Question & Answer
12:00 pm	WORKING LUNCH BREAK – LUNCH PROVIDED



TUESDAY, MARCH 14

Delegates Meeting

1:00 pm	Congressional Delegates Lisa Murkowski, Senator, US Senate Senator Dan Sullivan, US Senate
1:50 pm	Broadband Dave Messier, Community Infrastructure & Development Division Director - Moderator Sarah Obed, Senior V. P. External Affairs, Doyon, Limited Kathleen Redmond, V. P. Strategy and Operations, Alaska Communications (ACS) Melissa Kookesh, Tribal Liaison, Alaska Broadband Office
	Question & Answer
2:15pm	Energy Wahleah Johns, Director of the US Department of Energy Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs Mr. Kevin Williams, Director, Division of Material Safety, Security State and Tribal Programs, US Nuclear Regulatory Commission – Eielson Nuclear Reactor Project Update
	Question & Answer
3:15 pm	BREAK
3:30 pm	Health Services Overview Jacoline Bergstrom, Executive Director Health Services, TCC
	Question & Answer
5:00 pm	ADJOURN
6:00 pm	Walking Two Worlds Documentary Premiere Westmark Hotel Gold Room

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15

Directors Meeting

8:30 am	CALL TO ORDER & INVOCATION– ANNUAL FULL BOARD OF DIRECTORS Rev. Dr. Trimble Gilbert, 1 st Traditional Chief Brian Ridley, Chief/Chairman, TCC
8:35 am	Credentials Committee Report Committee Chairperson
8:45 am	Roll Call and Establishment of Quorum Charlie Wright, Secretary/Treasurer Election Committee Report Election Committee Chairperson Adoption of Agenda Brian Ridley, Chief/Chairman Adoption of March 14 - 17, 2022 Delegates & Full Board of Directors Meeting Minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 15-17, 2022 Special Full Board Meeting Minutes Sharon Hildebrand, Vice-President
9:00 am	TCC Chief/Chairman's Report Brian Ridley, Chief/Chairman, TCC Question & Answer
10:00 am	BREAK
10:15 am	Financial Report Ben Shilling, Acting Chief Finance Officer Question & Answer
12:00 pm	WORKING LUNCH – LUNCH PROVIDED

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15

Directors Meeting

1:00 pm

Wellness Panel: Behavioral Health Prevention and Treatment

Ashley Powe, Wellness and Prevention Director, TCC

Ginessa Sams, Behavioral Health Director, TCC

Perry Ahsogek, Behavioral Health Director, Fairbanks Native Association

Question & Answer

Resource Panel

Brittany Madros, Tribal Government and Justice Division Director, TCC

Dan Nelson, Pharmacy Director, TCC

Dr. Stephen Odegard, MD Medication Assisted Treatment Provider, TCC

Project Hope (Fairbanks)

3:00 pm

BREAK

3:15 pm

Question & Answer Continued

5:00 pm

RECESS



THURSDAY, MARCH 16

Directors Meeting

8:30 am

Reconvene

Brian Ridley, Chief/Chairman, TCC

8:40 am

Invocation – TBA**Resolutions Committee Report**

Resolutions Committee Chairperson

Consideration of Resolutions

Will Mayo, Chairperson

10:00 am

BREAK

10:15 am

Consideration of Resolutions Continued

Will Mayo, Chairperson

11:30 am

Elections**Elections Committee Report**

Elections Committee Chairperson

12:00 pm

Working Lunch

1:15 pm

ELECTIONS:**Ratification of Subregional Advisory Board Elections ~ Election Chairperson****TCC Executive Board of Directors**

- **Upper Tanana Subregion – 3 year term (2023 - 2026)**
 - *currently Herbie Demit, Tanacross*
- **Yukon Koyukuk Subregion – 3 year term (2023 - 2026)**
 - *currently Charlie Green, Loudon - interim*

TCC Regional Health Advisory Board

- **Yukon Flats Subregion – 3 year term (2023 – 2026)**
 - *currently Patricia Salmon, Chalkyitsik*

TCC Education Council

- **Yukon Tanana Subregion – 3 year term (2023 – 2026)**
 - *currently Phyllis Erhart, Tanana*

Interior Athabaskan Tribal College Board Trustees

- **Yukon Tanana Subregion — 3 year term (2022 – 2025)**
 - *currently Vacant*
- **Yukon Flats Subregion – 3 year term (2022 – 2025)**
 - *currently Vacant*
- **Upper Tanana Subregion – 3 year term (2023 – 2026)**
 - *currently Gerald Albert, Northway*
- **Lower Yukon Subregion – 3 year term (2021 – 2024)**
 - *currently Vacant*

THURSDAY, MARCH 16

Directors Meeting

IRHA Board of Commissioners	<u>Interior Regional Housing Authority Board of Commissioners:</u> Election for one seat – from the Official List of Candidates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seat E – 3 year term (2023 – 2026) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Currently Fred Bifelt, Huslia</i>
IRHA QUESTION & ANSWER	IRHA Board of Commissioners Question & Answer
IRHA – CAST BALLOTS	Cast Ballots: Interior Regional Housing Authority Board of Commissioners
AFN Village Representative	AFN Village Representative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominations and Election for One (1) seat – 1 year term (2023 - 2024) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>currently Julie Roberts-Hyslop, Tanana</i>
SPEECHES	AFN Village Representative Speeches – 3 minutes each
AFN Village Representative-CAST BALLOTS	Cast Ballots: AFN Village Representative
TCC Chief/Chairman	<u>TCC Officer Seat: Chief/Chairman</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election – 3 year term (2023 – 2026) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Currently Brian Ridley, Eagle</i>
TCC Chief/Chairman Q&A	TCC Chief/Chairman Question & Answer (<i>*If required</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From the Official List of Candidates Election Committee Chairperson, Moderator
TCC Chief/Chairman CAST BALLOT	Cast Ballots: TCC Officer Seat – Chief/Chairman Outgoing Executive Board members address(es) – <i>if any</i>
Swearing in Ceremony	TCC Executive Board and TCC Chief/Chairman
5:00 pm	ADJOURN – ANNUAL FULL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING Brian Ridley, Chief/Chairman, TCC
6:00pm	Honoring Potlatch Chief David Salmon Tribal Hall

THANK YOU!

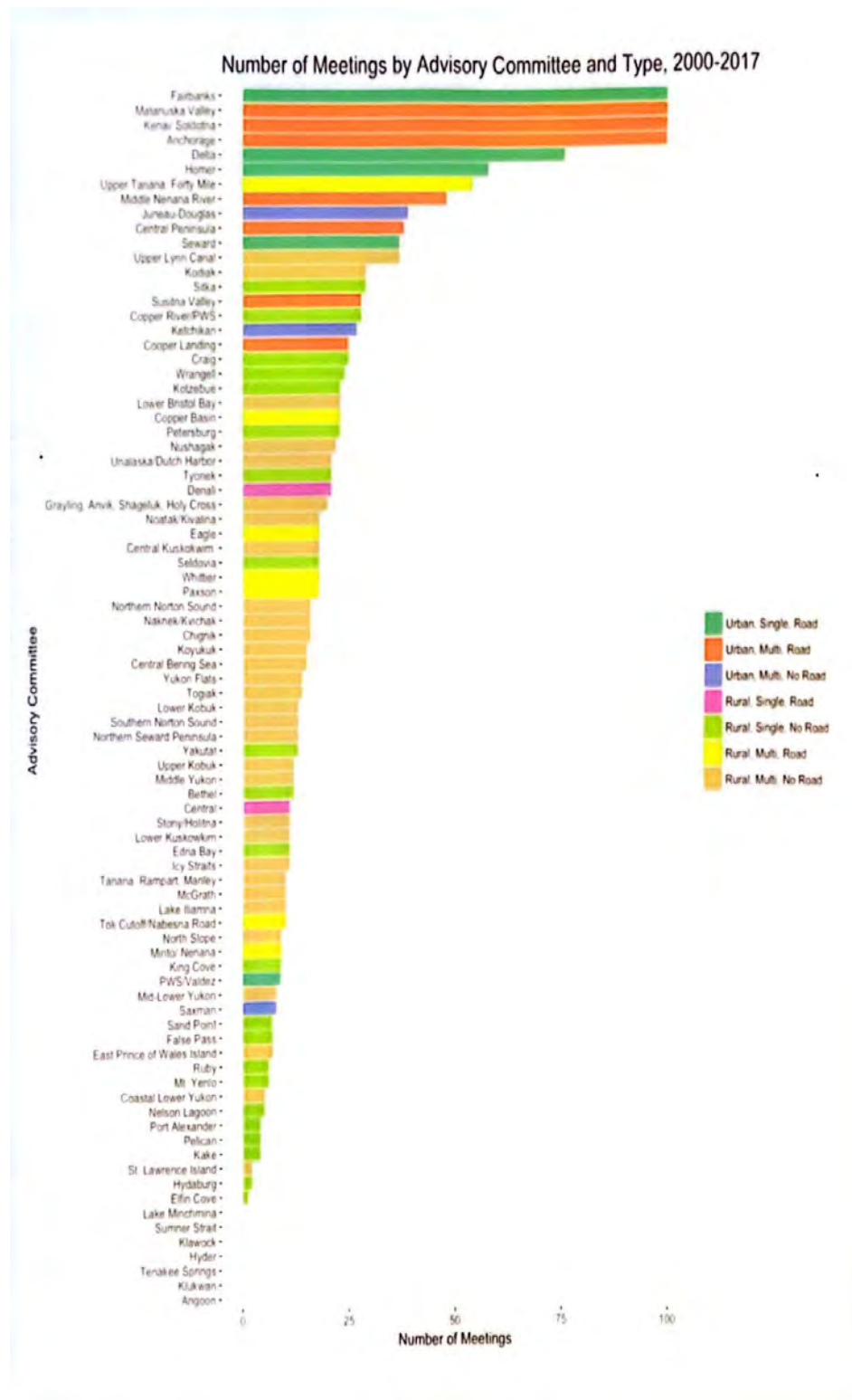
**Maasee' | Dogidinh | Tsenan
Mahsi' | Tsin'ee | Enaa Baasee'**



We would like to acknowledge and thank the Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation for their generous donation as well as the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce for their gifts to our delegates.



Appendix I: Meetings by Advisory Committee



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