Growing Your Own

Building Community Development Capacity in Rural Alaska Through Community Driven Educational Programs

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Tribal Management (TM) began at and is housed within the Interior Alaska Campus.

The Department of Alaska Native Studies and Rural Development (DANSRD) began at the Fairbanks campus and is housed within the College of Rural and Community Development.

Both programs are accessible statewide.
Mapping Alaska

Who we serve: Alaska’s tribes and rural communities.

Alaska’s languages and cultures.
Dimensions of Community Development in Rural Alaska

- The Department of Alaska Native Studies and Rural Development and the Tribal Management Program recognize that:
  - Community development is a process, not a project.
  - Cultural priorities must be honored for meaningful community development.
  - Alaska Native ways of knowing are vital to the process.
  - Western education can be delivered alongside and in cooperation with traditional education to produce leaders who are stronger in both systems.
- Educational programs are a cultural partnership to support local community needs.
Cultural and place-based educational programs derived from and in support of community

- Evolving community-identified needs
- Educational program development and curriculum enhancements
- Flexible, place-based delivery
- Student internships, projects, and theses in their communities
Rural Development Program, Department of Alaska Native Studies and Rural Development

- The Rural Development program was developed to address the need for rural and Alaska Native peoples to direct and manage the development of their communities.
  - Developed partially in response to the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act that established 12 regional for profit corporations and 203 village corporations.
  - BA developed 1984 (statewide distance program, 1994)
  - MA developed 2000

Marjorie Tahbone, Miss Indian World 2011 and Alaska Native Studies graduate, and Kelsey Ciugun Wallace, Miss WEIO 2011, Rural Development graduate. Photo credit: Todd Paris, UAF Marketing & Communication
Rural Development Curriculum

- The BA in **Rural Development** offers concentrations in:
  - Rural Community Business and Economic Development
  - Community Research and Indigenous Knowledge
  - Natural Resource Development
  - Community Health and Welfare
  - Indigenous Organizational Management
- The MA in Rural Development offers courses in many topics including:
  - Circumpolar Indigenous Leadership
  - Community Development Strategies
  - Political Economy of the Circumpolar North
  - Community-Based Research Methods
  - Management Strategies for Rural Development
- Student seminars that bring student cohorts together are an integral part of both programs.

Physical location of DANSRD students during the 2011-2012 academic year.
Tribal Management Program, Interior Alaska Campus

- The **tribal management program** was developed by a statewide team of advisors with the goal of providing a degree tailored to meet the unique needs of Alaska’s tribal governments.
  - Sixty credit A.A.S. and 30 Certificate developed in 2001
  - Nine credit Occupational Endorsements also available
- Tribal Management faculty also administer the [Alaska Tribal Technical Assistance Program Center](#) to provide transportation program development and technical assistance, workshops and courses to Tribes across Alaska.

Prof. Kevin Illingworth and TM graduate Roxanne Knudson, Fort Yukon
Tribal Management and TTAP

- Tribal Management offers concentrations for Certificates and A.A.S. degrees in:
  - Community & Economic Development
  - Community Health & Wellness
  - Environmental & Natural Resources
  - Tribal Governance & Law
  - Tribal Planning
  - Tribal Transportation
- Occupational Endorsements
  - Tribal Justice
  - Rural Utility Business Management

Tribal court judges and administrators from the Bethel region gather to take a class in tribal justice.
Distance Delivery Models

- Majority of Alaska’s rural communities are only accessible by airplane, boat, or snowmachine.
- The majority of students are older, working, parents, and active members of their communities.
- Programs must be delivered creatively both in terms of location and time
  - Face-to-face
  - Audio-Conference
  - Internet (primarily synchronous)
  - Faculty to the village
  - Students to a village hub or urban center
  - Evening classes
  - Week long intensives
  - Blended (some or all of the above)

Fort Yukon passengers ready to board Wright’s Air’s Cessna Caravan. Piper Navajos are also popular for bush travel.

Abigail Brooks at the Willow 100. photo credit: Donna Quante
Elements of Community in Rural Alaska: Fort Yukon Community Portrait

Fort Yukon

Sandra Solomon-Madison (RD BA) and her mother, Hannah, 2015
Elements of Community in Rural Alaska: Fort Yukon Community Portrait

• Human Resources
  – Gwichyaa Gwich’in (People of the Flats)
  – Population (2010):
    • 583
    – 90% Alaska Native
    – 8% White
    – 2% Other
    – 325 Male
    – 258 Female
    – 29% 0 to 18
    – 63% 19 to 64
    – 8% 65+
  • 246 Households

"Athabaskan Natives all dead now average age 100 yrs" l-r Old Mae, Mary Roderick, unknown, Old Roderick, unknown, Dick Martin w/ child, Fred Schroeder.”

Home of Richard and Eva Carroll
Elements of Community in Rural Alaska: Fort Yukon Community Portrait

- Human Resources - Local Government entities
  - Gwichyaa Zhee Gwich’in Tribal Government (federally recognized tribal government)
    - Social Services
    - Tribal Court
    - Housing Authority
    - Recycling Center
  - City of Fort Yukon (2nd class city)
    - Police & Fire
    - Road Maintenance
    - Water & Sewer
    - Liquor Store
    - Landfill
    - City Games

Fort Yukon City Building

Tribal Building

“Vegas Shack” (City Games)

Tribal recycling center.
Elements of Community in Rural Alaska: Fort Yukon Community Portrait

- Human Resources - Government/non-profit
  - Yukon Flats Region Government/non-profit entities
    - Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments (10 villages)
      - Yukon Flats Health Center
      - Natural Resources
  - Interior Region Entities
    - Tanana Chiefs Conference
    - Interior-Regional Housing Authority
    - Interior Alaska Campus (Yukon Flats Center in Fort Yukon)
  - State Government
    - Court house
    - Yukon Flats School District (7 schools)
  - Federal Government
    - Air Force Long Range Radar Site
Elements of Community in Rural Alaska: Fort Yukon Community Portrait

- Human Resources - Commercial
  - Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act entities
  - **Gwitchyaa Zhee Corporation** (village corporation)
    - Electric Utility
      - Biomass project/Powerplant
    - Gas/Convenience Store
  - **Doyon, Ltd** (regional corporation headquartered in Fairbanks)
    - Businesses in:
      - Oil & Gas
      - Tourism
      - Government Contracting
Elements of Community in Rural Alaska: Fort Yukon Community Portrait

• Human Resources - Commercial
  – Local Businesses/Other
• 18 total business licenses (including government and village corp. businesses)
• Others include:
  – Alaska Commercial Company (grocery)
  – J&J’s Shop (summertime sandwiches and etc.)
  – Gwandak Public Broadcasting (radio)
  – Snook’s Maintenance
  – TNT B&B
  – Yukon Tours
  – Crowley’s Fuel and Barge Service
Elements of Community in Rural Alaska: Fort Yukon Community Physical Resources

• Natural Resources
  – Subsistence: fish, birds, land mammals, plants
  – Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge
  – Oil & Gas (potentially)

Mineral resources (potentially)

Butchering a caribou.

Wild cranberry, aka lingonberry

Hunter and snow geese

Fish wheels in winter
Elements of Community in Rural Alaska: Fort Yukon Community Physical Resources

- Infrastructure
  - School
  - University Center
  - Airport
  - Phone and internet service
  - Public Radio
  - Health Clinic
  - Church (3)
  - Boat Landings (2)
  - Community Hall

![St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church](image1)
![Community Hall](image2)
![Fort Yukon School](image3)
![Boat Landing](image4)
Why is education an important component of community development in a community like Fort Yukon?

• Community and individual improvement to support:
  – Self-governance
  – Maintaining cultural and social ties
  – Local justice
  – Local management of natural resources
  – Local people holding local jobs
    • Teachers
    • Construction workers
    • Managers
    • Counselors
  – Self-sufficiency
  – Freedom to hunt, fish, and gather for subsistence
• People living, working, and investing in their home community
• Many students are already employed. They and the organizations they work for want to do better for their people.
• Education is the way rural communities are empowering themselves to be a part of state development efforts.
Impact of Tribal Management and Rural Development Students

- TM and RD students directly contribute to the planning and implementation of projects across Alaska through their applied coursework.
  - Community Development
    - Funding for community projects such as village clinic construction
    - Development of community plans
    - Development of culture camps and cultural curriculum
  - Government Improvement
    - Tribal Constitutional Convention
    - Marine Mammal Cross-Jurisdictional Agreement
    - Tribal Solid and Hazardous Waste Code
  - Organizational Improvement and Management
    - Annual reports
    - Cooperative land access agreements
    - Moose browse management and sustainable forestry plan

• Master’s Project: Fisheries Development in Rural Alaska: A Curriculum for Lower Division Undergraduates
• “I always knew I wanted to make a difference and a better life for my children and their children.”
• Barbara is currently Special Assistant to the Lieutenant Governor, Byron Mallot.
Kimberley Strong, Rural Development B.A. 2015

• Senior Project: Klukwan Mercantile, LLC
  – Started a small store in Klukwan (pop. 139), where tribal members have to travel 44 miles round trip to Haines (another small community) at ~$4.50/gallon in gas.
  – Store saves fuel and time, keeps money in the community, reduces grocery costs.

“The Rural Development program has created new opportunities for me and my community. The small convenience store project is creating a path to future economic growth and community development in Klukwan.”
The communication skills I learned in my Tribal Management classes helped me prepare my community for the 2013 Yukon River flood. What could have been chaos was only a temporary problem. My tribal finance classes gave me the confidence and written and verbal communication skills I needed to get the money Circle needed to rebuild.” Jessica Fields, First Chief Circle Tribal Council.
John Henry, Rural Development B.A. 2015

• Senior Project: A Place for Language and Culture: Project Kraka Bdì
  – A grant proposal to support the Nahual Foundation’s planned cultural center in the community of Soloy, Panama.
  – Ultimately, this proposal was not used because the community chose to move forward on their own without outside funding, which John considered a great success.
Anishia Elbie, Rural Development M.A. 2014

- Master’s Project: Southwest Alaska Vocational and Education Center Annual Report 2013-2014
  - SAVEC is located in King Salmon and provides training to local residents throughout Southwest Alaska.

“I belong to a generation of college students often referred to as “non traditional.” From my perspective, it means that my son Jeffrey Elbie Jr., graduated with a bachelor’s degree before I did.”

Kathryn Martin and her Grandmother, elder Katie John. Katie John received her honorary doctorate of laws from UAF in 2011.

“The Tribal Management program has assisted me in getting promotions for the knowledge and expertise I gained through the program. I now hold a TM certificate, TM AA degree, RD bachelor's degree. I have been able to go to school at the time at my own pace. I worked as a tribal administrator for 13 years and almost 9 years in a VP position for my corporation.” Kathryn Martin, Vice President, Land & Resources for Ahtna, Inc.
Randy Mayo, Tribal Management Certificate 2013, A.A.S. 2014

• “The Tribal Management program bridges the gap between your cultural identity and traditional wisdom from the elders and the tools that tribes have for self-governance. These classes teach you how to use federal Indian law to your tribe’s advantage.” Randy A. Mayo, former First Chief Stevens Village Tribal Council.
“DANSRD has given me an amazing opportunity to not only learn about my Gwich’in culture and language, but has also given me the tools to be a scholar, a planner, a successful professional, a mentor, and an Indigenous researcher. I’ve always believed that Education is one of the most important values taught to us by our Elders. Both Indigenous and Western education can help build a stronger foundation for the future.”