Health & Wellness: Modern Problems and Ancient Solutions

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What’s Hot in Alaska

- Wellness
- Awakening
- Health
- Self-governance
- Environment
- Traditional Knowledge
- Climate Change
- Youth and Elders
- Contaminants
- Subsistence
- Traditional Healing Practices
Overview of Alaska Native Concerns

- Global Warming
- Abnormalities in Subsistence Foods
- Human Health
- Impact of Commercial and Sports Fishing
- Local Sources of Contaminants
- Outside Sources of Contaminants
- Changes in the Ecosystem
- Perpetuation of Culture
Making Headlines – Anchorage Daily News, 8/6/02

- Cancer was rare 50 years ago.
- AN are 40% more likely to die of lung cancer than whites.
- AN have a higher incidence of colorectal cancer than whites.
- AN have 30% higher risk of dying from all cancers than whites.
- Breast cancer, once at half the rate, is now almost identical to the U.S. whites.
- Cancer is the leading cause of death for Alaska Native People.
More Headlines – ADN 10/3/02
St. Lawrence Island

• Hunting and Fishing families have nearly 10 times the PCB’s in their blood than average Americans.

• Residents average 7.5 parts per billion of PCB’s compared to a national average of 0.9-1.5.

• Levels are highest near the Northeast Cape, an old military radar site.

• Evidence found in blood samples of pesticide DDT.
The temperature has risen 7 degrees over the last 30 years
Permafrost is melting
Glaciers shrinking
38 million trees (100+y.o.), 4 million acres, died from spruce bark beetle
Hunting grounds are further out to sea
Erosion
Increased mosquitoes in areas that did not have mosquitoes
Sea ice breaking up off the northern coastlines
Native Worldview

Holistic View

Value Systems

- Responsibility to Tribe
- Knowledge of Language
- Sharing
- Respect for Others
- Cooperation
- Respect for Elders
- Love for Children
- Hard Work
- Knowledge of Family Tree
- Avoiding Conflict
- Respect for Nature
- Spirituality
- Humor
- Family Roles
- Hunter Success
- Domestic Skills
- Humility
SURFACE CULTURE

FOLK CULTURE

fine arts •
storytelling •
drumming •
subsistence •
dancing •
games •
cooking •
dress •
weather forecasting •
animal behavior •
navigation skills •
observation skills •
pattern recognition •
seasonal changes/cycles •
edible plants / medical knowledge •
star knowledge / constellations •
language / terminology/concepts •
counting / measurement / estimation •
clothing design/insulation •
tools/technology •
building design/materials •
transportation •
genealogy •
waste disposal •
fire/heating/cooking •
hunting / fishing / trapping •
weapons •
AND MUCH, MUCH MORE . . .

DEEP CULTURE

What are we doing?

• Community Mini Grants
  • Traditional Diet Project
• Dietary & Subsistence Food Assessment Project - NARCH
• Dietary Benefits and Risks in AK Villages
• Biomedical Research Infrastructure Network
• AN/AI Cohort Study
• Fish Monitoring Project
• Western Airborne Contaminants Assessment Project
• Center for AN Health Research
• Traditional Food Contaminants Testing Projects
• AK Wild & Traditional Food Safety Project
• Traditional Healers Program – ANMC
• Tribal Doctors’ Program
Using Native Knowledge & Science

- Traditional Knowledge & Contaminants Database (www.nativeknowledge.org)
- Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative (www.ankn.uaf.edu)
- Alaskool (www.alaskool.org)
- Alaska Native Student Wilderness Enrichment Retreat (www.serrc.org/answercamp)
- AN Spirit Camps
Passing on old wisdom to young souls