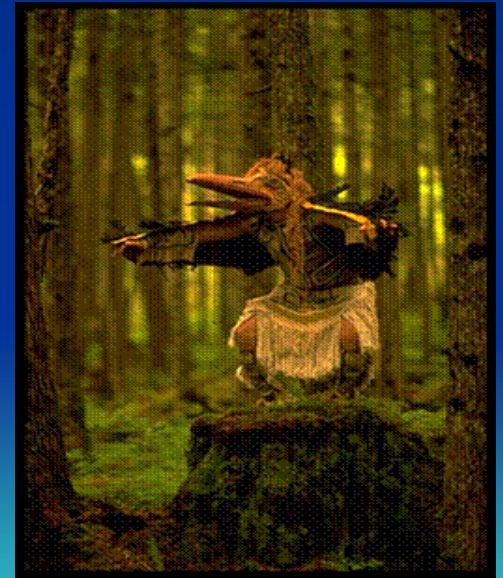


# Indigenous Perspectives on Health: Modern Problems and Ancient Solutions

**Patricia Cochran**  
**Alaska Native Science Commission**  
[www.nativescience.org](http://www.nativescience.org)



# What's Hot in Alaska

- Wellness
- Awakening
- Health
- Self-governance
- Environment
- Traditional Knowledge
- Climate Change
- Youth and Elders
- Contaminants
- Subsistence
- Traditional Healing Practices



# 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.



# More Headlines – New York Times

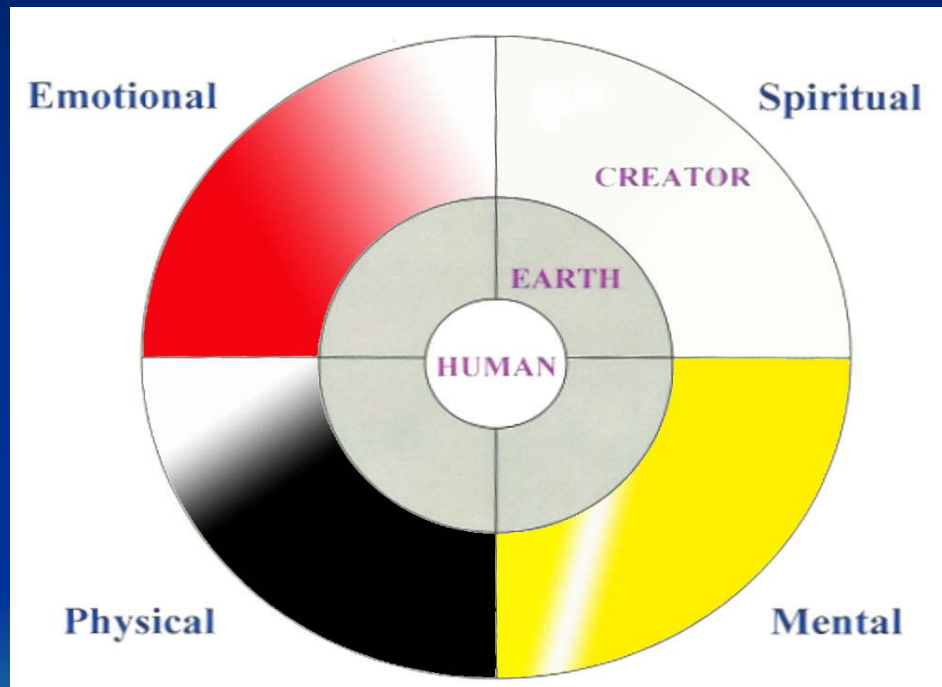
## 6/16/02 - Alaska's Temperature Rises

- 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

**DEEP  
CULTURE**

*notions of modesty • conception of beauty*

*ideals governing childraising*

*cosmology • relationship to animals*

*patterns of superior/subordinate relations*

*courtship practices • conception of justice • incentives to work*

*notions of leadership • tempo of work • patterns of group decision making*

*approaches to problem solving • conception of status mobility • eye behavior*

*roles in relation to status by age, sex, class, occupation, kinship, and so forth*

*conversational patterns in various social contexts • conception of past and future*

*nature of friendship • ordering of time • conception of "self"*

*patterns of visual perception • preference for competition or cooperation • body language*

*notions about logic and validity • patterns of handling emotion*

**AND MUCH, MUCH MORE...**



# 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](http://www.nativeknowledge.org))
- Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative ([www.ankn.uaf.edu](http://www.ankn.uaf.edu))
- Alaskool ([www.alaskool.org](http://www.alaskool.org))
- Alaska Native Student Wilderness Enrichment Retreat ([www.serrc.org/answercamp](http://www.serrc.org/answercamp))
- AN Spirit Camps



# Passing on old wisdom to young souls

