Indigenous Perspectives on Health: 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
• 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.
• 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

fine arts
storytelling
drumming • subsistence
dancing • games • cooking • dress

notions of modesty • conception of beauty
ideals governing child raising
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)
- 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