

Voices Gathered from EJ Summit I

The first **Alaska Tribal Environmental Justice Summit on Solid Waste** was conducted at the BIA Providers Conference in Anchorage Alaska (Nov 30, 2011). The summit had 28 Tribal participants, representing 20 Tribes from all regions across the state (Interior, Arctic North, Southeastern, Southwestern and Aleutians). During the summit the participants engaged in a EJ Community Problem-Solving Model exercise. There were 5 groups, each group was given the same 5 questions, then asked to develop ideas for strategies (#6) to address the concerns and issues that were

The following documents the environmental health concerns and issues in rural Alaskan villages. Without having to ask specifically about solid waste, solid waste continues to emerge as a top priority. The information gathered below will be utilized as a foundation for the development for the framework of change towards Environmental Justice for Alaska Tribal communities.

Tribes and regions represented:

Arctic Region (Inupiat)

Native Village of Point Lay
Native Village of Koyuk
Native Village of St. Michael
Native Village of Buckland
Norvik Native Community
Native Village of Unalakleet

Southeast (Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian)

Craig Tribal Association
Organized Village of Kasaan
Klawock Tribe
Hydaburg

Interior (Athabascan)

Native Village of Tazlina
Hughes Village Council

Southwestern Region (Yupik/Cupik)

Native Village of Nightmute
Bill Moore Slough
Native Village Tuntutuliak
Native Village of Eek
Asa'carsarmiut Traditional Council
Native Village of Kalskag
Organized Village of Kwethluk

Aleutians (Aleut)

Belkoski Tribe

1. What does the word " Health" mean to you?

- Clean and health environment effect of wildlife.
- Living a clean and health as into living a healthy life.
- Environment health as in the wildlife also, free from contamination.
- Wellness of one's mind, body & soul.
- Wellbeing of a person.
- A balance in environment, diet and activity that promotes a long healthy life.

- Clean environment/clean & healthy.
- Being able to respond to problems & trouble. Running, rest, work together.
- Effect on wildlife (salmon) health of our subsistence, throughout broad lands of Alaska.
- Wellness of the mind, body, and soul.
- Healthy families and villages
- Healthy relationships with other villages.
- Keeping our environment balanced.
- Strong, happy, energetic.
- Good long life.

2. What does the word "Environment" mean to you?

- Where you go for life activities with the "connections".
- Our land, but also our connection to the land, our culture, our traditions.
- Effects everything or the whole universe, find changes every day.
- Is the cleanliness of yours and the community around you and the whole surrounding world.
- Land, air, water, and wildlife.
- Whole globe.
- Affects everybody and everything.
- Where you are, even your body.
- Where we live.
- The land, air, and seal along with their delicious inhabitants.
- Where we get our food sources: berries, wildlife, fish.
- Using land & the sea harvesting from them. The same amount of time using the land for hunting. I use the ocean. A balance there. At home in the ocean, using what is there -all of it-

3. What does the words "environmental health" mean to you?

- Everything being healthy, especially the human beings and animals.
- Always keeping the task and making sure that you and your community keep clean & safe so you can live a healthy environment.
- Clean air & water, burn barrels, landfills, contaminated fish, contaminated sites, honey buckets, dust control, old buildings, flooding, abandoned vehicles pest control, old construction sites, lagoon.
- Quality of the environment and how it can support the life around it.
- Environment of the Air effecting our health.
- Close dumpsites; burning at dumpsites, effecting streams & wildlife.
- Sense of community health: Bad environment can separate your community.
- Our lifestyle (hunter & gatherer)
- Scientific studies - certain groups get grants to do this for whales, fish, birds - taking samples/analyze how old whale/what was in the liver, blubber etc.
- Fish can go into the waterways that we don't know, maybe contaminated places & the fish go back out and get eaten by seals. whales and we eat that - triple contamination.
- Maintaining our health abundant stock of wildlife and salmon and their habitat, while controlling human impact.
- Adequate workforce infrastructure (IGAP, Health Aides, RavenCorp, AmericaCorp)

4. What are the 3 major environmental health issues affecting your community?

- Open Dumps
- Erosion of open dump sites
- Trashes
- Mercury in fish
- Tumors seen in fish
- Mold in households
- Mildew
- Dust (Asthma concerns)
- Old buildings
- Honey buckets
- Flooding of open dump
- Toxins

- Four-wheeler, sno-go and car accidents
- Loose dogs in village
- Barge companies dumping in water
- The need to test what is draining into river
- Beaver population, damming up waterways
- Burning trash in drums
- no activities in the villages: lack of subsistence and jobs
- Logging
- Global climate pollutions
- Mining
- Old military sites
- Old tank farms
- Gases for all sources
- Cleanliness, safeness
- Solid Waste Management
- Bio accumulation
- Global weather pulling to the north
- Increase storm surges
- Need to re-locate, but no funding
- Cruise ships in Arctic
- Mold & moisture issues in housing affects health- lots of children with asthma and allergies
- Chlorine in well water
- Lack of facilities for garbage
- POP's migrate to North and get into seals.
- PCB's- didn't know killed whale.
- Damage to tundra by 4-wheelers
- Lesions in ring seals & salmon
- Deformity in birds.
- Invasive plants, impacting our berries.

5. Which issues above needs the most attention:

- Subsistence
- Pollution
- We will lose our subsistence
- Natural resource exploitation
- Need for clean water
- Toxins
- Control landfill
- Contaminated sites/construction/old military sites
- Lack of water and sewer

6. List possible strategies and actions that could help to address these issues:

- Recycling program.
- Tribes requesting consultation.
- By doing clean up.
- Obtain grants.
- Community togetherness by sorting out all their trash.
- Getting all organization to work as a team effort, state funds for buildings and cleaning dumpsite, federal for running water .
- Community meeting education.
- Educate ourselves on environmental laws.
- Create brochures to tell the story regarding your issue - for a solution
- Get grants to complete improvements.
- All local government bodies working together: Tribe, city, village corp.
- Participation in permitting and development process.
- Tribes requesting consultation: National Marine Services.
- Certify local people to be experts on specific issues - BIA used to do this long time ago.
- Educate ourselves on laws (CWA, EJ, etc) To enforce the laws, but how? who's responsible to enforce, state, fed, tribes.
- Road dust remediation (pellets, etc.)
- Setting speed limits.
- Work with partners.
- Teach our children.
- Stronger ordinances.
- Ordinances enforced.
- Take on challenges ourselves. We need to do it ourselves if we want it done!
- Water quality testing.
- More testing to be done...why animals are deformed?
- Sharing of data and research.
- More outreach.

7. What to do about Open dump sites and/or landfills:

- Fund monitoring & assessment of dumpsites.
- Fund operation & maintenance of landfills to meet permitting regulations.
- State should give assistance to villages (e.g. equipment).
- Not grants, but a program based on to bring the landfills to safe standards.

8. Miscellaneous Questions and Comments:

- Why is State of Alaska ignoring environmental issues?
- Why does EPA Mission say this...and it's not happening?
- Arctic people do not want ANSCA, what happened at Alaska sale without knowledge of Inupiat.
- Does US have legitimacy here?
- When the state was a territory used to have a sanitarian aide - state of Alaska should that back.
- Who made the dump?
- Years and years of writing down "lists"
- Not getting share of oil and gas - could then use our money to clean up, should get higher money per barrel
- State isn't helping but they are making all this money.
- World War II activities changed and introduced things not understood - how/if they affect health. Learning how this affected our health.
- Attitude of "don't care". Youth throwing trash, not spending time outdoors playing games, only using internet.