



# Alaska Federation of Natives

## Alaska Native Priorities for the 2012-2013 Presidential & Congressional Transition

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# Alaska Federation of Natives

## Transition Priorities

### ABOUT AFN

The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) was formed in 1966 to advocate for a fair and just land claims settlement. It is the largest statewide Alaska Native organization. The mission of AFN is to enhance and promote the cultural, economic, and political voice of the entire Alaska Native community. Our membership includes 178 villages (both federally recognized tribes and village corporations), 12 regional Native corporations, and 11 regional nonprofit and tribal consortiums that contract and run federal and state programs. AFN is governed by a 37-member board.

Each year, AFN's members convene the nation's largest representative annual gathering of Native peoples. Delegates are elected on a population formula of one representative per twenty-five Native residents and delegate participation rates at the annual convention typically exceed 95 percent. The Convention draws between 4,000–5,000 attendees every year. Proceedings are broadcast live via television, radio and webcast reaching a diverse audience of 40,000+ viewers from 78 countries. During the convention, the entire state of Alaska is blanketed with discussions of current events and issues. International observers are present at most meetings, both exchanging information and learning from the Alaska Native experience.

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## ALASKA - SIZE MATTERS

Alaska's geography is unlike anything, anywhere else in the United States. At 2.5 times the size of Texas, Alaska is a vast land, with a small population. Less than 700,000 people live in the over 200 rural villages, regional centers and urban areas. Alaska Natives make up about 20% of the population in Alaska and are very active in their communities and state. Alaska remains underdeveloped, but its people are actively seeking modern rural infrastructure, sustainable economies, affordable energy, access to quality health care and education. The great distances in Alaska from one community to another, and from the state to the rest of the United States, present unique and varied challenges. Transportation of people, goods and services is expensive; and logistics are complex due to seasonal extreme cold weather and mega storms.

In some villages in western Alaska, the impact of the cost of fuel on transportation costs adds as much as 40% to the overall cost of building materials. It can take as long as 6 hours to fly via air carrier from the northern part of the state to the southern. From subsistence living -- hunting and fishing to feed families -- to education, energy and distinct ethnic and cultures, Alaska's size and diversity make our peoples' needs, and the related policy solutions, very different than the rest of the United States.

## HOMELAND SECURITY FOR ALASKA NATIVES

It is critical that the US Congress and the State of Alaska ramp up investment in rural Alaska. It is the homeland of Alaska's Native people, on the frontline of a massive buildup on the northern shores, and the US's only footprint in the Arctic. Offshore exploration, a "race for resources," and climate change will greatly impact the rural communities of Alaska, and all Alaskans. There are critical rural infrastructure and program needs, which need attention now. To survive, traditional Alaska Native communities need both public and private investments to shore up the economic foundations of their communities. The future of rural Alaska depends upon this.

Alaska's traditional Native villages represent an important part of Alaska's cultural heritage, yet they are disproportionately impacted by the rapid changes taking place in the Arctic -- cultural, economic, and environmental. Alaska Natives are more likely to experience the effects of climate change due to the geographic area in which they live, and their very direct connection to their surrounding environment. These changes threaten not only their health and food supply, but also to their traditional way of life.

The serious problems that face the Native people of Alaska, include high energy costs, a stalled or non-existent economy, lack of training opportunities, and lack of access to quality and effective education, all of which make it difficult for Alaska Natives to remain in their villages. High energy costs for home heating and electricity, and a lack of infrastructure, severely limit rural residents' cash income. Hunting and fishing opportunities are disappearing due to intense competition from non-Native sport and commercial operations. Rising health costs due to high rates of diabetes and substance abuse among Native populations continue to challenge our cultural and economic survival. Educational opportunities drastically differ between schools in urban areas of Alaska and rural Alaska, where the majority of Alaska Natives live -- a problem that is exacerbated by the closure of schools when communities' populations become too small.

We must ensure that our grandchildren enjoy the same benefits that we do from the existence of vibrant traditional Alaska Native communities. We propose the following concrete steps the Administration and Congress can take to shore up the economic foundations of these communities and contribute to Alaska Natives' overall well being and security.



# Alaska Federation of Natives

## Alaska Native Subsistence

Protection of Native hunting, fishing and gathering rights is a part of federal law throughout the United States. Nowhere is it more critical than in Alaska. Subsistence is not a relic from the past, rather it is the foundation of Alaska Native society and culture. A vast majority of Alaska's 120,000 Native people (nearly 20% of the population of Alaska) still participate in hunting, fishing and gathering for food during the year. Subsistence resources remain central to the nutrition, economies, and traditions of Alaska's Native villages. Alaska Natives' freedom to pursue their subsistence activities is closely linked to their food security. The average harvest of subsistence resources in pounds per person in rural Alaska is estimated at 544 pounds, equivalent to 50% of the average daily caloric requirement. The economic significance of subsistence in rural Alaska is best appreciated in light of one study that suggested that replacing subsistence foods would range between \$98 and \$164 million or \$2,000-\$3000 per person.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, the legal framework governing subsistence in Alaska significantly hampers the ability of Alaska Natives to access their traditional foods. Native leaders sought explicit protection of their hunting and fishing rights in the settlement of their aboriginal land claims, but instead the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) extinguished those rights. Congress explained that it expected the State of Alaska and the Secretary of the Interior "to take any action necessary to protect the subsistence needs of Alaska Natives."

Neither the Secretary nor the State fulfilled that expectation. At the urging of Alaska Natives, Congress enacted Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) in 1980. ANILCA provided for state implementation of a federal priority for subsistence users on all lands and waters in Alaska through a state law implementing the priority. Again, Native leaders sought explicit protection for "Native" hunting and fishing rights, but the State of Alaska objected. Ultimately, the law was crafted to provide a subsistence priority for "rural residents" with the expectation that the State would enact laws that conformed to the federal requirements. The State reluctantly did so in 1982, but that system operated for less than a decade before the Alaska Supreme Court ruled that the State Constitution precluded Alaska from implementing a "rural" priority.

Today, after more than 20 years of dual federal and state management, it has become clear that ANILCA does not provide long-term protection for the Native subsistence way of life. Instead, other users and ineffective management regimes have marginalized subsistence harvests. Alaska Natives

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<sup>1</sup> Scott Goldsmith, *The Remote Rural Economy of Alaska* at 37-38, published by University of Alaska Anchorage, Institute of Social and Economic Research (April 12, 2007); Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence, *Subsistence in Alaska: A Year 2000 Update*.

have been made criminals for feeding their families and communities, and penalized for practicing their ancient traditions. The fact that Alaska Natives were given only a very limited role in the management of their hunting and fishing rights through ANILCA, and the fact that the federal priority does not extend to state and private lands, critically undermines all attempts to protect customary and traditional uses, practices and needs.

Rather than simply defending a broken system that no longer serves its intended purpose, it is time to consider options that reach back to Congress's original expectation that Alaska Native hunting, fishing and gathering rights be protected. Congress has the authority to enact legislation that ensures a "Native" or "tribal" subsistence preference on all lands in Alaska, and to mandate a co-management role for Alaska Natives. It has done so in the enactment of numerous other federal laws that provide explicit protection for Native hunting and fishing rights in Alaska.

Delegates to the 2012 annual convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives pledged to continue to strive for recognition and protection of their basic human rights to food security and self-determination, and to maintain their own unique cultures – rights that are recognized and codified in International Law and recognized by all enlightened, civilized societies.

We urge both the Administration and Congress to provide full and lasting protections for the Alaska Native hunting, fishing, and gathering way of life and a co-equal role in managing fish, wildlife, and other renewable resources that we rely upon for our economic and cultural existence.

## First 100 Days

### Executive Branch

- Appoint an Alaska Native to serve in the Office of the Secretary of the Interior in Washington, DC. Special expertise and knowledge of Alaska would aid the Secretary in addressing many of the issues facing Alaska Natives, including subsistence.
- Convene a high-level interagency meeting with key White House officials, including the Domestic Policy Council and department officials with jurisdiction over subsistence uses. Subsistence management and the legal rights of Alaska Natives cut across a number of departments within the Administration, including Interior, Agriculture, Justice, State, and Commerce (NOAA and NMFS). Often measures taken by one agency have a dramatic impact on another agency's ability to provide for subsistence uses of the same resources. If meaningful protections are to be provided for subsistence hunting and fishing in Alaska, there must be an ongoing dialogue between Alaska Native leaders and the agencies with jurisdiction over the various aspects of the Alaska Native subsistence way of life.<sup>2</sup>
- Develop a more complete and transparent federal subsistence budget for managing subsistence on federal lands.<sup>3</sup>
- Commit to entering into co-management agreements with tribal governments and Native organizations for significant aspects of the federal subsistence management system.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> AFN Convention Resolutions 12-18, 12-20, and 12-11.

<sup>3</sup> NCAI/Tribal Conference Recommendation; also follow-up from the Secretarial Review of the Subsistence management system.

<sup>4</sup> AFN Convention Approved Subsistence Action Plan; NCAI/AFN Tribal Conference Recommendation, AFN Convention Resolution 12-18.

## First 100 Days

### Congress

- Work with the Alaska Native Leadership to schedule field hearings in Alaska and Congressional Oversight hearing(s) in Washington, DC before the appropriate committees with jurisdiction on the status of Alaska Native rights to food security, customary and traditional hunting and fishing rights, and the need for self-determination to protect and maintain these rights and way of life.<sup>5</sup>
- Work with AFN to schedule a series of briefings and brown bag luncheons for Congressional leaders and staff of the committees with jurisdiction over subsistence. Many in Congress are not familiar with the legal framework in Alaska governing subsistence, the history of the subsistence issue, the shortcoming of the current laws, the role subsistence plays in the economics of food security for village Alaska, and the critical need for administrative and legislative changes.<sup>6</sup>
- Pass legislation that amends the Federal Duck Stamp Act to allow the Secretary of the Interior to waive the requirement that all hunters purchase and carry Duck Stamps for Alaska Native hunters who engage in the customary and traditional subsistence harvest of migratory birds in Alaska. Such a provision is currently included in the Sportsmen's Act of 2012, S.3525, a package of 17 bills that has broad bipartisan support.<sup>7</sup>

## First Year

### Executive Branch

- Issue an Executive Order to advise all federal agencies and the Federal Subsistence Board that Title VIII of ANILCA is "Indian Legislation," enacted under the plenary authority of Congress over Indian Affairs, and mandate an ongoing role for Alaska Natives in the federal management program, including tribal compacting and contracting of significant aspects of the federal management program. Section 809 of ANILCA, which allows for contracting co-management with Alaska Native tribes and organizations, is underutilized. The President should direct the Office of Subsistence Management to implement the subsistence management program in accordance with the Executive Order.<sup>8</sup>
- Work with the Alaska Native leadership to introduce legislation that repeals the extinguishment of aboriginal hunting and fishing rights (4b of ANCSA) and replaces it with improved protections for Native hunting and fishing rights, including an Alaska Native or tribal subsistence priority on all lands and waters in Alaska and a co-equal role in managing fish, wildlife and other renewable resources used for subsistence.<sup>9</sup>
- As an interim measure, review the Department of the Interior's policy of limiting federally reserved waters to lands running through or abutting federal lands created by Title VIII of ANILCA, and initiate a new rulemaking that would apply the federal reserved water rights doctrine to waters that run upstream and downstream from ANILCA's conservation system units and to Native

<sup>5</sup> AFN Convention Approved Subsistence Action Plan; NCAI/AFN Tribal Conference Recommendation, AFN Convention Resolution 12-18

<sup>6</sup> AFN Convention Resolution 12-18

<sup>7</sup> AFN Convention Approved Subsistence Action Plan; AFN Convention Resolution 12-18

<sup>8</sup> AFN Convention Approved Subsistence Action Plan

<sup>9</sup> AFN Convention Approved Subsistence Action Plan; NCAI/AFN Tribal Conference Recommendation, AFN Convention Resolution 12-18

allotments.<sup>10</sup>

- Enter into co-management agreements with Alaska's tribal governments and corporations and increase the Department's contracting with Alaska Native tribes and organizations under Section 809 of ANILCA for significant aspects of the federal management program in Alaska.<sup>11</sup>
- Expedite the implementation of the changes to the Federal Management Program promised by the Secretary in his 2010 Review, and make a formal report to Alaska's Tribes and Corporations concerning the steps taken to implement those recommendations.
- Amend the federal regulatory definition of "rural" as it applies to ANILCA's priority and the criteria for assessing rural characteristics during the decennial review of rural status so that Native villages such as Saxman do not arbitrarily lose their right to federal protections for their subsistence way of life.<sup>12</sup>
- Direct a comprehensive review of all subsistence regulations to ensure that no unnecessary restrictions have been imposed upon subsistence users unless required under Section 804 of ANILCA to protect the viability of the species and/or to continue to provide for subsistence uses.<sup>13</sup>
- Work with Alaska Native leadership to change the regulatory definition of "significantly altered" in the definition of "traditional handicrafts" under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The lack of clarity regarding the "significantly altered" requirement limits the permissible harvest of sea otters for subsistence purposes since it is unclear how the pelts can be used. This comes at a time when there are growing concerns about the growth of the sea otter population in Southeast Alaska, and the corresponding decline in commercially important shellfish, including Dungeness crab.<sup>14</sup>

## First Year

### Congress

- Introduce and pass legislation that will restore and protect Native hunting and fishing rights in Alaska, and provide a co-equal role in the management of subsistence for Alaska Natives.<sup>15</sup>
- Work with Alaska Native tribes and corporations on region-specific legislation that will ensure the opportunity for Native management of subsistence resources on Native owned lands, and unified management throughout tribal traditional hunting and fishing territory through co-management with Alaska Natives.<sup>16</sup>
- Amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to establish at least one voting seat for a tribal representative from Alaska on the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council.<sup>17</sup>
- Amend the Marine Mammal Protection Act to strengthen the co-management role of Alaska Native organizations engaged in co-management of marine mammals. A package of amendments were negotiated and agreed to by the Indigenous Peoples Council for Marine Mammals (IPCoMM), the Marine Mammal Council, the US Fish & Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

10 AFN Convention Approved Subsistence Action Plan

11 AFN Convention Approved Subsistence Action Plan; NCAI/AFN Tribal Conference Recommendation, AFN Convention Resolution 12-18

12 AFN Convention Approved Subsistence Action Plan and on-going AFN priority from prior Convention Resolutions

13 On-going AFN priority from prior Convention Resolutions

14 AFN Convention Resolution 12-10

15 AFN Convention Approved Subsistence Action Plan; NCAI/AFN Tribal Conference Recommendation, AFN Convention Resolutions 12-18 and 12-07

16 AFN Convention Approved Subsistence Action Plan

17 AFN Convention Approved Subsistence Action Plan, AFN Convention Resolution 12-20

The amendments would allow the agencies and Alaska Native Organizations to develop marine mammal conservation regimes collaboratively in order avert management crisis's that can arise under the current management system. <sup>18</sup>

- Appropriate amounts necessary for federal agencies to fulfill the mandates of Title VIII of ANILCA, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act and other laws that impact the ability of Alaska Natives to continue to harvest the resources of the land and sea that have sustained them for thousands of years. <sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> On-going AFN priority from prior Convention Resolutions

<sup>19</sup> AFN Convention Approved Subsistence Action Plan, AFN Convention Resolutions 12-17 and 12-19, and on-going AFN priority from prior Convention Resolutions



# Alaska Federation of Natives

## Energy Crisis in Alaska & Alternative Energy

Rural Alaska's villages are among the most economically depressed communities in the nation. They have the highest per capita fuel costs in the U.S. 176 of the largest communities in rural Alaska, with a combined population of 74,500 residents, will spend more than \$5 billion over the next 20 years for diesel fuel alone.<sup>20</sup> Most of Alaska's rural communities are not connected to a regional power grid, and are thus dependent on fossil fuels for heating of residential home and commercial properties, transportation, and electricity generation. In winter months, these costs are exacerbated by the cold harsh weather, causing residents to spend more than half their monthly income on energy/heating costs. It is not uncommon for entire communities to run out of fuel during the winter months.

At the same time, Alaska has a world-class range of renewable power resources, including hydro (run of the river, low impact and high head sources to traditional dams), massive amounts of wind power (including wind-hybrid systems), world-class tides, abundant geothermal resources, and great biomass opportunities. These vast energy resources are largely untapped. Many of our villages are actively working to develop these resources as well as energy efficiency projects, but these resources exist in a complex natural and socio-economic environment of tribes, non-profit organizations, non-governmental organizations, ANSCA Corporations, private sector organizations, and local/state/federal government agencies. Alaska's strategic location -- positioned between Europe, Asia and North America -- creates great opportunities to export these resources, build economies and expertise, and to test different alternative energy technologies through a range of demonstration projects.

Development of affordable energy is critical to the survival of our villages. The Alaska Federation of Natives has made it a priority to focus on energy initiatives and to make sure our villages are not excluded from any energy policy, program, or infrastructure development. We urge the Administration and Congress to take the following steps.

### First 100 Days

- Provide increased funds to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Over the past decade, LIHEAP has transitioned from a regional program to a national program serving all 50 states. At peak funding in 2009, the program was national in scale but still only had enough resources to support roughly 1/4 of eligible households. With decreased funding over the past several years, states are forced to provide smaller grants to fewer households. Additional cuts will further stress the program. Funding at the \$5.1 billion level is recommended for the continued

<sup>20</sup> Bases on ISER Community Diesel Price Projections (medium price scenario), Energy Pathway database current fuel use 3% interest rate in 2007 dollars

success of this program.<sup>21</sup>

- Ensure the reauthorization of the Denali Commission. The Denali Commission is a federal, state and tribal partnership created by Congress to address the needs of Alaska's distressed communities. The commission works to enhance the economies of our rural communities by building and maintaining infrastructure projects in Alaska. The commission also works with the Alaska Energy Authority (AEA) on energy projects and grants in rural Alaska.<sup>22</sup>
- Support H.R. 3973, the "Native American Energy Act," to streamline duplicative government regulations and increase the opportunity for Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations to develop energy resources on their own land to create jobs and increase American energy production.
- Support S. 1684, the "Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self Determination Act Amendments of 2011," which allows intertribal organizations to receive Department of Energy (DOE) Indian energy education planning and management assistance program grants to increase tribal capacity to manage energy development and efficiency programs. The Act also makes DOE energy development loan guarantees available to Tribal energy development organizations. The bill would also amend the Energy Policy and Conservation Act to provide home weatherization grants directly to Indian tribes if a tribe requests a direct grant, and the Secretary of Energy determines that the Indian beneficiaries would not be better served by providing the grant to their state.

## First Year

- Work to make available public lands for the development of renewable energy systems in rural Alaska, modernize current electrical grids to provide access to renewable resources, reduce power outages, and allow for greater efficiency with new "smart grid" technology.
- Support transmission projects to interconnect our rural Alaska Communities.
- Establish funding for an Essential Marine Transportation program at the national level, and give a priority to funding essential marine transportation facilities that will lower the transportation costs of fuel and materials and goods to rural Alaska Communities.<sup>23</sup>
- Encourage the exploration and development of private, state, and federal lands, onshore and offshore by providing incentives and revenue sharing for Alaska's coastal communities.
- Provide support to existing programs and agencies such as the Denali Commission, Alaska Energy Authority, and DOE Tribal Energy Program, and for the creation of other regional authorities, in order to provide outreach, investment, and technical assistance to rural communities and tribes for research and feasibility studies to understand their energy options, best practices, and strategies that will best serve each of Alaska's rural communities.
- Continue to provide federal wind tax credits to incentivize wind energy projects in Alaska and to help overcome the lack of economies of scale in rural Alaska.

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<sup>21</sup> AFN Convention Resolution 11-27

<sup>22</sup> AFN Convention Resolution 11-42 and reauthorization of the Denali Commission is a continued Energy, Economic, and Health/Welfare priority for AFN

<sup>23</sup> AFN Convention Resolution 12-33



# Alaska Federation of Natives

## Economic & Foreign Policy

There is a common misconception that because Alaska Native corporations are making progress and oil production takes place in-state, Alaska Natives are not affected by the recession and have little need for federal assistance. This could not be further from reality. Although nearly \$18.5 billion was either generated in or flowed into remote areas in 2006, only \$2.35 billion entered the local economy. The rest went directly to producer profits; purchases of labor, supplies, and services; and federal and state taxes and royalties. In many ways, we can describe rural Alaska as an “emerging economy” similar to other developing countries around the world. As an “emerging economy,” we experience more drastic impacts from recessions. The 2010 census estimates indicate that a poverty rate of 13.6% exists in rural Alaska (some places reaching a rate as high as 30%), compared to a 9.8% level in urban areas of the state.<sup>24</sup> Effective economic stimulus programs must be tailored to the unique circumstances in Alaska. We need U.S. financial and tax incentives to increase both local and expanded statewide and national investment in our villages, which can lead to stronger and more responsive economic performance levels and badly needed jobs.

### First 100 Days

- Protect vital funding for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of Interior programs and other programs that benefit Alaska Natives and Native Americans from sequester, rescission, and other funding reductions.<sup>25</sup>
- In terms of Communications, ensure that the FCC not only listens to, but collectively works with all of the Alaska stakeholders, including AFN, tribal organizations, village and regional corporations, local borough governments, the Alaska Congressional Delegation, and all of Alaska’s carriers, to ensure the creation of a robust broadband network in Alaska. Also, ensure that reforms to the Universal Service Fund do not create a situation where large areas of Alaska are left unserved or underserved by broadband.<sup>26</sup>

### First Year -- Define Alaska’s strategic role as part of both the Arctic and Pacific in American foreign and economic policy to include:

- Participation in the Arctic Council. (Chairmanship – identify focus for 2015-2017 term & Implementation of Search and Rescue Agreement – increase capabilities of coastal communities so they can respond to calls within the US region.)

<sup>24</sup> <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/02/02270.html>

<sup>25</sup> AFN Convention Resolution 12-13, 12-14, 12-15, and 12-27

<sup>26</sup> AFN Convention Resolution 12-04

- Increased resources to regional hubs and coastal communities to meet the challenges presented by increased activity in the Arctic. Regional hubs are becoming increasingly important in terms of providing critical support services; including search and rescue, emergency health care, communications, and oil spill response. Increased funding for marine facilities such as docks and transportation services is necessary for delivery of such services.<sup>27</sup>
- Ratification of the Law of the Sea – the United States is the only Arctic nation that has not adopted the law of the sea.<sup>28</sup>
- Full Consultation with Alaska Natives on research priorities and a comprehensive development plan that includes Alaska Natives and incorporates traditional, ecological knowledge in Arctic Research.

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27 AFN Convention Resolution 12-33

28 AFN Convention Resolution 12-37 and 11-44



# Alaska Federation of Natives

## Education

Alaska is home to the sixth largest overall population of indigenous people in the United States, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. Alaska Natives constitute 19.5% of the state's population, and 23% of its school population (25% including American Indians). In 2001, nearly 60% of Alaska Native students continued to attend school in rural and remote communities where K-12 school enrollments ranged from eight students with one teacher to larger schools with 500 students or more.<sup>29</sup> The remaining 40% of Alaska Native students were in urban schools where the majority of the student enrollment is non-native. The unique geographic, historical, and cultural context in Alaska presents unique challenges and opportunities for educating our children.

### First 100 Days

- Keep the Elementary and Secondary Education ACT (ESEA) intact. The unique challenges of rural Alaska are not addressed in a number of bills that eliminate needed funding. Amend ESEA so that funding is administered by Alaska Native organizations in order to improve education for Alaska Native youth and maximize leadership and involvement of Alaska Native organizations in such efforts, including pilot projects designed to increase tribal authority in the public schools through ESEA.<sup>30</sup>
- Create greater opportunities and exposure for tribal programs and organizations to access funding for indigenous language instruction among school-aged students through H.R. 4766, the Esther Martinez Native Language Preservation Act.
- Support continued federal funding through the No Child Left Behind Act, and especially the Alaska Native Education Equity Act, to tribal communities for the development of curriculum and educational programs that are aligned with, and reflect, the culture diversity, language and contributions of Alaska Native People, and provide Alaska Native organizations with the ability to train teachers and increase graduation rates among Alaska Native students. Continued federal funding through these programs to tribal communities will provide the leverage necessary to drive education change in our school districts.<sup>31</sup>
- Provide a significant increase to Head Start funding over FY2012, and allow Head Start to adopt more accurate poverty guidelines, perhaps using state data, taking into account the higher cost of living in rural areas. Head Start currently uses "100% of the federal poverty guideline (FPL)" to determine eligibility for services; however, the FPL uses Anchorage rates for the whole state, despite a much higher cost of living in rural Alaska.

<sup>29</sup> Alaska Native Knowledge Network, A HISTORY OF SCHOOLING FOR ALASKA NATIVE PEOPLE

<sup>30</sup> AFN Convention Resolution 12-06, 12-09, and similar resolutions from the National Congress of American Indians, National Indian Education Association, and the Tribal Education Departments National Assembly.

<sup>31</sup> AFN Convention Resolution 12-06

## First Year

- Reaffirm and acknowledge the Department of Education's federal trust responsibility to Alaska Native students. The President issued his Executive Memorandum regarding implementation of Executive Order 13175, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments, in November 2009. The Department of Education has yet to release its consultation policy. As a result, tribes are still fighting for a seat at the table—both with the Department and with state governments—in developing meaningful education policy for Native students. The Department must ensure that tribes are key stakeholders in these discussions. The Department must engage in meaningful consultation with tribes prior to the development of regulations that will affect Native students and how schools are funded.
- Engage in the White House Initiative on American Indian and Native American Education. Because there are no reservation or Department run schools in Alaska, we will work with the Department of Interior, Department of Education, and appropriate State Departments of Education to ensure Alaska Native students are considered and provided opportunities to expand their education and improve educational outcomes.
- Provide funding for tribal Vocational Training Programs. Putting America back to work means training our work force in the skills needed in critical industries. Many of our tribal non-profits run training programs focused on the skills needed by employers in Alaska, and they know to meet the needs of Alaska Natives. They need support.
- Include tribal provisions for technical training in all federal agency education and job training programs, and foster the creation of bridge programs that would enable tribal members to fulfill academic prerequisites to move into more advanced jobs or educational environments.



# Alaska Federation of Natives

## Health & Wellness

Tribal citizens encounter several barriers to adequate health care, including a lack of access to specialized care, long distances to Indian Health Service (IHS) and/or tribal facilities, and culturally incompetent care. Collectively, tribal communities suffer from higher rates of obesity and diabetes. Native women experience infant mortality rates nearly 50% higher than their white counterparts. In addition, tribal communities struggle with the same social ills that many larger communities battle, including alcohol and substance abuse and suicide. Of these, American Indians and Alaska Natives report more monthly binge drinking episodes and higher alcohol consumption per episode than any other racial group. These factors and others result in the highest drug-induced mortality rate among women for American Indians and Alaska Natives, and suicide rates that are more than twice that of Blacks, Asian Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics.

This Administration has strengthened its partnership with Native nations to defend communities against the leading statistics. Most importantly, the Administration successfully passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA). This law included permanent reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, which brought the entire IHS system, including tribal and urban programs and clinics, into the new system of health care delivery. Successful and seamless implementation of the ACA will increase health care access for American Indians and Alaska Natives, support the IHS system of care, broaden services provided in rural communities, and strengthen an integral network of providers. In addition, the Administration has proposed and supported improvements in tribal prevention. These programs are designed to be tribally driven, culturally sensitive, and locally provided. Some of these programs have proven to be hugely successful, but replication and expansion is still necessary.

### First 100 Days

- Stress the importance of, and work with Congress on passage of, the Violence Against Women Act.
- Ensure that Indian Health Services fully complies with the Ramah decision so the federal government pays "each Tribe's contract support costs in full."<sup>32</sup>
- Support Housing Security
  - Increase Housing Improvement Program (HIP) funding that has seen annual appropriations drop 50% since 2008 through the American Jobs Bill.<sup>33</sup>
  - Reauthorize NAHASDA for 2013 and 2014 Fiscal Year Funding.<sup>34</sup>

32 AFN Convention Resolution 12-30 and U.S Senator Mark Begich letter

33 AFN Convention Resolution 12-22

34 AFN Convention Resolution 12-26



# Alaska Federation of Natives

## First Year

- Ensure the seamless implementation of key ACA provisions through inclusion of tribal consultation.
- Continue to support and request increased funding for the Indian Health Service. The IHS has been underfunded for decades. In FY 2011 the IHS was finally “fully funded.” We believe that Congress should continue to provide full funding.<sup>35</sup>
- Provide funding for Suicide Prevention. Alaska leads the nation in deaths by suicide, with Alaska Natives being particularly vulnerable.<sup>36</sup>
- Pass the Alaska Safe Families and Villages Act. This act would create a demonstration project by which participating tribes would have clearly confirmed authority to enforce tribal laws regarding alcohol and substance abuse, and domestic violence, within their villages.

## Alaska Federation of Natives

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<sup>35</sup> AFN Convention Resolution 11-28  
<sup>36</sup> AFN Convention Resolution 12-24