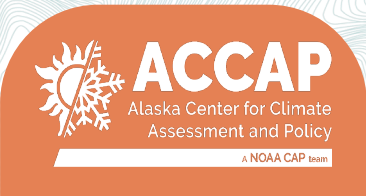
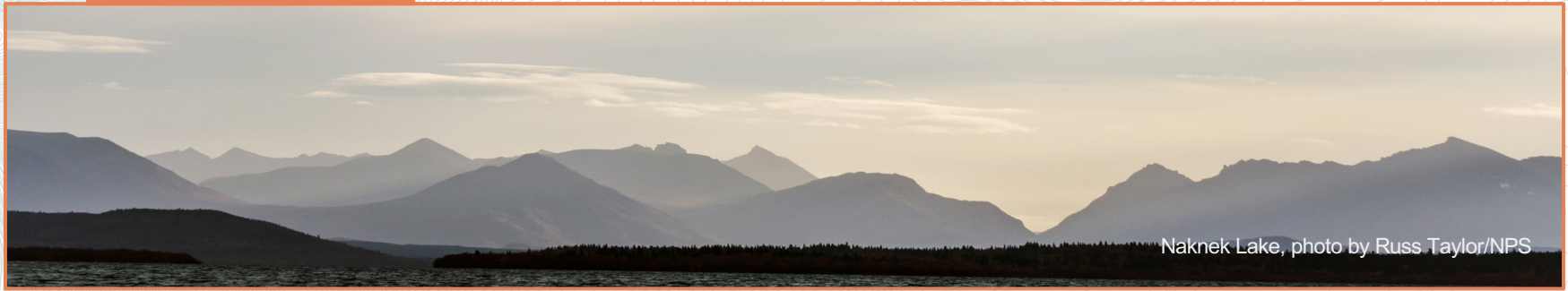


# Landscape of Tribal Communities: Context for Working in Rural Alaska



**Adelheid Herrmann, EdD, Co-Investigator,  
Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Policy**



Naknek Lake, photo by Russ Taylor/NPS



# Herrmann's background



**Lived experience:** Dena'ina/German descent from Naknek, Alaska; Alaska State Representative in 1980s for Bristol Bay, Aleutians & Pribilof Islands region

**Expertise:** Tribal resilience, climate adaptation, workforce development

**This work is part of Dr. Herrmann's postdoc:** Building capacity of rural communities to respond and adapt to climate change: focusing workforce development within Tribal climate adaptation and mitigation planning

# Purpose of article

**Purpose:** Visualize the complex landscape of Tribal communities; Tribes and Tribal entities can use it to educate the outside world

**Audience:** Researchers academics, federal & state agencies planning to work in rural Alaska

**LANDSCAPE of TRIBAL COMMUNITIES**  
*Context for working in rural Alaska*

**About Adelheid Herrmann**

This article and the associated graphics were developed by Adelheid Herrmann, PhD. She is of Dena'ina and German descent from the community of Naknek, Alaska. Beyond her own experiences living in rural Alaska, Herrmann served as an Alaska State Representative in the 1980s traveling extensively throughout the Bristol Bay, Aleutians and Pribilof Islands regions. She initiated the 'Day in the Life of an Alaskan Tribe' graphic (page 2) concept in the 1990s and further refined it during her postdoc research (2019 to present) for the Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Policy. As co-investigator for ACCAP, Herrmann works to build capacity in rural communities to respond and adapt to climate change.

**Purpose of this article**

The purpose of this article is to inform people planning work in rural Alaska about the current landscape of Tribal communities. It is meant to help researchers, academics, federal and state agencies — especially those doing climate work — understand the complexities in villages and regions. Tribes, Tribal members, and Tribal regional organizations can also use it to educate the outside world.

This article is part of Herrmann's postdoc research project: Building capacity of rural communities to respond and adapt to climate change: focusing workforce development within Tribal climate adaptation and mitigation planning.

**How to cite this article**

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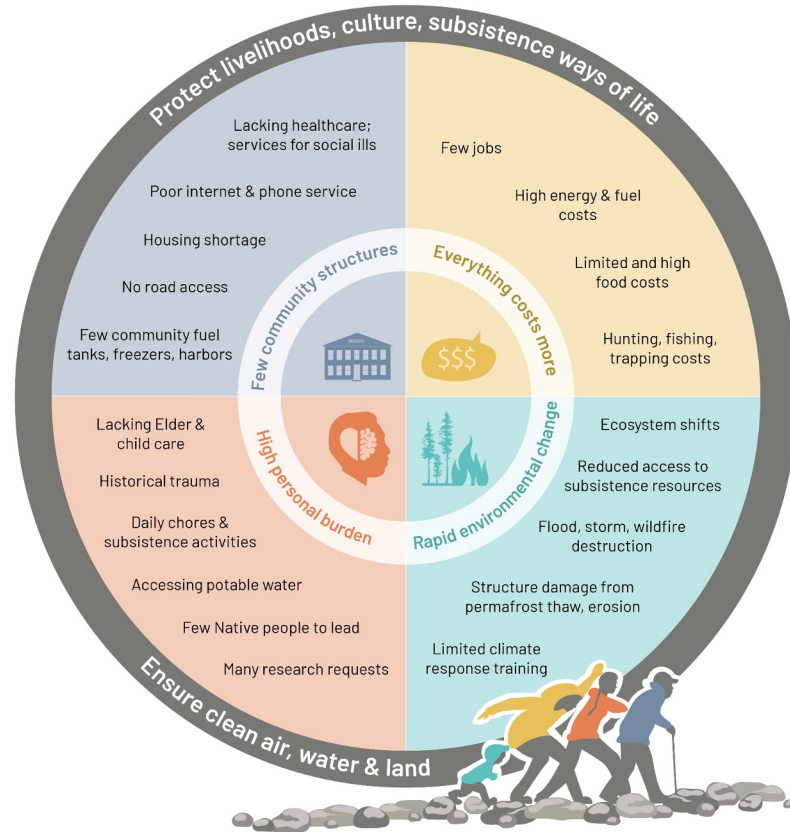
# A day in the life of an Alaskan Tribe




This illustration provides a snapshot of some of the external entities that Tribes may deal with on a daily basis. Groups listed depend on the specific Tribe and are subject to change. Last updated May 2024.

Credit: Herrmann, A. (2020). A day in the life of an Alaskan Tribe (graphic). Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Policy. [uaf-accap.org/projects/tribal-landscape](https://uaf-accap.org/projects/tribal-landscape)

# Internal stressors Tribal members face



This graphic portrays some of the stressors Tribal or community members deal with in their personal lives, often on a daily basis. Examples listed depend on the specific Tribe, community or individual and are subject to change. Last updated May 2024.  
 Credit: Herrmann, A. (2024). Internal stressors Tribal members face (graphic). Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Policy. [uaf-accap.org/projects/tribal-landscape](http://uaf-accap.org/projects/tribal-landscape)



# Human capacity issue in rural Alaska

- People are spread too thin
- Abundant funds, too little capacity
- Navigating complex governing systems



# Complex structure of Alaska Native entities

Multiple governing entities: Tribe, village or regional Alaska Native corporation, city municipalities and boroughs.

Tribes govern themselves

Corporations hold land

Non-profit organizations  
deliver services

ANTHC & AFN  
largest statewide Alaska  
Native organizations



# Tribes govern themselves

- Over 200 Tribes in Alaska
- Government to Government Relationship with the Federal Government
- No two are alike, may be similarities within regions
- May have their own research and engagement protocols



## Corporations hold land

- ANCSA Regional Corporations hold title to 44 million acres in Alaska
- 174 Alaska Native Village Corporations
- These corporations provide shareholder benefits, dividends, educational resources



## **Non-profit organizations deliver services**

- Provide Health Care Services
- Provide Social Services
- Provide Workforce Development and Educational Services
- Advocate on behalf of their region regarding the environment



# **ANTHC & AFN largest statewide Alaska Native organizations**

- ANTHC - Largest Tribal Health Organization
- Developed the Unmet Needs Report
- Developing a Climate Initiatives program
- AFN - Membership - 209 Federally recognized tribes, 185 Village Corporations, 9 regional corporations and 10 regional nonprofit and Tribal consortium
- AFN - Developed the AFN Navigator's Program



# Climate grief and wellness

Climate change grief  
(solastalgia)




Healing and wellness  
rooted in culture



Well-being in climate  
adaptation





## Climate change grief (solastalgia)

- Climate change in rural Alaska is personal
- Destruction of lifeways, subsistence foods, sacred lands
- Destruction of personal and community property
- Adds to historical and other trauma



# Healing and wellness rooted in culture

- Examples of resilience and wellness are rooted in all cultures across Alaska and the World
- Many cultural and traditional practices incorporate healing and wellness strategies
- Learning wellness strategies and creating communities of care and practice can help people stay engaged



## Well-being in climate adaptation

- Term used in many Arctic Reports
- Never a clear definition
- “We define well-being as a way of being with others that arises when people and ecosystems are healthy, and when individuals families and communities equitably practice their chosen ways of life and enjoy a self-defined quality of life now and for future generations” - Rachel Donkersloot and co-authors



# Takeaways

- Alaska climate funding and research is simultaneously needed and taxing
- Do your homework before engaging with Tribal communities





# Let's connect

Send me an email ▶ [acherrmann@alaska.edu](mailto:acherrmann@alaska.edu)

Download the graphics and article ▶ [uaf-accap.org/projects/tribal-landscape](http://uaf-accap.org/projects/tribal-landscape)



**Chin'an • Quyana • Dogidinh • Gunalchéesh •  
Basi' • Thank You**

