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About the Conference
Kawerak, Inc. and RurAL CAP combined their annual wellness conferences to host the Kawerak Regional/Rural Providers’ Conference (RPC) in 2015 and 2016. The RPC is an annual gathering of community members, substance abuse service providers, youth and Elders interested in celebrating a culture of wellness. The RPC embraces and unites traditional Alaska Native knowledge and modern methods in the battle against substance abuse and the promotion of wellness. The RPC features ceremonies, talking circles and cultural events. Workshops and general sessions are geared toward families, those in recovery, Elders, youth, clinicians and service providers in rural Alaska.

The majority of the RPC was held at the Nome Elementary School. Evening events were held at the Nome Recreation Center.

Logo Artwork
We would like to thank Bill Jones, Sr. of Shishmaref. His ‘Spirit Dancers’ carving inspired the conference logo. The theme “Carving a Path to Wellness” recognizes the strength to a traditional and cultural knowledge in creating healthy communities.
The Elders General Assembly was hosted by the Kawerak Elders Advisory Committee and held at the Katirvik Cultural Center.

**Kawerak Elders Advisory Committee**

The Kawerak Elders Advisory Committee hosted the Elders General Assembly (EGA) for Elders from this region. They presented two guest speakers from the Bering Strait region: Panganga Pungowiyi, Director of Kawerak Wellness Program, and Dan Harrelson, VPSO of White Mountain. Ms. Pungowiyi spoke on the root causes of drug addiction and prevention. Mr. Harrelson spoke on drug effects on self and the community. Elders had the opportunity to discuss ways to help their own communities, and how drugs have affected families and the villages. An EGA committee member facilitated each of the small group discussions.

Above: Bernadette Yaayuk Alvanna-Stimpflie speaks at the Elders General Assembly. Photo by Angela Gonzalez

At right: At the conclusion of the Kawerak Regional/Rural Providers’ Conference, Merlin Koonooka shared the Elder’s Assembly Report. Photo by Joel Turman
General Assembly

**August 2nd: Marjorie Tahbone – Inupiagurunga - I am Inupiaq**

Marjorie Tahbone grew up in Nome, Alaska, an active student who participated in Native youth organizations and spoke at conferences as well as leading her student council. Summer weekends were spent hanging fish to dry at her family’s camp and working as a fishery technician, helping to restore Nome’s rivers.

Marjorie Tahbone, Inupiaq/Kiowa, was named the 2011 Miss Indian World at the Gathering of Nations in Albuquerque, New Mexico. This wasn’t Tahbone’s first crown. She had recently been crowned Miss Arctic Native Brotherhood in Nome and Miss World Eskimo-Indian at the Olympics in Fairbanks.

This presentation bridged from previous year’s keynote; highlighted topics from presentations by Lucy Apatiki, Darlene Trigg and Donna Barr. Marjorie highlighted that people are fully capable to live their Inupiaq lifestyle in this modern time. She challenged the saying of “living in two worlds”, because people live in one world where they can be Inupiaq and live by their values and celebrate their traditions. Marjorie illustrated how people today are achieving wonderful things and still live with their Inuit values and traditions, as well as successes in the region and see just how strong people are and what people are capable of doing. Through her keynote, she motivated and inspired people of all ages to live their life full and happy with the Inuit values and traditions; they do not need to choose between a “modern” lifestyle and a “traditional” lifestyle, it is all interconnected and should be viewed as such.

**August 3rd: Lucy Apatiki – Intergenerational Historical Trauma; Past is Present, What Now?**

Lucy Apatiki is from Gambell, Alaska. Her family roots are deep in this village community since her father’s father traveled from Siberia to Gambell and the family grew. Currently, Lucy is a graduate student, working towards her Master’s Degree in Social Work. Lucy and her late husband, Morgan, are the parents of one daughter and two sons and six grandchildren. All of the children and grandchildren live in Gambell.

Lucy is also involved in committees that bring services and hope to her communities. She is a Co-Chair for Liitfik’s Cultural Committee and is part of the Native Connections Steering Community. Lucy identifies her guiding value or principle in life as “to glorify God”.

Lucy expanded upon her 2015 keynote address about historical trauma events in the early 1900s that affected Alaska Native people. She talked about many underlying root causes of negative behaviors prevalent among the Alaska Native population. Lucy talked about the need to invest in solutions. She talked about the need for an apology to Alaska Native people and the need for an Alaska Native memorial and celebration.
August 4th: Linda Chamberlain – Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in Alaska: What We Know Can Change Our Future

Scientist, author, professor, dog musher, and founder of the Alaska Family Violence Prevention Project, Dr. Linda Chamberlain is an internationally recognized keynote speaker and advocate for health issues related to domestic violence, adverse childhood experiences, brain development and trauma, and the amazing adolescent brain. She is known for her abilities to translate science into practical information with diverse audiences and convey a message of hope and opportunity.

Dr. Chamberlain holds faculty appointments at the University of Alaska and Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. She earned public health degrees from Yale School of Medicine and Johns Hopkins University. For the past decade, her work has focused on creating tools that combine the latest science with best practices and practical strategies that service providers, parents, and communities can incorporate and adapt into daily practices.

The scope of Dr. Chamberlain’s work has expanded into the field of mind-body practices to identify self-care strategies to manage stress, promote healing and optimize health. She is a certified practitioner of Tension and Trauma Releasing Exercises (TRE). Her publications include the Amazing Brain Series, a nationally acclaimed resource to educate caregivers about healthy brain development and the implications of early trauma. Awards and recognition for her work include a National Kellogg Leadership Fellowship, an Alaska Women of Achievement Award, and serving as the Inaugural Scattergood Foundation Scholar on Child Behavioral Health. She lives on a homestead with her husband and dog team outside of Homer, Alaska, and teaches graduate courses and lectures on teamwork and leadership based on her experiences as a dog musher.

August 5th: Samuel Johns – Making A Difference

Samuel Johns is a positive rap musician and performer, mentor and motivational speaker. He is the founder of the new Facebook Group, Forget-Me-Not. Samuel lives in Anchorage, Alaska and has been blessed with an amazing wife and kids. He comes from Copper Center, a beautiful community off of the Richardson Highway, full of beautiful people.

Samuel’s grandfather, Harry Johns Sr., was the traditional Chief and Pastor of the church and a major influence to him and his cousins. He was a man well known and respected across Alaska. Samuel remembers all of the plaques on the walls with his grandfather’s name on them and a building that was dedicated to him in Anchorage.

As Samuel got older and his grandfather had passed, he realized that no one could ever fill his grandfather’s shoes. Samuel made up his mind that he wanted to create his own legacy. Today, Samuel is a little different; he is not so concerned about creating his own legacy, rather he wants to inspire people to make the right choices in life and for each to realize they can help make a difference.
Workshops

• Circle Talks • RPC Stakeholders
• Cultural Center for the Bering Strait Region • Lisa Ellanna and Amy Russell-Jamgochian
• Cultural Hands-On Activities • various artisans
• Facing, Healing and Moving Forward from Historical Trauma • Esther Green
• Garden of Roses – Camp for Girls • Debbie Demientieff, Shirley Moses, Elsie Boudreau and Rita Blumenstein
• Green Dot: Sharing Skills to Make our Communities Safer! • Kari van Delden and Lisa Ellanna
• Hands-On: Backyard Medicines – Healing with Plants Close to Home • Jennifer Nu
• Hands-On: Making Plant Medicines • Dr. Allison Kelliher
• Healing from Native Language Loss • Bernadette Yaayuk Alvanna-Stimpfle
• Health Research in Alaska; Why Alaska Native People Need to be Involved • Timothy Thomas, Dr. Rosalyn Singleton, Abbie Wolfe, Connie Jessen and Terry Powell
• Healing and Decolonization • Panganga Pungowiyi and Kari van Delden
• Healing Multigenerational Grief • MaryJane Litchard
• How to Facilitate Circle Talks 101 • Shirley Holmberg and Dee Dee Bennis
• Leadership for Results: Capacity Building in Response to Sexual Violence and Interpersonal Violence • Debbie Demientieff and Elsie Boudreau
• Mindfulness Training for Providers • Jay David
• Modern Healing Systems Catching up with Alaska Native Traditions • Doug and Amy Modig
• Nome Emergency Shelter Team (NEST) & Emergency Shelter and Housing • Bridie Trainor and Sue Steinacher
• Overcoming Change and Grief & Healing - in a Native Perspective • Donna Barr, Edna Apatiki and Ellen Richard
• PC Cares • Panganga Pungowiyi, Diane McEachern, Lisa Wexler and Roberta Motto
• Plant Medicine Basics • Allison Kelliher and Mary Sears
• Safe in the Village (SITV) Healthy Relationships • Cornelia Jessen and Jaclynne Richards
• Treatment Strategies for Intergenerational Trauma of Alaskan Natives • Lucy Apatiki and Jay David
• Traditional Knowledge Exchange: The Supernatural Environment • Julie Raymond-Yakoubian, Lucinda Wieler and Amy Johnson
• Water and Sewer Reform Dialogue • Senator Dan Sullivan, Steve Weaver, Admiral Gary Hartz, Tami Fordham and Bill Griffith

Jay David speaks at a workshop called, Mindfulness Training for Providers. Photo by Angela Gonzalez
Emily Lucas and Edith Starr present information about the Apache stronghold. 
Photo by Angela Gonzalez

Doug Modig presented on Modern Healing Systems Catching Up with Alaska Native Traditions. 
Photo by Angela Gonzalez

Jaclyyne Richards and Cornelia Jessen present Safe in the Village Healthy Relationship. 
Photo by Angela Gonzalez

Justice Track
The Tribal Justice Track raises awareness of the unique healing and therapeutic needs of communities, families, adults, youth and children impacted by the justice system.

Justice Track sessions included:
- Alaska Criminal Justice Follow up Session • Susanne DiPietro
- Consultation on Draft US Fish & Wildlife Services Alaska Native Relations Policy • Doug Burn
- Federal Resources for Your Community • Steve Forrest
- Legal/Legislative Update Regarding Legal Issues Affecting Tribes • Sydney Tarzwell and Chelsea Gregerson
- Tribal Court/Restorative Justice Opportunities for Tribes • Lisa Jaeger

John Bioff introduced Lisa Jaeger when she presented about tribal courts restorative justice opportunities for tribes. 
Photo by Cathie Clements
Youth Track

Youth ages 14 to 18 from attended the general conference and the Youth Track. There were fun and interactive sessions geared directly to youth. The Youth Track sessions were held at the Katirvik Cultural Center.

Youth participated in the beach glass frame activity. Photo by Cathie Clements

Panganga Pungowiyi introduces Jacob Brouillette who gave an update on the Youth Track. Photo by Joel Turman

Tatiana Chanar also gave an update on the Youth Track at the closing day of the RPC. Photo by Joel Turman

Youth listen to a presentation by Senator Lisa Murkowski. Photo by Joel Turman
Youth participated the fun ice breaker activities at the main conference. Photo by Cathie Clements

Nicki Corbett (upper left photo) taught a kuspuk making class at the RPC Youth Track. Photo by Angela Gonzalez
Conference Highlights

Shirley Holmberg starts off the second day with Athabascan singing. Photo by Angela Gonzalez

The Nome Betz Choir sang the Alaska song and national anthem on the first day of the conference. Photo by Amy Modig

Melanie Bahnke of Kawerak expresses gratitude at the conclusion of the conference. Photo by Joel Turman

Senator Lisa Murkowski gave a legislative update between the evening performances by dance groups. Photo by Angela Gonzalez

Audience members watch a keynote address. Photo by Angela Gonzalez
Retired Judge Eric Smith spoke about the Restorative Justice Program. Photo by Angela Gonzalez

Marjorie Tahbone teaches attendees how to cut fish. Photo by Cathie Clements

Attendees learn how to scrape fish skin. Photo by Cathie Clements

Senator Dan Sullivan addressed the conference. Photo by Angela Gonzalez

Megan Alvanna-Stimfle introduced the Water and Sewer Reform Dialogue. Photo by Angela Gonzalez

Lorraine David of the Fairbanks Native Association speaks with Marie Katcheak of Stebbins. Photo by Angela Gonzalez
Evening Performances

Arlo Hannigan and Bryan Muktoyuk
Fresh Water is an exploratory and experimental album from lifelong friends Arlo Hannigan and Bryan Muktoyuk. From Nome, Alaska the group combines Hannigan’s melodies, lyrics, and guitar with Muktoyuk’s Native vocables and Iñupiaq drum. Muktoyuk has a history of drumming and singing with the King Island Eskimo Dancers while Hannigan brings experience having worked on various projects as a singer/songwriter. Their separate backgrounds come together in Fresh Water, harnessing a unique musical voice. A digital album is available for purchase for you or as a gift at: https://arlohanniganandbryanmuktoyuk.bandcamp.com/releases and includes unlimited streaming via the free Bandcamp app, plus high-quality download in MP3, FLAC and more.

Gambell Qughsatkut Dance Group
The Qughasatkut Dance Group is from Gambell. In 2003 Shem Rose helped to get the youth dancing and today they still love to dance! This group has travelled ad performed at Stebbins, twice, Teller, four times, Nome, Fairbanks, and Savoonga! They value their tradition profoundly and are excited to have been invited to perform at the Kawerak/Rural Providers Conference.

Nome/St. Lawrence Dance Group
The Nome/St. Lawrence Island Dancers are a Nome Siberian Yupik dance group made of descendants that originated from Gambell and Savoonga. They were reconnected in January 2014 and there are both beginners and veteran dancers in the group. Their goal is to create opportunities for the Nome Siberian Yup’ik community to come together to learn, maintain and share their traditional culture with others through Native dance and potlucks.

Samuel Johns
Samuel Johns is a positive rap musician and performer, mentor and motivational speaker. He is the founder of the new Facebook Group, Forget-Me-Not. Samuel lives in Anchorage, Alaska and has been blessed with an amazing wife and kids. He comes from Copper Center, a beautiful community off of the Richardson Highway, full of beautiful people.

King Island Traditional Singers and Dancers
King Island Dancers come from King Island, which is located in the Bering Strait approximately 40 miles due south of Cape Prince of Wales and the village of Wales. The village site on King Island is located on the south side called Ugiuvak. Since the early 1960’s the King Island dancers and drummers have traveled to many parts of the Lower 48, Washington DC, Japan, Russian Far East, and various villages in Western Alaska for many cultural festivals.
The group is world-renowned for performances that feature traditional stories and legends of village life. King Islanders enjoyed “The Time of Drumming,” celebrated in the weeks before the winter solstice in December and onto January of the New Year. There were competitions between the four qagzrit or community houses, where Islanders gathered to dance, sing, and feast. New songs were composed that belonged to family members. The songs could be about teasing cousins, hunting, picking greens, or just a fun dance for people to join in.

**Byron Nicholai**
Growing up in a village of only 800 people, Byron felt small with more than 663,000 square miles of Alaska surrounding him. In his mind, his future was predetermined; his destiny was to become like the people of Toksook Bay. However, his passion for music drove him to pursue his dreams and go far beyond what was expected of him. Today, he goes wherever his music takes him, with one goal in mind: to share his culture with the rest of the world and continue the legacy of his ancestors.

Byron began creating music in fifth grade when his cousin asked him to join Toksook Bay’s traditional singing group as a drummer. His music has become an inspiration for young teens across Alaska seeking to embrace their culture. His music is showcased on his “I Sing. You Dance.” Facebook page, named after one his most popular songs. “Regardless of where you come from and your age, all you have to do is believe in yourself. If people doubt you, prove them wrong and show them who you are. You can do whatever you set your mind to.”

**Inaliq Traditional Dancers**
Inaliq Traditional Dance Group from Diomede has a strong history of surviving through generations. Through traditional dance gatherings we celebrate life, passing of our love ones, community gatherings, honoring our elders, our children and our future. It remains the biggest part of our lives knowing it helps us heal, celebrate, and honor who we are. We are a small community that is proud to carry on our traditions through singing and dancing. Diomede songs are widely used throughout our region; a reflection that other communities feel the same way.
Acknowledgements

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Bridget McCleskey

Local Planning Committee
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Rural CAP Staff
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Angela Gonzalez
Amy Gorn
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Susan Martin
Joie Millett
Amy Modig
Joel Turman

About the RPC Commitment Ceremony
The RPC Stakeholders hosted the Commitment Ceremony in Nome on the closing day. It was introduced as a Staking Ceremony by the RPC in 1985 to signify the commitment to sobriety. The involvement in the ceremony is a public declaration of one’s intention for sobriety, because it is made in public with those one respects or honors. In this year’s ceremony, participants were invited to declare their commitment to sobriety. The small stakes in the ceremony symbolize a warrior’s lance. It is a way of “tying” oneself to the lance and facing the enemy — alcohol and drug abuse. The stakes are always decorated with black, white, yellow and red, which have become known as the sobriety colors. All participants will be given a stake to take home that reminds them of their commitment to sobriety for themselves and their loved ones.
Sponsor Acknowledgement

Kawerak and RurAL CAP thank the following organizations, businesses, individuals and sponsors.