

Making Connections – The Foraker Nonprofit Sustainability Model and Alaska Tribes

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In 2014, Foraker received funding from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust that was designed to enhance our ability to serve rural Alaska Native serving nonprofits and tribal governments by testing the validity of the Foraker Nonprofit Sustainability Model in those organizations. The project became known as “Making Connections.” This report documents the research and findings of a three-year process.

We thank the Murdock Trust for their support of this project.

Executive Summary

Since our founding, Foraker has been committed to serving all areas of Alaska. We recognize the vast opportunities to learn and grow from both urban and rural, and Native and non-Native cultures. In all our work, our sustainability model, created primarily with the nonprofit sector in mind, provides a framework for strengthening organizations no matter their mission, size, or location. The model stresses maintaining **focus** on the reason an organization exists by articulating the founding story and answering the questions “who are we?” and “where are we going?” Using the answers to those questions as the focal point, the model asks organizations to ensure that the **right people** are on the board and staff and that a balance exists between the CEO and the board. It also asks organizations to consider the sources, sufficiency, and resiliency of their **unrestricted funds** to meet opportunities and unforeseen needs, and finally to foster strategic and productive **partnerships** to further mission results.

The *Making Connections* project, which was supported by this grant, was designed to assess how the lenses of the sustainability model are helpful in the way Alaska Native tribes are exercising tribal governance. Currently, many tribes operate with governing tools that result in limited effectiveness. These tools are often designed and controlled by the federal government, funded by the federal government, and organized around social programs that do not reflect indigenous ideas of how authority should be exercised. In most cases, these tools do not maximize the opportunity for leadership to deal with current and complex challenges that face Alaska’s tribal governments and the people they serve. We recognize this fundamental dilemma in their current framework, and we have been testing our assumption that the sustainability model is a way to rethink where they are today and where they want to go. Whether we are working with a tribal government or Native nonprofit (one that is governed and led by a majority Alaska Native board and staff), we wanted to learn more about how our sustainability model can be a platform to help Alaska Native leaders ask new questions and rethink methods for effective governance from the inside out. We also wanted to share these insights with the funding community to create a

better understanding of the structures that are both supporting and challenging the tribes and Native nonprofits in Alaska.

The *Making Connections* project underscored the importance of maintaining Foraker's connection in our Native communities through better understanding of how the sustainability model is used in effective tribal governance, whether that use is intentional or not. During the three years of this project, a variety of our staff and consulting team worked with tribal citizens and leaders who are actively engaging in new conversations and practices related to governance that stem from, and are guided by, cultural values. These conversations have required leaders to counter practices that were based on inherited western institutional values and frameworks and move to those that are culturally appropriate. The Native Nations Institute (NNI) calls this process "Native Nation Building" and defines it as "the enhanced capacity of indigenous people to realize their own cultural, educational, political, economic, and environmental objectives through fundamental actions of their own design and initiation." The guiding principles of nation building go beyond defining good governance, they are meant to encourage leaders to strengthen tribal capacity and become the primary decision makers over their land and future. In this regard, tribal leaders learn to move into governing practices that are focused on strengthening their purpose through legitimate cultural values. This clear focus helps tribes define and clearly articulate the "self" in tribal self-determination and self-governance.

In the first two years of the project, the Foraker team worked to deepen existing relationships and establish new ones with many tribes in the state. This work took many formats including issue specific facilitation in areas like planning and HR, listening sessions in concert with grantees of the Oak Foundation and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, attendance in our certificate program, and connections through our Rural Capacity Initiative business development process. Each of these engagements and subsequent relationships provided insights into the selection of groups upon which to base case studies on the use of our sustainability model. While the original grant proposal called for engaging these groups as a cohort, for a variety of reasons we chose to use one-on-one relationships, which turned out to be a more successful process for them and for us.

In Year Three, we moved to the objective of providing case studies and developing metaphors to assist tribes in using the sustainability model to advance their work. Four tribes were selected because of their reputations for strength in one of the areas of the sustainability model and for their determined and engaged leadership. At this point in the project, Lead Capacity Builder Jonella Larson White engaged in intensive conversations with tribal leadership, administered governance assessment surveys, and brought together tribal council members to share the challenges they each face. The insights we gained from these engagements are captured in case studies that are attached to this report.

Foraker's work with the participating tribes will allow us to adapt how to employ the sustainability model in tribal governance frameworks. Below are observations that will provide context for our future work.

- Tribes, like nonprofits, vary with where they are in their sustainability journey – some have a clear focus and a true understanding of their governing constitutions, whereas others do not. This is similar to what we find in our work with nonprofits.
- Tribes, like nonprofits, face a real challenge of capacity. This is especially true for tribes that exist in communities with small populations (less than 100 people), are faced with an out migration of citizens, and operate their entities using systems that have little to no match with cultural values. To counter this challenge, tribes are investing in leadership capacity through focused teachings that emphasize cultural values and development of Native language (especially among children), and by encouraging high school students to actively participate in tribal council meetings.
- Tribes, probably more so than many nonprofits, understand and embrace their purpose and values through their oral history and cultural practices. Not all tribes have their purpose and values written, but they can certainly communicate their importance along with their strategic vision and plans.
- Our work with tribes is inherently different when we discuss focus – who they are and where they are going. With nonprofits, we often ask organizations to describe the story of their “founding.” With tribes, we know that their peoples have organized for thousands of years and have much deeper and more profound understandings of “who they are” from a cultural perspective. Our hope is to provide leaders with adequate tools that encourage them to incorporate their indigenous concepts of how governance and authority should be organized and exercised into formal governing institutions (tribal entities, Native corporations, schools).
- The core purpose of tribes is always to foster, grow, and encourage the health and well-being of their citizens. Unlike nonprofits, they typically do not have varying “missions.” Tribes are guided by their cultural values often with the strategic vision “to remain for the next 10,000 years.”
- As sovereign entities recognized by the federal government, tribes receive certain federal payments and engage in cottage industries and more recently in 8A companies, all of which are considered earned income. Tribes also are in the midst of developing alternative energy projects and food security projects, protecting and exercising subsistence rights, and supporting local entrepreneurship – all of which offset the high cost of living in rural Alaska and connect to the financial resiliency factor within the model.

The insight and knowledge we gained from this project will not only continue to inform our work around the state, but will also have an impact on how the funding community engages with tribes and Native nonprofits. Throughout the project, we have had conversations with funders who are making grants and supporting the capacity of organizations in rural Alaska – mainly the Moore Foundation, Oak Foundation, and Rasmuson Foundation.

Foraker staff remains committed to building the cultural competency within our team of staff and consultants. Continuing and expanding *Making Connections* will be a long-term project that can now be carried on with enhanced capacity, insight, and commitment.

***Final Report to the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust
Supplemental material***

Introduction to Case Studies

The foundation for *Making Connections: The Foraker Nonprofit Sustainability Model and Alaska Native Tribes* began in Year One of Murdock funding when Foraker Lead Capacity Builder Jonella Larson White enrolled in and completed a three-credit course on tribal governments in Alaska offered through the University of Alaska (UA), Interior Alaska Campus in Fairbanks. This course provided valuable insight specifically into current tribal government and politics in rural Alaska and included overviews of tribal legislative, judicial, and administrative responsibilities. The class also tied into key concepts of federal Indian law, self-determination and self-governance for building and enhancing tribal governments. This ultimately helped with the engagement protocols that were created for the project. The course provided the opportunity for Larson White to communicate the applicability of the sustainability model while working with tribes by using the questions within the **focus** lens, “who are you?” and “where are you going?” and linking those responses to tribes defining the “self” in self-determination and self-governance. The four tribes initially identified for this project were chosen in part because of conversations with the UA tribal management faculty.

During Year One, Foraker conducted multiple meetings over the phone and in person with the four tribes. These meetings would often include staff and tribal council members, and in some cases tribal legal counsel. To help facilitate the process, we created a document that outlined project protocols patterned after the ethical principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent as laid out by the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). This document, which is attached, increased Foraker’s credibility as staff moved forward with the project.

During Year Two, we continued to meet with tribal council leadership to introduce the *Making Connections* project. Additional meetings with the staff of the Native American Rights Fund, First Alaskans Institute, and continued conversations with staff at the UA Tribal Management program helped to identify potential tribal partners. A partnership was formed between Foraker and the University of Arizona Native Nation’s Institute (NNI) allowing us to adapt a governance assessment used by NNI that had been created for the Honoring Nations Program at Harvard University and the University of Arizona. Foraker met with national and international funders who gathered in Anchorage on two separate occasions to discuss the project and the philosophy of organizational sustainability, particularly as it applies in rural Alaska.

During Year Three, we developed case studies of four tribes, articulated metaphors to help better relate the factors in the sustainability model to Native governance, and instituted an assessment process. Four tribes accepted our invitation to participate in the case studies:

Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Igiugig Village Council, Organized Village of Kake, and Native Village of Port Heiden. Again, the project was designed to strengthen connections with tribal leadership through supported peer learning, along with better understanding of what is working well and why using the sustainability model improves tribal understanding of challenges and opportunities for self-determination and self-governance. Ultimately, we also knew that their learning and sharing would better inform Foraker's commitment to capacity building work.

The case studies were developed using interviews and an assessment survey that attempted to measure the use of the sustainability model in tribal decision making. The survey was adapted, with permission, from a governance tool created by NNI. We requested that each tribe submit at least one and up to three completed surveys. The Port Heiden and Igiugig tribes each submitted two complete assessments, the Kake tribe submitted one complete assessment, and the Chickaloon tribe did not complete the assessment. Even though there was not substantial participation, the additional information from the assessments provided Foraker with further insight into the internal operations of each tribe including: administrative roles and responsibilities, civic engagement, use of tribal courts, partnerships, and revenue generation (tribal businesses and citizen entrepreneurship.)

During this part of the project, Larson White led the effort to meet with tribal council leadership and citizens both in their communities and in Anchorage to learn what was going well and how they were addressing challenges while using the sustainability model as a reference tool. In all of the communities, young leaders were actively involved in driving the change they wanted to see. Below is a summary of what she learned:

- In Kake, the tribal council leadership emphasized that everything they do is rooted in who they are, where they are, and their history. They have clear **focus**. The tribe has influenced policy at the state and national levels (presenting successful resolutions at the Alaska Federation of Natives and the National Congress of American Indians), and they have won cases at the Supreme Court. The leaders recognize that their cultural values are the foundation of their work, and they are actively digitizing and sharing archival information in hopes that it will be available and accessible for future generations.
- In Igiugig, the tribal council insisted that high school students be part of each conversation. They recognize that involving young people in decision making is one of the most important ways they can keep their tribe strong for the next generations. Several young people have returned to the community after receiving higher educational degrees and have started families in the village of 70 people. The council sees the size of their community as its strength and is clear on how to grow and keep the **right people** in their village.

- Port Heiden’s strength lies in its innovative model for maintaining **unrestricted funds**. The village has re-established the cultural practice of reindeer herding and is also raising, marketing, and selling livestock (chicken, eggs, pork, reindeer) to neighboring communities as a sustainable food source. The tribe is building the Meshik Processing Center to process and sell Bristol Bay salmon online and is focused on projects that will increase eco-tourism and provide geothermal energy for residents. They are interested, too, in developing a treatment center based on their core values and focused on self-discovery, healthy recovery, and personal and cultural growth.
- Through focus and self-determined efforts, Chickaloon is in a position where funding entities, including the federal government, are approaching them to partner on projects and initiatives at the national level. They have come a long way in developing critical **partnerships** stating, “When we first started working with the BIA and social service agencies, everything was so regulatory tight for us – they were strangling us to death. Over time we’ve proven we are responsible for doing our work and so the partnerships have grown more positive.”

The sustainability model and cultural metaphors

Foraker staff continues to explore creative approaches to convey the importance of organizational sustainability in ways that resonate well with Alaska Native leaders in rural and urban Alaska. As we discuss the sustainability model, a process that emphasizes strategic decision making while moving an organization forward, we often incorporate culturally relevant metaphors and comparisons that are practiced and understood by the people with whom we are working. These metaphors will often generate conversation, encourage active participation, and increase overall understanding of what it takes to create and maintain a resilient organization. Below are three examples. When these analogies are shared with Alaska Native leadership of organizations and tribes, people tend to become more immersed in the philosophy and can ask more informed questions about their ideology, leadership, revenue, and partners.

Whaling and Commercial Fishing (informed by Inupiat and Yupik whalers and Yup'ik, Unangan, and Sugpiat fisherman)

Having a clear *focus* is to understand who you are and where you are going. The same goes for members of whaling and commercial fishing crews. To know who you are is to know your cultural and family values. To know where you are going is to harvest and safely return home with food to feed the family and communities. Who you are will never change (this is similar to the ideology of an organization). Where you are going may change depending on what season it is (similar to a strategic plan). As with a sustainable organization, a hunting crew maintains a laser focus on its founding principles and exercises discipline (known as cultural protocol) based on those principles in all its strategic decisions. At the same time, every season a whaling crew, much like an organization, must look ahead and adapt for the future.

Having the right people in the right roles, specifically counting on the right board and staff who work together effectively as partners, is like a well-balanced whaling and commercial fishing crew. The primary role of a captain is to ensure the safety of the crew and to plan for and oversee its daily function. The captain works closely with crewmembers including people who remain on the mainland (i.e. retired whalers and fisherman, community elders, spouses, and children). Crewmembers spend the year preparing for and understanding their role in the boat as captain, harpooner, bouyman, etc. Reliability, communication, trust, and work ethic are as important for the healthy functioning of the crew as they are for an organization.

Crews that have their own apparatus and equipment are comparable to organizations with sufficient *unrestricted funds*. These crews have the flexibility to take advantage of opportunities or meet unanticipated challenges. Ultimately, they are safer and more secure than those who rely on borrowing equipment.

It takes a community several months to prepare for the whaling and commercial fishing seasons. It also takes the whole community to come together in *partnership* to welcome and properly care for the successful harvest of a whale and fish. One crew of five alone cannot tow in, let alone butcher and distribute an immense 60-foot whale. Following cultural protocol is an important factor to any crew as its members prepare, embark, and return home from a successful harvest. Following protocol depends on active communication with retired and fellow crewmembers (men and women) as well as teaching and communicating with emerging crew.

The following two metaphors are examples shared by artisans from Pt. Hope, Kodiak, and Kake and summarize the practices of creating cultural works of art with the lenses of sustainability.

Weaving (informed by Tlingit and Haida weavers)

The Tlingit saying *Haa-sh Agoon* informs the work of current Tlingit weavers and is a core value that speaks directly to using artistic weaving techniques of ancestors and applying them to a current art piece with the intent of its continued use by future generations over the next several hundred years. Wearing and dancing woven cultural regalia is believed to add to the length of the spiritual life not only of the people but of the cultural item as well. Ceremony and dance strengthen the cultural and social connections of a community. Weavers today talk about the stylistic change in the quality of detail and complex weaving techniques once used by weavers one and two generations ago. The eldest weavers mention that during the lifetime of their grandparents, the creation of a Chilkat blanket was a community responsibility and involved the **right people** who were known within the community for harvesting quality tree bark and roots, wool, furs, and other material used to create and adorn a blanket. The weaver had one responsibility and that was to focus on the designs while creating and at times inventing weaving techniques.

Today, the artist is responsible for not only creating the item but is also responsible for gathering and harvesting material. That coupled with limited time to focus on a product (many artists today have full-time jobs that are non-art related) has resulted in less complex and more simplified versions of work. Generations ago, the Tlingit and Haida artist community did the majority of the work associated with community ceremonies and were often considered community “headsmen” who were generously compensated by fellow leaders of families and clans. There are fewer weavers today. **Partnerships** are critical to perpetuate the cultural techniques and practices and often depend on the resources and space provided by local and regional institutional entities (schools, corporations, tribes).

Mask making (informed by Sugpiat and Inupiat artists)

The cultural function of a mask maker is to visualize an image and carve it, frequently out of wood, to be worn for a specific purpose and with the intent of being used for many

generations. Masks that are created and used for cultural dance help people connect directly with their ancestors while strengthening their cultural identity and who they are. People who are critical in the process of bringing a mask to life include the artist, the dancer wearing the mask, fellow dancers, singers and drummers, song composers, and the spectators who witness the mask being danced. This action alone, strengthened by the **right people** involved, helps to make inherent and invisible cultural values visible through action. Masks are one element of cultural paraphernalia used for expression that are often made using resources that are readily available to the artist, either personally obtained or gifted, and can include wood, feathers, shells, ivory, furs and skins, and baleen. Critical **partners** include fellow and experienced mask makers who teach important carving techniques while challenging and encouraging creativity, as well as those who provide opportunity (time and space) for masks to be created and used.

Case Study for the Organized Village of Kake (OVK)

Kake, Alaska

“100 years ago, our ancestors were faced with a lot of change and they adapted the best way they could. I feel that we’re in the same shoes trying to do the same thing they did. I believe in our leadership and I believe in our kids. I believe in the impact our work will have.”

Dawn Jackson, OVK Executive Director.

Foraker’s association with Kake

Over the last two years, Foraker has strengthened its partnership with the OVK, both through our work with the *Making Connections* project and through other Foraker services in the community. Those include helping to inform and create a succession plan for the transition from a long-time executive director to the new ED, developing a 10-year strategic plan, and delivering training in the roles and responsibilities of the tribal council. In addition, Executive Director Dawn Jackson has successfully completed the Foraker Certificate in Nonprofit Management program.

OVK tribal leadership greatly appreciates the ability to work with an Alaska partner like Foraker to help learn about capacity building tools. They see value in turning to the sustainability model as a way to ask important questions, and they have also expressed interest in developing a leadership cohort specifically focused on learning from fellow tribal entities around the state. They are interested, too, in continuing to work with Foraker to strengthen the capacity of tribal government leadership.

Summary of findings on how the sustainability model is applied in Kake

In Kake, the tribal council leadership emphasized that everything they do is rooted in who they are, where they are, and their history. They have clear focus. The tribe has influenced policy at the state and national levels (presenting successful resolutions at the Alaska Federation of Natives and the National Congress of American Indians), and they have won cases at the Supreme Court. The leaders recognize that their cultural values are the foundation of their work, and they are actively digitizing and sharing archival information in hopes that it will be available and accessible for future generations. In addition to strengthening cultural values and ensuring they have a clear plan moving forward, OVK continues to develop its leadership by emphasizing the importance of both cultural and western education. Tribal leaders have seen this success first-hand and want to ensure that all young people find value within their community. OVK sees opportunity in developing sustainable financial opportunity through increased cottage industries and is in the midst of restoring their historic fishing cannery. They recognize that the tribe is a means for sustaining cultural and community values and is working to strengthen its partnerships with other entities within Kake and the region.

Making Connections, Foraker's approach

Making Connections key participants: OVK Executive Director Dawn Jackson, Tribal Council President Casimero Roy Aceveda, Former OVK Executive Director Gary Williams.

In Year Two of the project, Larson White was asked to meet with the OVK Council and guide them through conversations around developing a succession plan. She also facilitated a strategic planning session the same year in which the council developed and adopted a 10-year plan. In Year Three, Larson White met with key participants at the Foraker offices in Anchorage where she spent an afternoon providing an overview of the *Making Connections* project, the sustainability model, and the Native Nation Building principles, and asked project specific open-ended questions. OVK completed and submitted one governance assessment, and all three key participants came together in Anchorage with other participating tribes.

Those who participated in the *Making Connections* conversation spoke specifically about the recent history of Kake and current efforts to strengthen culture and leadership and create sustainable opportunity for their community. Two of the participants have been actively involved in leadership positions for the past 30 years and provided valuable knowledge about the changes they have experienced with the tribe and within the community. They spoke in detail about their efforts not only to secure rights to self-determination, but also how they have exercised these rights. They outlined in detail the current strategies they are undertaking as a tribe to improve the health and wellness of their citizens and ensure that the appropriate mechanisms and partnerships are in place to promote opportunities for a thriving tribe and community, which they articulate as healthy and productive children, families, and elders.

Background on Kake

The Organized Village of Kake (OVK) is a federally recognized tribe located in the community of Kake on the northwest coast of Kupreanof Island, 100 miles south of Juneau. The name Kake is an English adaption of the community's Tlinglit name *Keex Kwaan* (*Keex* translates to "opening of daylight" and *Kwaan* translates to "land"). Approximately 560 people live in Kake, with nearly 70% of the residents enrolled as citizens through the OVK. The mission of OVK is "to promote the welfare of tribal members and descendants through the development and operation of social, economic and cultural enterprises, and to preserve and maintain Native cultural traditions and our subsistence lifestyle." In 2016, OVK adopted its core purpose "to strengthen tribal community and culture" through the core values of respect, collaboration, endurance, and safety and security.

In the 1980s, the village of Kake had the highest rate of suicide in Alaska. Up until this time, money generated from resource industries, mainly timber, commercial fishing, and a fish hatchery, flowed freely through the community – and then came to an abrupt halt.

Residents experienced an increase in substance and alcohol abuse and tribal leaders openly described their community as being in the midst of chaos. A handful of individuals decided to tackle these challenges, using the tribal government as a conduit, and began efforts to regain control of their community prioritizing the wellbeing of their tribal citizens through efforts stemming from cultural values.

In the 1990s, OVK established “Circle Peacemaking” through a tribal ordinance. Circle Peacemaking is a group process used for suicide prevention, interventions for alcoholism and drug abuse, domestic violence, personal and cultural traumas, and restorative justice work. It is an alternative to the State of Alaska’s traditional justice system and involves a cultural and holistic-based approach that tribal citizens charged with minor disputes and misdemeanors can choose rather than going through western courts. Kake, like many rural Alaska communities, experiences challenges securing full-time law enforcement officers. The U.S. Department of Justice relationship with Alaska Native villages and tribes is complex and legally different from that of tribes in the contiguous United States. In Alaska, the state, rather than the federal government, generally has jurisdiction over criminal matters involving tribes. Because Alaska has limited financial or personnel capacity to employ full-time law enforcement in every tribal community, the state has recognized the importance and effectiveness of Circle Peacemaking. This model is currently being used by tribal governments throughout state and the nation.

The impacts associated with the loss of industry in Kake along with the establishment of Circle Peacemaking encouraged new conversations among tribal leaders about the role of tribal government in their community. Understanding the importance of a healthy community, OVK has worked extensively over the past few decades to maximize its sovereign rights to self-governance through legal and financial partnerships with the state and federal governments. Tribal leaders have tried and won cases in the Alaska Supreme Court that have influenced policy at the state and federal levels. Rather than work through a regional entity to receive federal funds for programs, OVK exercises its right as a tribe to contract directly with the federal government through Public Law 93-638 (Amended Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act). This allows them increased flexibility to determine how federal funding is used for housing, security, and transportation within their community. The OVK leadership understands the importance of effective governance and the direct impact it has on their current culture. They are working extensively to tackle social, cultural, and economic challenges knowing that the work they accomplish today will have an impact on future generations of leaders and citizens.

Note: Information on Kake was gathered from interviews conducted by Foraker, the village’s website (www.kakefirstnation.org), and an article in the August 2, 2014, edition of the Washington Post by reporter Sari Horwitz. The Post article, “In rural villages, little protection for Alaska Natives,” outlined the social challenges in remote areas and the difficulty with providing public safety.

First person narratives on the factors of sustainability

Focus

- Everything we do is rooted in who we are and where we are and our history. That is a reflection of what people value. We are very proud of where we are at and our history. Sometimes there's controversy but that's what makes us, us. I want to make sure that all the history that we have in our office, all the audio, visual, and text donations we get from our people, is digitized so that it is shared and so that the school and the kids have access to all of our recordings. There is a lot of history that our students are unaware of. We were a part of Supreme Court cases that are deeply rooted in defending who we are and where we are from. We're very proud of that and we want to make sure that that is still there in five generations or ten generations. Laying that foundation is ongoing and that is where we are at.
- Our cultural way of life is so important. No matter what type of education we have, we have to know where we come from and who we are. That should always be there and I'm proud to say that. We hired somebody to teach our kids Tlingit. We brought her to our home. She is not from Kake but she is married to a guy from Kake. We are trying to get the younger ones in to take the responsibility. In 25 years, I hope that she will still be there thinking and investing in the future of Kake and understanding the values we need to keep in our community.
- Early on, I saw a lot of opportunities with OVK—it was there. We had the programs there but we were not doing anything because there was no focus. Nobody was dreaming about the future. In the meantime there were young kids going to college. There was just a few of them going to college and getting degrees. I thought about that and wondered what do we have to offer them when they come back? We don't have a 10 year plan to see where we are going as OVK. No one was steering the boat.

Right People

- Effective leadership goes back to education for the council and remembering who you are serving. I think we can forget that sometimes—who we are serving and who put us there. We were put here because we promised we were going to do something. When we fall to the wayside, it becomes a personal thing. I think education, knowledge, learning how to work together first as a council and then with other entities is important. Like I said earlier, it's not about me, it has to be about we—we as the OVK tribe. Once we all learn to say “we” as a community again, we are going to grow and there is no other way. We are going to get a lot of things done.

- Our role in leadership has to be selfless. It's not about you. Leadership needs to be about the good of the order and it cannot be judged. It makes a difference when people have to be clean mentally and do not have misassumptions or are judgmental. We have to be open minded in what is all possible for our people and then pair it down to what is realistic.
- We are trying to catch up and trying to learn how to be better leaders and to listen. We are trying to listen and that's a hard thing – to listen to what is going on around us. So when we start learning to listen things happen. Those lights that were put up in our community, that came from the high school kids talking about what they thought would make the community safer. So, we listened to what they said.
- When I first came back to Kake, there were not many people going out for education. A lot of people were floating around doing nothing. When we got into dancing and started bringing the culture back to the community, we started working with the kids and we started with the high school but that was too late because they were graduating. So we focused on the grade school and then we went all the way down to kindergarten. They just happened to be my grandkids and Dawn's kids. Last year, we had 9 kids graduate and 8 of them are going to college. To me that is success. That is what I see in our community today. We are not just sitting there – we are trying to grow the best way we can for our people and it has taken time. The Council gets frustrated because it takes a lot of time, sometimes, to get something done.

Unrestricted Funds

- Years ago I asked if we could have an 8A company. We had to think outside the box and it took a lot of years but we finally got it going and Dawn's been working pretty hard on that. We now have money flowing in there. I always thought about free money, what I call free money, because the federal government's got nothing to do with it – it belongs to OVK and we can do things with that. If somebody needed a new furnace, we wouldn't have to go through the federal government process. We could buy it on an emergency basis for our elders or our people who need it. Right now we have a good start.
- What is important is whenever tribes can create their own services locally, not taking things away from regional entities because they do some things really well, but if tribes have the capacity to do things locally, it's so much better. Your dollar stays there and you have your fingers on the pulse. That allowed us to expand our programs and services for our people and I don't think it is any coincidence that it allowed us to expand in another direction. We worked for 3-4 years to get our self-governance, which became permanent legislation in '95. We jumped into projects with our own independent self-governance compact. It was also around that time

that we developed our own economic development venture, which was the Keex Kwaan Lodge. Self-governance allowed us to spread our wings in theory and take us toward unrestricted funding. It is not yet a cash count but at least it is a way and a direction.

- Over the years our different programs have all evolved, including transportation with the BIA and federal highway. They have worked it out so that so tribes can take on their own transportation dollars and that allowed another exponential growth spurt for us. Through all of those we were able to do the multi-use dock and work on the cannery. We put up safety streetlights throughout the community and we couldn't do that without the more flexible sources of funding, which are still tethered by the feds but they are less restricted. So the idea of totally unrestricted, that's a wonderful thing. We have realized that with our 8A, our profit arm, we cannot just pull money immediately off of that. We need to keep money in there so it can grow and nurture and we cannot hamstring it prematurely by taking revenue.
- We have to find ways to provide an income for our citizens and try to stimulate economy and keep dollars in the community rather than exporting and always paying for stuff. We are trying to find innovative ways to initiate and cultivate our own business-minded people at home. One of the things we take pride in is getting our own foods and we rely heavily on the environment around us. The health of the environment as a whole and not just the foods. So we are trying to integrate an economy around that and we are working with the Sustainable Southeast Partnership, which is a partnership between a bunch of people including tribes who want to keep more dollars in the community rather than rely on outside entities to keep people employed. We want to keep people at home. We're trying to bring the forest service on board in a different direction and utilize the foods around us and the plants, and the berries. We are working to get more people involved in creating their own cottage industries. We are trying to keep people interested in learning more about their plants and how logging can affect streams or how the climate change is affecting our plants, ocean, and impacts pollution.

Partnerships

- I think that in the beginning, our people worked well together as a community and because of western society, we became individuals. At this stage we are trying to find our identity again and say instead of "me" it is "we" as a community again. I hope our people will be saying that and helping each other and doing it together. To really understand what it means to be a citizen of a village because we are really going to need partnerships more so now as the years go by.
- In the next 25 years, I see more partnerships happening and working together and being very deliberate about it. Not people fighting or personal agendas at the table,

it is about finding solutions to the issues we have on a daily basis at home and being very deliberate about it. That is what we are supposed to be doing. We are supposed to have partnerships and leveraging what we have together whether it is in-kind, whether it is cash – going after funding and having four other partners on board because that is going to get you the money you need to get stuff moving forward. That is where I see us in 25 years.

- There is a lot moving forward without having to be weighed down by the power struggles in the past. We have to ask how we can partner with each other moving forward. We have a plan here - do you have a plan? How can we move forward with our plans for the betterment of our community? Instead of pointing fingers and blaming and saying your family wronged me 100 years ago. That cannot happen anymore.
- We are all working toward the same vision but need to coordinate our strengths. In our discussion with the BIA Director, they feel confident in giving resources and support to Kake because they know we are going to follow through and say what we are going to do. Sometimes that might not be the case but if a community can muster itself to doing that, even at an entry level, you can really go a long way.

**Case Study for the Igiugig Tribal Village Council
Igiugig, Alaska**

“It’s a pretty good feeling when you live in a town where your people have been sustained for thousands of years and when you hear about any one period of time, it is just a blink. We have a very long history here.” AlexAnna Salmon, Igiugig Tribal Village Council President.

Foraker’s association with Igiugig

Over the last two years, Foraker has strengthened its partnership with the Igiugig Village Tribal Council, both through our work with the *Making Connections* project and through the Rural Capacity Initiative Business Planning Competition, a program focused on sustainable economic development and capacity building in the Lake and Peninsula region of the state.

The Igiugig Village Tribal Council leadership is interested in expanding its partnership with Foraker, specifically through the offerings in leadership development. They see value in turning to the sustainability model as a way to ask important questions. They also are interested in developing a leadership cohort specifically focused on learning from fellow tribal entities around the state. They hope to continue working with Foraker to strengthen the capacity of tribal government leadership through board member training and professional employee training.

Summary of findings on how the sustainability model is applied in Igiugig

In Igiugig, the tribal council insisted that high school students be part of our conversations. They recognize that involving young people in decision making is one of the most important ways they can keep their tribe strong for generations to come. Several young people have returned to the community after receiving degrees and have started families in this village of 70 people. The council sees the size of their community as a strength and is clear on how to grow and keep the **right people** in their village. Igiugig is a role model community for all of Alaska. Tribal members focus their energy on creating opportunity for the next generation of leadership while recognizing that it is the collective of people that is responsible for contributing to positive change whether it is cultural or social, or through governance or economic development.

Making Connections, Foraker’s approach

Making Connections key participants: Elders Anna and Jordon Wilson and Randy Alvarez, Tribal Council President AlexAnna Salmon, Tribal Council Vice President Karl Hill, Tribal Council Member Christina Salmon-Bringhurst, Tribal Clerk Ida Nelson, Tribal Clerk Sheryl Wassillie, Village Health Aide Jiles Turning Heart, Director of Accounting and Finance Sandy Alvarez, Community member Jeffery Bringhurst, six high school students.

Larson White and Foraker Director of Communication and Education Kate O'Brien traveled to Igiugig to meet with the council and community members over a two-day period. During the community meeting on the first day, Larson White provided an overview of the *Making Connections* project, the sustainability model and the Native Nation Building principles, and asked specific open-ended questions related to the community. Three individuals from the tribe traveled to Anchorage and participated in the conversation with fellow tribal entities.

Those who participated in *Making Connections* spoke specifically about the recent history of Igiugig and current efforts to strengthen culture and leadership. The elder participants provided direct context to the cultural changes they have experienced. The younger participants willingly shared what they have learned from their elders and spoke specifically about how the experience of their grandparents has had a direct impact on their families and their cultural identity. They also spoke in detail about current strategies they are undertaking as a tribe to provide the best quality of life for their citizens including language immersion programs, community activities, business opportunities, and harnessing alternative energy and food security projects—all critical elements they believe necessary for strengthening and exercising their sovereignty as a tribe and advancing the leadership within their community. On the second day, Larson White and O'Brien, along with AlexAnna and Adeline Salmon, visited the home of elders Anna and Jordan Wilson for informal conversations. The two were also invited to sit in on the Yup'ik immersion class in the afternoon.

Background on Igiugig

Igiugig (population 70) is a community located in southwest Alaska on the south bank of the mouth of the Kvichak River and Lake Iliamna. The word *igiugig* means "like a throat that swallows water" in the Yup'ik language—a name clearly derived from its location. Archaeological sources of settlements surrounding Igiugig parallel the local knowledge of current residents—both indicate that people have continuously lived in this part of Alaska for thousands of years. Many of the current residents of Igiugig are the decedents of the first Yup'ik, Unangan, and Dena'ina people whose parents and grandparents occupied a wide land base migrating from settlement to settlement with the seasons. Today, they are one of the only villages in Alaska that has all three cultural groups living within the community. The mission of the Igiugig Tribal Village Council is "to provide resources, programs, and infrastructure to enhance our quality of life. We are an energetic and hard-working village with strong community, family, and cultural values. We have built a strong job base, which has made it possible for young people to remain in the village, and to raise their families in a safe and healthy environment." The purpose as stated by AlexAnna Salmon, Igiugig Tribal Village Council President, is "to develop good leaders and look out for the welfare of the community and not for individuals." She continued with: "That's how we progress so well."

Considerable lifestyle changes have occurred within a few generations for the people of Igiugig. Within the last century, the community has survived impacts of population devastation combined with the introduction, imposition, and adoption of alternative methods to spiritual expression, formal education, as well as governance systems and structures. These experiences stem from the direct impact of western societal and cultural values and practices entering into the community, which were fundamentally different from the indigenous values and practices that sustained people in the area for generations.

During the first half of the 20th century, a flu epidemic devastated the area around Igiugig decimating the population and wiping out whole settlements of people. The survivors of the epidemic settled in the modern day villages around Lake Iliamna, including Igiugig. At this time the Russian Orthodox Church established a strong hold within the community. The church converted people to practice the religion regularly and also took on the role of overseeing law and order. Two of the elders in the room shared direct stories about the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church and what it was like to be the first generation of Alaska Natives in their area forced to attend government mandated schools. They talked about how the institutional philosophy and approach to Russian Orthodoxy and western education was vastly different from the spiritual and cultural education they and their parents were accustomed to. Attending the schools, often in locations far away from their expansive family unit, diminished not only familial relationships but also the cultural relationships with the land and environment. These elders were the first generation of people living in the area that were physically punished and banned from speaking their Native languages in school.

The second half of the 20th century continued to bring about more cultural change. The market crashed for the once lucrative reindeer herding industry for the people of Igiugig and was replaced by the commercial fishing industry drawing many people to work in canneries and to become involved in commercial fishing in areas outside and away from the village. In the 1970s, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) resolved land claims in the state and created regional and village corporate institutions. ANCSA defined land ownership for federal, state, and tribal entities creating land partitions and introducing new rules and regulations for the landowners. The majority of tribes in Alaska gained title to designated surface land rights while the regional and village Native corporations gained title to the subsurface rights. In addition to settling the land claims, ANCSA was designed to provide new economic opportunity through corporate institutions primarily focused on resource development industries (mining, oil, timber, and fisheries) and were designed and structured to maximize financial growth. These Alaska Native village and regional corporations created an alternative way in how Alaska Natives would interact with their lands and environment. New conversations emerged shifting discussions from the cultural relationships with the lands to maximizing opportunity for financial gains through development of lands.

Regional Native nonprofit corporations also emerged as an extension to the 12 for-profit corporations in Alaska to oversee and implement federally designed and funded boiler plate programs intended to help with social issues. These programs were the primary welfare programs made available by the federal government to the 230 tribes across the state and were now managed and implemented by the regional nonprofit corporations. Tribes and their citizens located within the newly formed regional boundaries became the beneficiaries of the regional corporations and enrolled as member entities into the nonprofit corporations and the shareholders of the for-profit corporations. Alaska Natives employed through the newly formed corporations adopted official leadership titles including “Native corporation board member,” “tribal councilmen,” and “president, secretary, treasure, first chief, second chief.” These titles were reflective of corporate institutional cultures and western corporate values prominent at the time: heroic leaders, strong staff hierarchies, and hieratical cultures.

Alaska Native corporations and corporate leaders emerged throughout the state, directly and indirectly impacting every Alaska Native and tribe. The leadership criteria for the corporations tended to focus on western business and corporate acumen rather than the cultural approaches that had legitimate strongholds with its people. Anna Wilson, Igiugig elder, and AlexAnna Salmon, both talked about the cultural leadership criteria considered within the community prior to the ANSCA era. Wilson reflected that when she was young, leaders embodied values that were strong in discipline and focused on gathering and sharing the food with their communities. AlexAnna Salmon reiterated this sentiment sharing that she was told by her elders that personality tests were conducted on young individuals in order to determine their leadership ability. Elders would often observe how the men would react to situations that would stimulate anger and strong emotion. Those who kept the most composure and did not act out in anger, even if they were feeling it, were recognized as upholding the needed qualities of a leader. Randy Alvarez, village elder and former tribal councilmen, continued stating: “Back then we had real community leaders or chiefs, and when ANSCA and ANILCA passed, leadership roles transitioned to village council presidents or village corporation presidents. Nick Wassalie was the last traditional chief here. The land claims came and changed that.”

Within the last four decades, Igiugig, like much of rural Alaska, has experienced an influx of federal funds and developed capital infrastructure including: Housing and Urban Development (HUD) homes, a school, clinic, water and wastewater system, a bulk fuel farm, communication systems, and roads. This new infrastructure and modes of current transportation rely heavily on energy generated by diesel, gas, and oil while requiring ongoing maintenance and upkeep. Alvarez spoke directly to this, stating: “It’s hard to live in the villages now. In the ‘60s and ‘70s, people did not have all of this expense. People did not have a HUD house or sewer, cell phone, cable, and Internet bills or even electricity—there was no electricity when we moved here. Now there is all this stuff and it costs a couple thousand bucks a month to pay for all of that.” The substantial increase in most all cost of

living expense is a challenge for the citizens of Igiugig that is compounded by its limited and primarily seasonal fishing economy. However, compared to other Alaska Native communities, Igiugig has a relatively low unemployment rate and people recognize that the size of their community is a strength (the tribe hired 40 local employees in 2014). They believe that the land base they currently rely on for sustenance would not be enough to support many more people and would only increase community stresses. In recognizing these challenges, Igiugig Tribal Village Council is focused on enhancing their community by growing quality rather than quantity both in leadership and sustainable socioeconomic development initiatives.

Igiugig Tribal Village Council, as the sole government operating all essential services in Igiugig, is actively working to advance its community with clear focus on helping the village thrive through cultural values. In recent years, the tribe has provided opportunities for community growth that include leadership development, international cultural exchanges, and socio-economic opportunities through small cottage industries that create revenue by serving the community, seasonal tourists, and local fisherman. They are also working to advance responsible mining initiatives on their lands through the Diamond Point rock quarry, a partnership with their village 8A Native Corporation, Iliaska Environmental.

Within the last decade, village council leadership has worked to increase agricultural initiatives and decrease energy costs. They currently operate a year-round community greenhouse and harness alternative energy projects that include five wind turbines. They are also testing a hydrokinetic power in the waters that parallel their community. High school students play an active role with these initiatives.

In 2015, the Igiugig Village Tribal Council received a grant from the First Nations Development Institute (FNDI) of Longmont, Colorado to support the village greenhouse and traditional wild food initiative. The community greenhouse supplies locally grown fresh foods to Igiugig and fills a void from not having a grocery store. Leadership sees the growing and sales of local foods as an opportunity to encourage citizens to make healthier nutritional decisions and to allow students to develop entrepreneurial skills. Under the guidance of community members and teachers, students created a food stand to sell their locally grown produce and learn how to best supplement it with foods harvested from the lands. The food stand teaches students the fundamentals of managing a business as well as marketing and advertising techniques to attract community members and tourists. IVTC was featured in a FNDI website post where they wrote:

“Lessons have been coordinated through the high school to develop entrepreneurial skill sets including budgeting, procurement, and time and money management. Harvesting foods within the greenhouse encourages students to expand conversations with community elders and increase their knowledge of cooking and preserving Native foods, including plants, caribou, and salmon. They incorporate the Yup’ik language at every

opportunity and embrace the ways people have sustained their livelihood off the land. Community member and greenhouse manager Jeff Bringhurst stated: “You never know which one of these kids will be our next tribal administrator.”

In 2016, after two years of active fundraising, the tribe sent 42 tribal citizens and community members (more than half the community, including all high school students) to New Zealand to learn directly from the Maori about their cultural education programs and reawakening their language through Maori designed educational institutions. They are also in their second year of a multi-year language immersion program funded by an Administration for Native Americans (ANA) grant. In this effort, the tribe hired a Master Yup'ik language speaker from their community and three adult apprentices to immerse children in the language. The tribe wants to ensure that the children know they are valued and have a place within Igiugig. They believe that investing in their youth is the key to keeping their community and culture alive.

Note: Information on Igiugig was gathered from interviews conducted by Foraker, the village's website (www.igiugig.com) and an article posted September 12, 2016, on Indian Giver, a website for the Friends of First Nations Development Institute (www.indiangiver.firstnations.org). The post by Amy Jakuber entitled “Sustaining Culture and Livelihood in Remote Igiugig Village” outlined the process for setting up the greenhouse with a focus on the high school students who undertook the project.

First person narratives on the factors of sustainability

Focus

- When we lost those villages, due to the epidemic, there was nothing left. Ships came up and took all of the belongings from the people who lived in the settlements. So to find any photographs or historic cultural items is hard and rare but it has been my personal mission. Collecting this last information about our language and the culture from the elders is why I love living here, besides raising kids in a safe community. That really drives me. I need to be that elder next. I am not even half as cool as these guys (pointing to elders in the room). What kind of stories am I going to tell? I don't want them to be, “oh, I sat in front of a computer all my life and now I can't see.” Anyway, those are those things I think about.
- I'll be nearing elder status in 25 years and I would like to see these young kids running the village with confidence and motivation knowing who they are and where they are from.
- Our mission statement came from everyone in community and was revisited in 2010. Really, our mission is to provide resources, programs, and infrastructure to

enhance our quality of life. We want it to be comprehensive rather than to simply state, “We are government and so we are going to govern.” We are a friendly all-inclusive community and serve everybody. You have to be a citizen to serve on the council but any resident is welcome to receive services. We have a section in our meetings where anyone can voice their concerns. If you live here, your concern is heard whether you are enrolled in the tribe or not.

- We operate with a vision—daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, the next 100 years. We have goals and objectives we want to achieve. We also have become very forward thinking with alternative energy and running pilot projects for such ideas. Our greenhouses continue to grow and produce more and more vegetables each year. We also have a lot more people eating a lot healthier. I think our kids have always known the importance they play in our community, especially these last few generations. Every kid has a purpose and a role in this community. I think we have come a long way from being a small village with a big drinking problem as well. Drug and alcohol abuse is not common here and we have worked to create a safer community for everyone.
- I hope in the future there will be a balance between advancing technology to sustain our community and preservation of our land, natural resources, and subsistence ways of life. I hope we will continue to be well educated to protect our lands, waters, and natural resources, yet remain tied to them for the rich lives that they provide us. I’d like to see that we have a healthy balance of differing personalities and talents and that we will remain in good standing with people from outside of our community, yet garner respect from all that interact with us.

Right People

- These young people should have an interest in how to make a living here. When they live off the land they should only take what they need and not just go out and shoot anything that they see. They should go out and get what they need and let the rest go to make more. They make good leadership when they pay attention to how their families lived here.
- One thing we do really well is help kids grow up to function both in this community and in society-at-large. You take any of these kids and put them at a banquet at the Hilton and they will know how to act, dress, and talk. You bring them home and put them in a skiff with a bunch of camping gear and away they go, they can do that as well. I think that is a really important skill because the only way you are going to maintain your culture is if you know what it is and if you can effectively communicate it with the world at large to ensure that you keep what you have.

- I think we have a good base of well-educated community members in many fields: education, health, and a variety of environmental sciences. We also have many locals who do not have college degrees, but are very talented in skilled positions: welders, artists, commercial fisherman, and small business owners. I feel like we have a broad range of skill sets that can help us in all aspects of running our community.
- Igiugig has always thought about young people because we have always had a young council and that has always come at the direction of our elders. Dolia Andrew was the previous council president. The board had a talk and they asked AlexAnna to be on the board. She agreed if that was Dolia's wish. Dolia strongly believed that AlexAnna would know how to talk to those people on the outside because she had gone to school and come back.
- Since we don't have a VPSO, when we encounter trouble in the village we come together as a council and make sure we have an elder in the room. We look to the elders for guidance, for what to say, and what to do.
- Sometimes there is a lot of conflict among other tribal leaders because they are not in agreement. That holds them down. We do so well here because our community is so small—there is not a lot of conflict. A good leader can plan out ahead of time so everything works out for the best for everyone and keeps everything going.
- We are not a strict democracy. If you read through our meeting minutes over the years, they never indicate the vote was 2:3. We all go together or we do not go at all. If somebody does not like the road plan or something else, then we do not vote until we can address the situation in its entirety. There have been some things that have been tabled over and over again until everybody is comfortable. When the vote occurs it is always unanimous and done in consensus. When something moves forward it is because everybody wants it and it is never because of politics.
- We consider all our youth future leaders. They are encouraged to attend all meetings, we send them to conferences, and we encourage them in whatever field they are interested in. We have hosted job shadows with them and remind them constantly "we used to do this when we were in high school," in hopes to keep them motivated.

Unrestricted Funds

- I would like to see all of our houses off of diesel fuel. We have become so modern that all these amenities that we have become a big expense—cell phone bills and Internet bills among them. We also pay a higher price living out here and it is not like we have the option to work for more.

- We are working on renewable energy projects with wind turbines, with the river, and with other companies. In partnership with the University of Alaska, we are focused on energy sustainability because you see that nice bulk fuel farm out there? That is something that we need to get beyond and we are looking at harnessing energy from both the water turbines and wind turbines including vertical access ones. If we could power up even three-quarters of the village that would be thousands of gallons of fuel we would not burn. Also, a part of having sustainable fisheries is not storing fuel right next to where it could spill. That is where the current fuel plant is located.
- The village council technically does not need to run our bulk fuel farm. They can rent the facility and let someone else do the business. With the right people, there is opportunity to diversify who takes care of what and with the right people moving here, we would not need to change the nature of the community but rather there would be a lot of opportunity to thrive by allowing people to earn an income through their own businesses.
- We're single audit so our revenue is over \$750,000 annually. We do over \$2 million worth and about \$1 million in fuel. A lot of it is trading money because we do a lot of rentals (houses belong to the tribe and rent to the community), water and sewer and electric runs through the council. That's not counting the revenue generated through the 8A companies Iliaska Environment or Iliamina Lake Contractors. About one-third or less of our revenue is restricted through federal dollars.

Partnerships

- We partner with the Lake and Peninsula Borough because the State of Alaska does not on a lot of things. We are doing a lot of Community Development Block Grant projects with the borough.
- We work on the renewable wind and river turbine with private companies as well as the University of Alaska. The University partners with us on ecotourism efforts and quite a bit of cultural research has come through the university system. We recently developed a cultural place map through the UA system.
- National Science Foundation, Alaska Native Science Commission, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium do a lot of projects out here.
- We have worked with the military with a lot of the hazardous material found on Big Mountain and with the US Air Force on the cleanup of the White Alice sites around our community. We get base passes because of this.

- We are partnering with the Smithsonian on repatriation issues. The Director of the Natural History Museum, Kirk Johnson, was the commencement speaker at our last high school graduation ceremony.

**Case study for the Native Village of Port Heiden
Port Heiden, Alaska**

“One thing that I love about our community is that we are a welcoming place. Port Heiden is a very friendly place. I hope in the future we are still inclusive, practicing our self-determination, and have our subsistence. I want our children to live in a place where they are safe and have opportunity. That is what I work toward every day.” Adrienne Christensen, Native Village of Port Heiden Director of Business Development.

Foraker’s association with Port Heiden

Over the last two years, Foraker has strengthened its partnership with the Native Village of Port Heiden, both through our work with the *Making Connections* project and through the Rural Capacity Initiative Business Planning Competition, a program focused on sustainable economic development and capacity building in the Lake and Peninsula region of the state, and by helping them develop a community-wide strategic plan. Adrienne Christensen is a 2016 graduate of the Catalyst for Nonprofit Excellence program, and Gerda Kosbruk is also a 2016 recipient of the Rasmuson Foundation Sabbatical.

The Native Village of Port Heiden sees value in using the sustainability model as a tool for tribal and community leadership to ask important questions. They expressed an interest in developing a leadership cohort specifically focused on learning from fellow tribal entities around the state in a retreat setting. They are interested, too, in continuing to work with Foraker to strengthen the capacity of tribal government leadership through technical support, trainings on tribal council roles and responsibility, and human resources support.

Summary of findings on how the sustainability model is applied in Port Heiden

Port Heiden’s strength lies in its innovative model for maintaining **unrestricted funds**. The village has re-established the cultural practice of reindeer herding and is also raising, marketing, and selling livestock (chicken, eggs, pork, reindeer) to neighboring communities as a sustainable food source. The tribe is building the Meshik Processing Center to process and sell Bristol Bay salmon online and is focused on projects that will increase eco-tourism and provide geothermal energy for residents. They are interested, too, in developing a treatment center focused on self-discovery, healthy recovery, and personal and cultural growth. When speaking directly about the sustainability model, tribal members recognize that their strength lies within the unrestricted funds lens and they are interested in using the tool to ask new questions about sustainability for their tribe and community.

Making Connections, Foraker’s approach

Making Connections key participants: Tribal Council Member Toni Christensen, Tribal Council Member Celestee Christensen, Tribal Council Member Andrew Lind, Tribal Administrator

Gerda Kosbruk, Director of Business Development Adrienne Christensen, Tribal Citizen and former Tribal Council Member Jimmy Christensen.

Larson White met with Native Village of Port Heiden council members, staff, and citizens at the Foraker office in Anchorage. During the meeting, she provided an overview of the *Making Connections* project, the sustainability model and the Native Nation Building principles, and asked specific open-ended questions directly related to the project. Two tribal representatives participated in a convening that involved all four participating tribes during Year Three. Larson White also visited Port Heiden with members of the Lake and Peninsula Borough in April where she met briefly with tribal citizens and toured the community visiting the reindeer corral and the farming area where the pigs and chickens are housed.

Those who participated in the *Making Connections* conversation spoke specifically to the current challenges within their community including the out migration of whole families, an increase in alcohol and substance abuse, lack of law enforcement in their community, and challenges associated with division between families within the community. They are clearly focused on strengthening their community and economy through farming initiatives and tourism. The tribe is also working to strengthen their culture and in recent years have developed, in partnership with neighboring tribes, a language app that people can download on their devices. The Native Village of Port Heiden submitted two complete governance assessments and directed Foraker staff to additional written resources that helped inform this project.

Background on Port Heiden

The Native Village of Port Heiden is a federally recognized tribe located in the community of Port Heiden, 424 miles southwest of Anchorage along the mouth of the Meshik River on the north side of the Alaska Peninsula and near the Aleutian chain. The village is on Bristol Bay Native Corporation land, and tribal land extends roughly 50 square miles. Port Heiden is surrounded by both state and federal lands and lies near the Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve. Aniakchak formed 3,500 years ago after the collapse of a 7,000-foot mountain creating a six-mile wide caldera. Archeological sites and records show that the area around Port Heiden has been continuously occupied for the past 10,000 years, making them some of the oldest inhabited sites by people in North America. Today, Port Heiden is an Alutiiq community with approximately 100 people living in the village year round. The core purpose of the Native Village of Port Heiden is to “use traditions to create new opportunities.” Their vision is, “Our community of 100 people is growing, living and thriving as we have for a thousand years.”

Port Heiden was once known as the community of Meshik. In the early 1900s, a flu epidemic decimated the population and survivors relocated to neighboring communities. During World War II, Fort Morrow was built six miles from Port Heiden and 5,000 military personnel

were stationed at the base. The fort was closed after the war and shortly thereafter a school was established within the community bringing families back to Port Heiden. Today, Port Heiden is one of nine communities on the Alaska Peninsula and one of 17 communities within the Lake and Peninsula Borough. Adjoining Port Heiden Village Corporation lands is the Alaska Peninsula Wildlife Refuge (3.6 million acres). The refuge is accessible from Port Heiden by small aircraft, boat, or rugged backcountry hiking—recreational activities that attract tourists to the community during the summer months.

Right around the time the flu epidemic devastated the community of Meshik, reindeer herds and herders were introduced to Alaska from Siberia and in 1890 had migrated to the Bristol Bay region. Though reindeer populations dwindled in the late 1930s, the eldest living people in Port Heiden still remember the herds and those who tended them. Adrienne Christensen, Director of Business Development, said: “All of our families have lived here since the beginning of time. The old reindeer herders are our grandparents. We wanted to bring the practice of reindeer herding back.”

In 2000, the residents of Port Heiden experienced a crash in the numbers of the moose and caribou in the areas where they hunted the animals for sustenance. In a few short years, caribou populations fell from from 20,000 down to 3,000. Jimmy Christensen, tribal citizen and former tribal council member, stated that 15 years of not being able to hunt caribou made people in his community feel like they were starving. They were eating bad food and getting frustrated because the moose populations were decreasing as well. In 2015, the tribe decided to do something about the food shortage within their community and took action. That year, the tribe had 64 reindeer sent to Port Heiden from Stebbins and St. Michael, two northern Yup'ik communities located on the Seward Peninsula. Since then they have also purchased ten reindeer from a reindeer farm in Palmer to grow and diversify the herd. The reindeer are a part of an effort to re-establish reindeer herding on the Alaska Peninsula with the vision of spurring economic development by processing the meat locally and selling it at a wholesale cost to residents in the nearby villages. They are also looking to sell the meat to the school district and incorporate the meat in school nutritional programs.

Adrienne Christensen was quoted in an article published by the Alaska Dispatch News in January 2015 about the new reindeer herding initiative saying that “community interest in the reindeer is high and that residents, some of whom are currently employed as certified Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response technicians, are excited about the reindeer herding program and the potential of becoming reindeer herders.” The article also states “while bringing reindeer to Port Heiden has been an ambitious project, it is not unprecedented as many of the current residents are the direct decedents of the reindeer herders who traveled by foot with the reindeer throughout the Alaska Peninsula during the early 1900s.”

Today, just as in the past, the reindeer are meant to increase the amount of local meat for subsistence as well as provide a new form of economic development for the tribe. In this

regard, tribal council members hope to set an example of proactive economic development for neighboring communities in the region. The reindeer program is also bringing together people who live in the community through new cultural and economic interest, defusing decades of long standing division and micro-aggressive behavior between families and strengthening family and community partnerships. For example, local landowners (regardless of which family they represent) have given permission for their properties to be used for the new corral and for the animals to graze upon.

The new corral and the arrival of reindeer coincide with another community project the tribe is moving forward with—the construction of a fish-processing plant, and the purchase of freezers that employ new technology. The CAS (Cells Alive Systems) freezers, a Japanese technology, will keep fish, and reindeer meat, fresh without damaging cells and will eliminate freezer burn. Both the reindeer and fish-processing projects are part of an ongoing effort to improve the quality of food available in the village and boost economic opportunity. Adrienne Christensen states: “We hope our initiatives improve the quality of food for everyone in Alaska.”

Note: Information on Port Heiden was gathered from interviews conducted by Foraker, the village’s website (www.nativevillageofportheiden.com), and an article in the January 10, 2015, edition of the Alaska Dispatch News (www.adn.com) by reporter Millie Murray. That article, “Port Heiden plans to re-establish Alaska Peninsula reindeer herding,” outlines the process of bringing live reindeer to the village to increase economic development.

First person narratives on the factors of sustainability

Focus

- Hopefully we have developed our business with the CAS system so that we have jobs for everyone in our village and that our village can feed from that. Hopefully our understanding of farming will increase and our community will be able to subsist off of our own foods, in case anything happens.
- We are focused on strengthening our culture through our language. When I was in high school, we had a first language teacher teaching us our language and I would like to see that again in our schools in addition to people using the language app we created. The language app is strengthening our connection with the kids in our community and I hope it strengthens community pride in our culture.
- We have a five-year development plan that includes constructing an airport facility at our airport, selling fuel so people who stop here in planes can refuel their planes, community housing projects, a day care program, and building a road on the Pacific side of our land. We are also interested in getting a conservation rescue

permit to care for injured animals like moose, bear, and seals—much like the Conservation Center outside of Anchorage.

Right People

- I have seen people become elders in our community, some are younger and some are older. It is not really about age, it is about their leadership. Things are different in our village now, back then everyone would come together and everyone would help everybody. People would help others work on a house or help them move fuel. We would like to see that again—even if it is inviting people over to our house to take a steam. Back then our door was always revolving and everyone would come over for coffee.

Unrestricted Funds

- What we would like to do at the tribal level is create a detox and a treatment center in our community, but not just for substance abuse. We want to design it so that anybody can go to it to help find their purpose. We want it to focus on self-discovery, healthy recovery, and personal and cultural growth. We talked about having a camp and taking people out to the country and help them detox and develop tools so they can be OK again. That's our goal is to create something like that perhaps starting as a program. So we are talking about that. We have a lot of people in Anchorage who are on drugs and they cannot go back home because we do not have the capacity to help them safely detox.
- We have gone from being 100% dependent on BBNA (regional nonprofit corporation) and BBNC (regional for-profit corporation) to doing a lot on our own. We have a lot we want to do but we need to increase our capacity. We have lodging and we want to increase our tourism industry by making a trail to Aniakshak. We have a five-year plan. We want to do the detox center and have an elder prison—a facility that houses nonviolent offenders who are elders so we can take care of them in a nice and compassionate way. The federal government pays for prisoners in private prisons so this may be a way to generate revenue although we may need a bigger graveyard. We have all these ideas that we are actively working toward and are also looking into developing geothermal energy as a sustainable means of energy.
- Twenty percent of our operating revenue comes through our subsidiary. The rest comes from restricted revenue. We have a CDQ group, the Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation (BBEDC), that we get a lot of money from to kick-start projects like our reindeer project. Our Indian Environment General Assistance (IGAP) program (scrap metal back haul program and community recycling program), is funded from the federal government

and Brownfields program, which allows us to clean up and prevent contaminated sites in our community, is funded by the state. We also have federal dollars to fund our Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) program. Aniakshak, is a corporation the tribe formed and although it has a lot of money but we have not seen that revenue, yet.

Partnerships

- In 25 years, I hope that the division within our community is gone. One of the great side effects of the farm is that all of the animals bring everyone together. And when we get a new reindeer, we just got 10, everyone in the community comes and helps. We never get asked to reimburse people for gas or anything. It's pure excitement.
- We have great partnerships with our neighboring villages. When we need their support with a project, they will support us. A lot of the villages are trying to survive themselves and are hoping that they do not get wiped out. We are seeing a lot of population decline in all of the villages. The Chignik's are barely surviving. Perryville at one time had 300 people and they are now down to 96. Chignik Lake had 250 and they are down to 40-50 people. The population of Chignik Lagoon has always stayed the same. Chignik Bay is like a roller coaster though. They hire people right and left to keep the village open. At one point, their population went down to 15-20 people and today they are up to 70. We need each other right now to survive and to keep our communities alive. We hope our farm will help with that.

**Case Study for the Chickaloon Village Traditional Council
Chickaloon, Alaska**

Foraker's association with Chickaloon

Foraker has a long history of working with the Chickaloon Village Traditional Council. Within the last few years, a staff member graduated from the Catalyst for Nonprofit Excellence program and their traditional chief and chairman, Gary Heart, helped open up our statewide Leadership Summit in 2015. The Chickaloon Village Traditional Council uses Foraker services to create their core ideology and currently works under a strategic plan developed with the help of Foraker staff. The council leadership is interested in expanding its partnership with Foraker, specifically through the offerings in leadership development and has expressed interest in creating a cohort of tribal administrators.

Summary of findings on how the sustainability model is applied in Chickaloon

Through focus and self-determined efforts, Chickaloon is in a position where funding entities, including the federal government, are approaching them to partner on projects and to be involved with initiatives at the national level. They have come a long way in developing critical **partnerships** stating: "When we first started working with the BIA and social service agencies everything was so regulatory tight for us – they were strangling us to death. Over time we've proven we are responsible for doing our work and so the partnerships have grown more positive."

The direct examples Chickaloon Village Traditional Council shared during the official interviews as well as through informal conversation and recommended web publications for this project, not only articulated how their work aligns with the sustainability model but also emphasized that with clear focus, they have gained the necessary courage and confidence to move forward and provide adequate services for their citizens. This keeps them connected to their community and able to navigate through adversarial situations that are directly connected to the coal industry, which takes up 22,000 acres along the spine of the mountains in their back yard. They also emphasized that with clear focus they have been more strategic in who they partner with as a tribe and will not deviate from what they believe is core in order to meet their mission.

Making Connections, Foraker's approach

Making Connections key participants: Tribal Council Secretary Penny Westling, Council Member Shawna Larson, Health, Education, and Social Services Director and Council Member Lisa Wade, Language Project Manager Carrie Shaginoff, Environmental Stewardship Department Director Jessica Lefevre.

Larson White traveled to Chickaloon to meet with the council and staff. During the community meeting, she provided an overview of the *Making Connections* project, the sustainability model and the Native Nation Building principles, and asked specific open-ended questions directly related to Chickaloon. Two participants from the interview session traveled to Anchorage for a half-day meeting with other members of participating tribal governments.

Those who participated in the *Making Connections* conversation spoke specifically to the cultural history of Chickaloon and current efforts to strengthen their tribe and community. They also spoke in detail about strategies they are moving forward with as a tribe to provide the best quality of life for their citizens including partial language immersion programs through their school, leadership development for youth, board service, and leadership positions outside of the tribe. In addition, they talked about offering all-inclusive health and wellness services through their clinic to people outside of their tribal community, harnessing alternative energy and food security projects, and advocating for the protection of natural resources in and around their community—all critical elements they believe necessary for strengthening and exercising their sovereignty as a tribe and advancing their leadership.

Background on Chickaloon

The Ahtna name for the village of Chickaloon is *Nay'dini'aa Na'*, meaning “the river with the two logs across it.” Chickaloon Village Traditional Council is an Ahtna Athabascan tribe located in Southcentral Alaska in the community of Sutton, about a 90-minute drive from Anchorage along the Glenn Highway Scenic Byway. The community is surrounded by mountains, glaciers, and lush boreal forests. The Ahtna people have lived in this area for the past 10,000 years. The Chickaloon Village Traditional Council is federally recognized as a traditional sovereign government. The mission of the tribe is to “perpetuate our ancestors’ beliefs, customs, traditions and values and steward our environment to help our citizens thrive.” Their core purpose is “to help our citizens thrive.” They meet their mission and purpose through their values of: care and love for each other, education, honesty, humor and respect. Their long-term vision is to have “a tribal government that stands sovereign with all nations, utilizes our land responsibly, has a sufficient resource base, and prepares our future generations, to fulfill our core purpose and long-term goals.”

The people of Chickaloon were some of the first in Southcentral Alaska to be affected by outside development. Dating as far back as 1900, Chickaloon village’s traditional territories have been subjected to large-scale resource extraction including coal, copper and gold mining, oil and gas drilling, and logging. The Glenn highway and railroad construction also had a negative impact on Chickaloon. Alcohol and diseases such as polio, tuberculosis, and the Spanish flu, all brought in through development activities, almost wiped out the tribe. During the 1930s through the 1950s, the federal government established and enforced a mandatory educational system intended to assimilate Alaska Natives. Many of the tribe’s children were taken from their families and placed in boarding schools throughout the state.

Because of this, the tribal children experienced negative socialization, abuse, neglect and years of separation from their families. The boarding school experience created a generation of people (now elders) deprived of their cultural teachings leaving them with a legacy of internalized oppression and shame.

In 1973, Chickaloon's elders re-established the Chickaloon Village Traditional Council as a response to the environmental and social injustice suffered by Chickaloon Village tribal citizens, coupled with the passing of the Alaska Native Claims and Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971. The mandate for the Council at this time was: *To restore our traditional worldview by rejuvenating our traditional Athabascan culture, values, oral traditions, spirituality, language, songs, and dance.* Chickaloon Native Village gained federal recognition in 1973. Today, the tribe is governed by a nine-member Traditional Council (CVTC), which is tasked to reassert the tribe's identity and cultural traditions and create economic self-sufficiency.

As with many indigenous people throughout the state, external threats to the culture, language, and way of life for the people of Chickaloon, has altered the culture for Ahtna people, particularly during the past 100 years. Tribal leadership today is determined to improve the lives of their citizens through efforts to reawaken and strengthen their language and cultural values, operate year-round alternative energy and food security projects within their community, and help their youth communicate the importance of their culture to people within and outside of Chickaloon. In 1992, the Chickaloon tribe opened its doors to the Ya Ne Dah Ah School to teach, preserve, and rejuvenate the Ahtna Athabascan language, culture, songs, dances, earth stewardship, and history of Chickaloon Village. Carrie Shaginoff, Language Project Manager, spoke directly to the challenges she has encountered as a lead language instructor saying:

“We are the generation of “the go between” with elders and the kids. We are first English speakers and that is a challenge because we are the first generation of Ahtna people who are not fluent in our own language. In order for us to teach Ahtna, we must first understand the structure and linguistics of the English language—it's a big commitment and our language is one of the hardest to learn because it is so different. The past 20 years have been on the job learning for us in both languages and we are getting better at it. Because of our work, I notice people are learning our language faster than we did. The weight of knowing that the Ahtna language could be in total extinction in the next 20 years is real and it is heavy on us. We have to work hard and put ourselves out there to save it even though as children we were ridiculed and experienced shame for being Native. This is more than about keeping a language alive, it is also about instilling confidence and values in our people so they can communicate and show they are proud of who they are with other people in our village or anywhere else in the world.”

This comment summarizes the commitment and journey the Chickaloon Village Traditional Council had taken as leaders in service to their citizens and community. The last few

decades, the tribe has prioritized the importance of learning and teaching the Ahtna language. This process has encouraged the “go between” leadership to have new conversations with people in the community engaging with and learning from the elders and the youth alike. These conversations have been an important conduit for people in Chickaloon to broaden their understanding of important places on and around their cultural territory and expanding their knowledge of cultural values by putting them directly into action in and out of the workplace. They are using the tribal entity as a means of transferring, communicating, and protecting who they are as a sovereign people. In this regard, they have had to learn and go through growing pains associated with operating within a western institutional framework in order to develop an institutional culture that reflects and upholds who they are as Ahtna people. This thread is woven throughout their mission, their strategic plan, their investment in leadership, in who they partner with and how they design their services.

Note: Information on Chickaloon was gathered from interviews conducted by Foraker and the village’s website (www.chickaloon.org).

First person narratives on the factors of sustainability

Focus

- In Ahtna, the original name for Chickaloon translates to the log that goes across the river. The trail a long time ago used to go through here and they needed a way to get across the river—I guess it was really scary. All these rivers have names in our language and it is usually directed to place and what the area was used for. A lot of our place names are all based on what we did as Ahtna people and defines how we lived on this land. If you look at our map here, you will see all of the place names because people used to use it more than they do now. Anytime you see a word end in “na,” like you see Talkeetna or Eklutna, it refers to the original Ahtna name but twisted into English. “Na” means river. So when you see that, that’s what it means.
- In the future, I hope the school is still here operating Katie’s vision of it, “to teach the kids and all kids, the language, culture, spirituality, values of Ahtna people.” At one point she said, if you learn the values, you will be alright. Back then, we were trying to learn the language from her and it was so hard for us to get some parts of it, I think getting frustrated with us. She said, “If you guys just learn the values, you’ll be OK.” That did not sound fun then but it is definitely a huge thing. Our values include being good to each other and having a good heart—if you don’t have a good heart, things will not work out and you will have trouble with what you are doing. If you don’t have your heart in what you are doing for others, then it is not going to work out. I believe it.

- I hope that people who join the council and are in council remain true to our values and keep them intact. Honesty, being good to each other, love for each other, love for the kids, humor, family, respect, support—helping each other out, spirituality and prayer. These are all values core to who we are.
- My dad was proud of who he was and he walked in the white man’s world proudly. He didn’t have to say it all the time or justify it all the time. My uncle told me that my grandma used to say, “have a strong mind and be honest in everything you do in life.” Know who you are and when things are tough—you have that strong mind to get you through. When things are tough, and hard, and you want to give up, keep your mind strong. Do not get weak minded and fall into traps. It is hard. It is hard being a Native person in today’s world.
- I would like to see our ability of looking forward continue. That is a strong suit of ours. We are doing the work of today but we are always looking at what is next, and what is after that. It is upholding the 7th generation vision really and knowing that what we do today, we leave for the next generation. I really appreciate that about us because that is not the case with everyone but we continue to look at that.
- It is good because if we were just thinking in the present, we would not make good decisions for our children. If we were just thinking about the future, we would not be making good decisions for our elders right now. So we have to think about planning in that way. It took a long time to learn that but now that we know, it makes it easier to call it out. We have to think about how things are done culturally, and what we are deciding on is still important to us, right now, and if what we are deciding on will be important to us later on. Some small decision that you make can take forever to think about and that is why council meetings do not get rushed, because you have to think about the depth.
- I always think about my decisions in terms of how they will affect our kids. I do not ever think about it in terms of myself because I’m here short term now. Like building our clinic, we did not build that for me, we built that so our kids have a place to get health care and a place to have a legacy.
- When we think about the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANSCA) and how that came about, decisions were made quickly and by a few Natives at the time. Our leaders here in the village reflect back on the values and the thoughts of our ancestors and what was important to them. It’s good to think about it—you get caught going forward so much. It is good to reflect back, think about it and remember it. You know, for us as Natives to plan out our future at times was back luck because if what you planned for didn’t happen, there were consequences. Today we have to think about moving forward but we also have to do it carefully and be mindful of our decisions.

Right People

- I wish someone had taken me to council meetings when I was young because I would have had so many less self-doubts if I had known about my place, if I knew I had a place. If I knew there was some future planned for me and that it was important. That is what I'm trying to give to a couple of the young girls in our tribe because I already see them dealing with issues of weight and insecurities that we all went through and they are at that critical place where they are going to start forming relationships with the opposite sex. I want them to have a strong sense of who they are before they go down that road.
- I like what Carrie does when she teaches drumming. She holds everyone accountable for their attitude and that they are embodying the qualities of leadership and not just getting the perk of being a leader. That is the responsibility piece of it.
- One thing that I see in consideration of the past, the present, and the future is confidence our leadership has in their decision. Once a decision is made, there is no second guessing the decision that was made because the time was taken to think about with many different aspects. The future decisions that are related to that one come easier because there is full confidence in those choices.

Unrestricted Funds

- Unrestricted funding is huge. You know, we just want to live and that is the reality. I don't want to be a grant writer. I don't want to be a grant reporter. I want to help people and I find that so much of my time gets sucked into searching for money and trying to justify why we want to do something the way we want to do it in order to help people. After 10 years, I feel like I'm finally to a place where people are starting to understand what it is we are doing and they see it so I feel like they allow us a little more freedom than they do other tribes. It took a lot to get to that point. I have had to cry, yell, and scream to try and get funders to understand what we are trying to do. If we had unrestricted funding we could be doing so much more—we could be doing so much more in terms of supporting our culture. That is one thing you cannot easily fund and you can expect cultural bearers to work for free or do things for free. It takes a lot of effort. We are in a good place right now because we are able to fund cultural support.
- It's hard for funders to measure progress in culture. Are you improving? Are you gaining your culture back? It's hard for people to measure that and to do the measuring. It is super awkward and that's happens with restricted funding.

- One of the most depressing things about writing grant narratives is that you are essentially trying to point out the negatives because you in some ways are begging for money to fix what is bad—whether it is the environment, health, or education. It is not just about communicating what we are doing well. It would be nice for our partners, including the federal government, to give us money to work on what is going well with our tribe and community.
- The Advancement for Native Americans (ANA) grant application for example requests the “problem statement” rather than a “goal statement” so you have to frame this very complex problem just to get your money. Instead of us sharing what we have done well the last 10 years, and what do we want to do next. With the ANA grant, we never refer to the problem statement ourselves with our work, because it was so negative even to write it. So we just referred to the goals and objectives of the grant. So much of the narrative is backing up that problem statement.

Partnerships

- They see that we fulfill our mission when our financial partners give us money so they are willing to be more flexible with us than maybe they are in other places, which is really positive for us. I do a lot of work with the Mat-Su Health Foundation working on the community issues that they think are important. I have purposefully not tempered my views with them. I have been very honest in discussing the challenges our tribe and citizens face and the racism challenges that exist within our community. This honesty and sharing has opened up a lot of positive relationships with them so they are more generous in understanding what we are trying to do. They are also willing to dive in more with us to do “Undoing Racism” training and other racism dialogues in our community and are supporting that. We have jokingly told them that we want them to require all the people that they fund to take these trainings from us to build a more open community. We have made a lot of strides in the partnerships in getting some of what we need for our people and the 10,000 Alaska Natives who live in our community. We are developing our partnerships to hopefully help them feel a little more comfortable in this community.
- We have these difficult conversations even with our Native partners like Southcentral Foundation and Cook Inlet Tribal Council. Even though they are Native organizations they may not necessarily see things through a Native lens and instead see things more through a western lens. Sometimes we have to remind them and bring them back to what is real for us.
- I’d like to say that we’ve come a long way in developing partnerships. I think about when we first started working with the federal government and the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the social service projects and how they were so regulatory tight for us—they were strangling us to death. Over time we have proven that we are

theforakergroup

responsible for doing the work and so the partnerships have grown more positive.
They are coming to us now for partnership vs. us going to them.

Culturally aware project methodologies for working with tribes

Foraker's project protocol is patterned after the ethical principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) as laid out in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Free

Foraker's activities are done without coercion or exploitation.

Prior

Foraker will seek consent of governing entities before starting a project.

Informed

Foraker will provide to a tribe a full explanation of scope including duration and reasons for a project. Foraker will share the findings of our work with the tribe in a timely manner.

Consent

Foraker will discuss project components and results with a tribal council in each community. Foraker will then seek consent from the councils to move forward. A tribe can choose to remain anonymous or withdraw from the project at any time.

Foraker's overall methodology stems from Foraker's core values of Sustainability, Strategic, Collaborative, Urban/Rural/Native/Non-Native. Our values drive our decisions, actions, and interactions as we work to strengthen nonprofits and tribal governments. In addition to our values, our theory of change articulates the way we work with organizations, leaders, and the sector to achieve our strategic goals. We recognize that our role is to stand beside nonprofits and tribes as we work to strengthen individual and collective efforts. Foraker will stay true to its values as a leader, catalyst, convener, innovator, and connector throughout the duration of this project, which will be implemented using the following steps:

1. Establish contacts in each village

There are three ways that Foraker will be in contact with tribes:

1. Foraker will be invited to directly engage in a project or discussion with the tribe.
2. Foraker will be asked to join an existing team working with a tribe.
3. Foraker will lead an initiative and make direct contact with a tribe.

In options 2 and 3 when we have not been directly invited to participate with a tribe, Foraker will not proceed until we meet with the tribal council president or an acting member of the council to share information about the project and learn about the governance structure of the tribe. If the council agrees with the purpose of the project and is willing to participate, then we will ask council member(s) to recommend a tribal council representative willing to serve as a point of contact on behalf of the tribe to help Foraker coordinate activities throughout the duration of the project, including setting up interviews and meetings.

2. Seek consent from tribal leadership

At least one Foraker representative will meet with tribal councils, and other individuals within the community (cultural value bearers) where appropriate, to explain the project and ask for their consent to participate. If consent is granted, then we will begin the project, which may include interviews of individual council members or recommended tribal citizens.

3. Share project findings in a timely manner

Foraker will meet with a cohort of representatives (tribal administrators/executive directors/project designee) named by the tribal councils to report on project results and request consent to publish those results on the Foraker website and in any other form (e.g. print, newsletter) that is helpful to share the appropriate level of information. This could also include hosting a public meeting that includes all those who were interviewed to review the project information and ask again for consent to publish their statements.

4. Continue to ask for consent throughout the duration of the project

Foraker will meet with tribal council representatives (tribal administrator/executive director/designee) to seek consent regarding the project's direction when emerging needs and information may differ from the original intent.

5. Partners must agree to follow these protocols.

Foraker may partner with other organizations during our work on a specific project. In each instance, Foraker will require the partnering organization to uphold these protocols.