

# Opportunities to Spur Progress in Health Equity in Cancer Care: An Alaska Perspective

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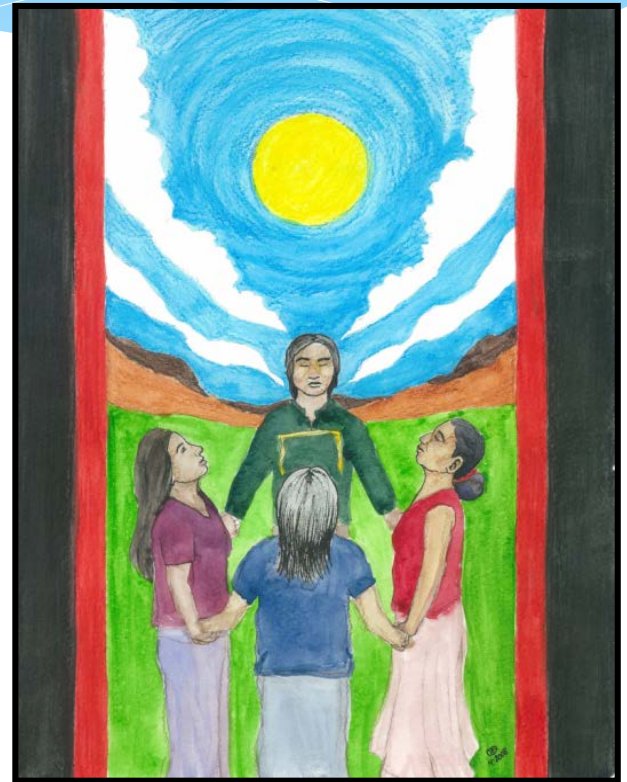
UAA Institute of Social  
and Economic Research  
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

I live on the Indigenous lands of the K'enaht'ana people within Dena'ina Elnena.

# Acknowledgements



Thank you to all those who've generously shared your stories with me over the years.



Cassandra Leigh Darrough,  
Paiute-Shoshone

A person wearing a red jacket, black pants, and a yellow backpack is walking away from the camera across a vast, frozen body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a long, bright reflection on the ice. In the background, there are snow-covered mountains under a clear sky.

# Journey with me:

- Alaska's diverse Native peoples
- Alaska's healthcare system
- Existing initiatives
- Opportunities

**Listen to the Communities**



# Culturally Diverse



# Strength of Traditions



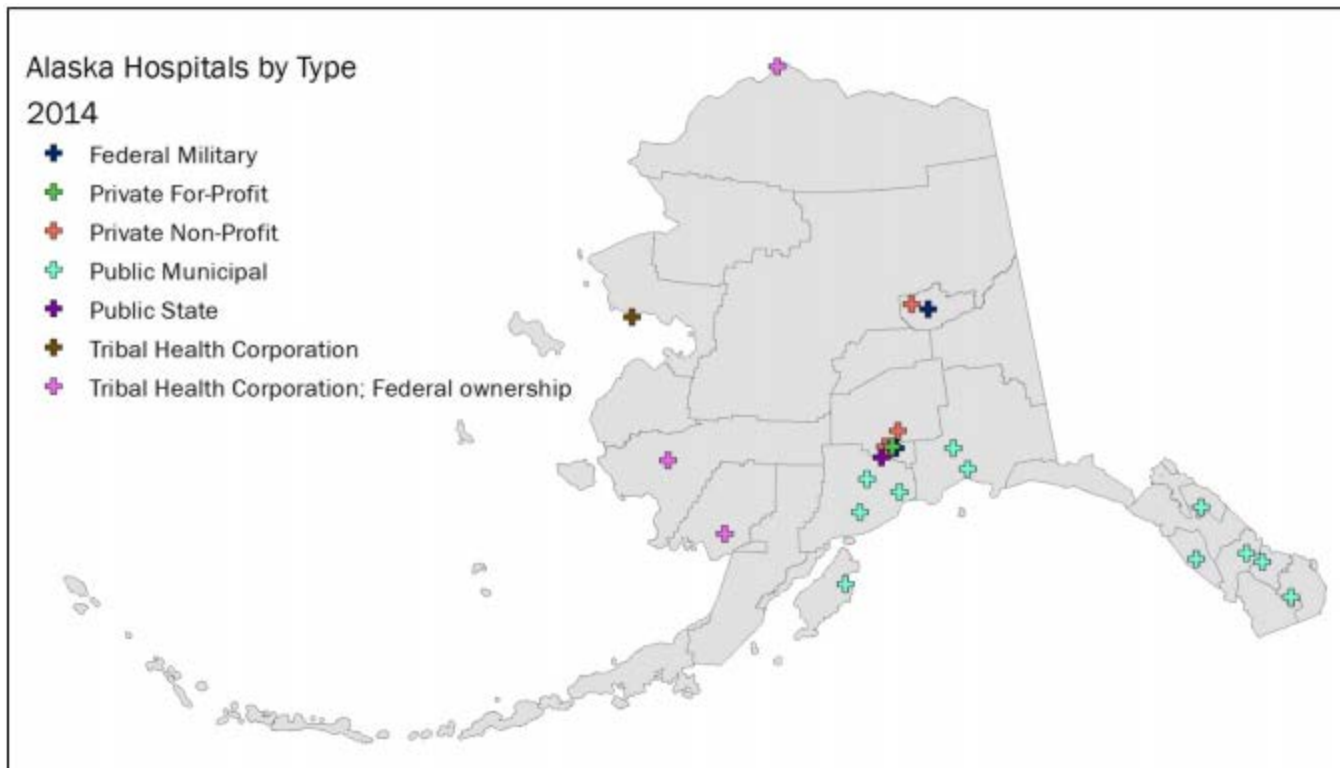
1. *Show Respect to Others* - Each Person Has a Special Gift
2. *Share what you have* - Giving Makes You Richer
3. *Know Who You Are* - You Are a Reflection on Your Family
4. *Accept What Life Brings* - You Cannot Control Many Things
5. *Have Patience* - Some Things Cannot Be Rushed
6. *Live Carefully* - What You Do Will Come Back to You
7. *Take Care of Others* - You Cannot Live without Them
8. *Honor Your Elders* - They Show You the Way in Life
9. *Pray for Guidance* - Many Things Are Not Known
10. *See Connections* - All Things Are Related

# 1 in every 5 deaths



# Health Care in Alaska

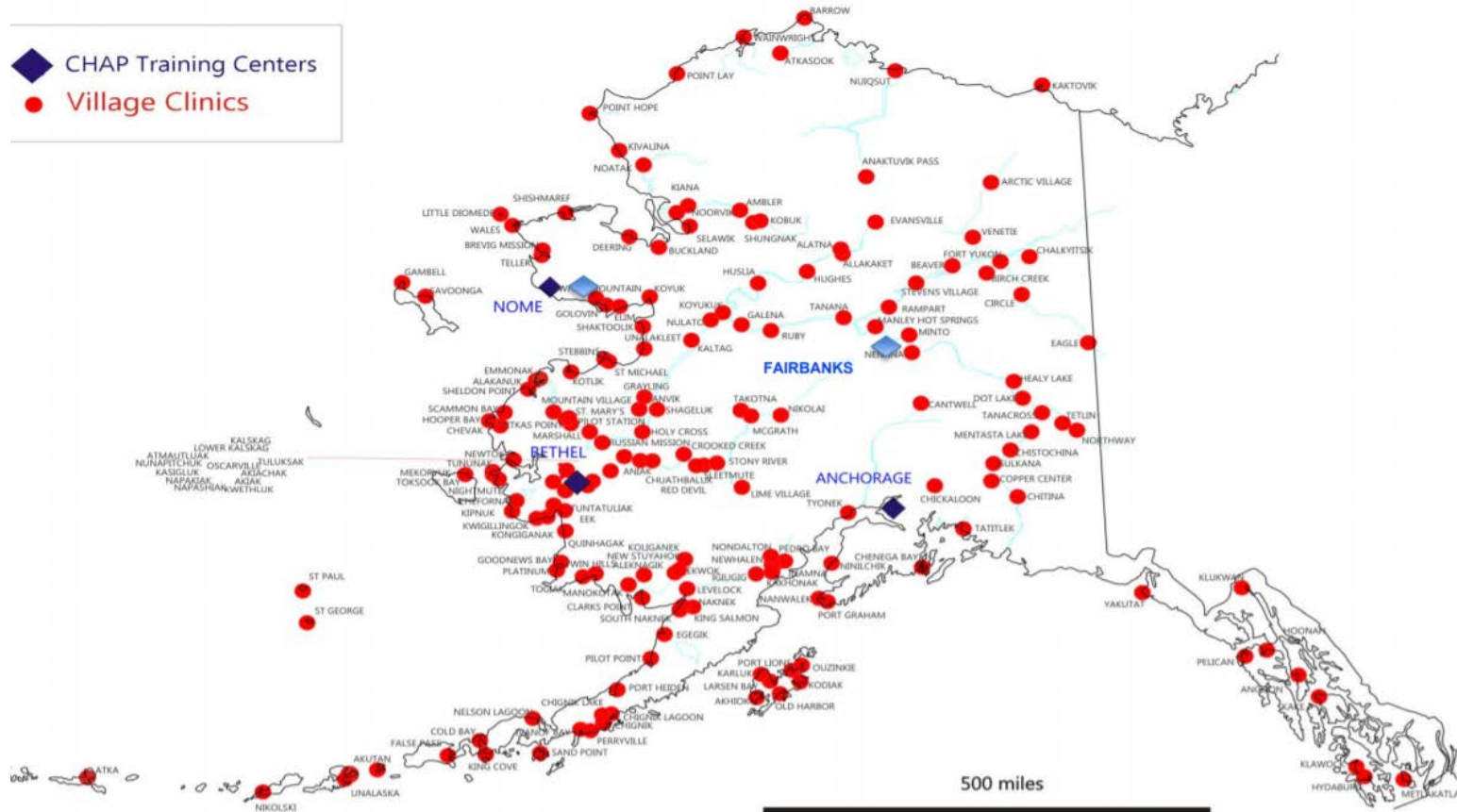
- \* Private Sector
- \* Veteran's Affairs (12% eligible)
- \* Tribal Health (20% eligible)





# Alaska's Community Health Aides/Practitioners

## Community Health Aide/Practitioner Village Clinics



Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium  
rhall@anthc.org  
2014

<https://anthc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CHAP-Updates-Dr-Michelle-Hensel.pdf>



# CHA/P Scope of Work

## ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

### Innovative primary care delivery in rural Alaska: a review of patient encounters seen by community health aides

Christine Golnick<sup>1\*</sup>, Elvin Asay<sup>2</sup>, Ellen Provost<sup>2</sup>, Dabney Van Liere<sup>3</sup>, Cora Bosshart<sup>1</sup>, Jean Rounds-Riley<sup>1</sup>, Katie Cueva<sup>4</sup> and Thomas W. Hennessy<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Anchorage Community Health Aide Training Program, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Anchorage, AK, USA; <sup>2</sup>Alaska Native Epidemiology Center, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Anchorage, AK, USA; <sup>3</sup>Division of Community Health Services, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Anchorage, AK, USA; <sup>4</sup>University of Alaska, Anchorage, AK, USA; <sup>5</sup>Centers for Disease Control, Arctic Investigations Program, Anchorage, Alaska, AK, USA

**Background.** For more than 50 years, Community Health Aides and Community Health Practitioners (CHA/Ps) have resided in and provided care for the residents of their villages.

**Objectives.** This study is a systematic description of the clinical practice of primary care health workers in rural Alaska communities. This is the first evaluation of the scope of health problems seen by these lay health workers in their remote communities.

**Study design.** Retrospective observational review of administrative records for outpatient visits seen by CHA/Ps in 150 rural Alaska villages (approximate population 47,370).

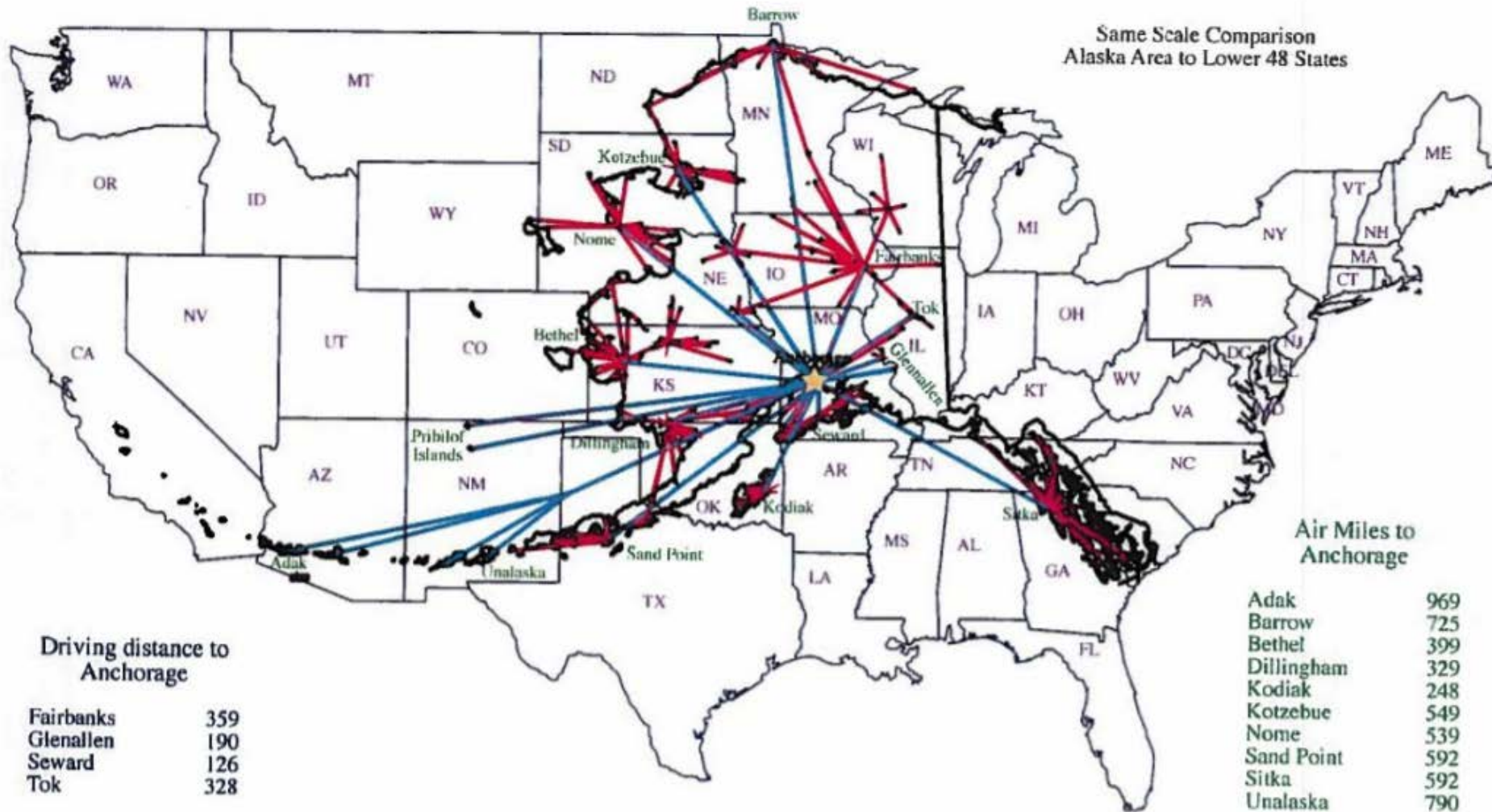
**Methods.** Analysis of electronic records for outpatient visits to CHA/Ps in village clinics from October 2004 through September 2006. Data included all outpatient visits from the Indian Health Service National Patient Information Reporting System. Descriptive analysis included comparisons by region, age, sex, clinical assessment and treatment.

**Results.** In total 272,242 visits were reviewed. CHA/Ps provided care for acute, chronic, preventive, and emergency problems at 176,957 (65%) visits. The remaining 95,285 (35%) of records did not include a diagnostic code, most of which were for administrative or medication-related encounters. The most common diagnostic codes were: pharyngitis (11%), respiratory infections (10%), otitis media (8%), hypertension (6%), skin infections (4%), and chronic lung disease (4%). Respiratory distress and chest pain accounted for 75% (n = 10,552) of all emergency visits.

**Conclusions.** CHA/Ps provide a broad range of primary care in remote Alaskan communities whose residents would otherwise be without consistent medical care. Alaska's CHA/P program could serve as a health-care delivery model for other remote communities with health care access challenges.

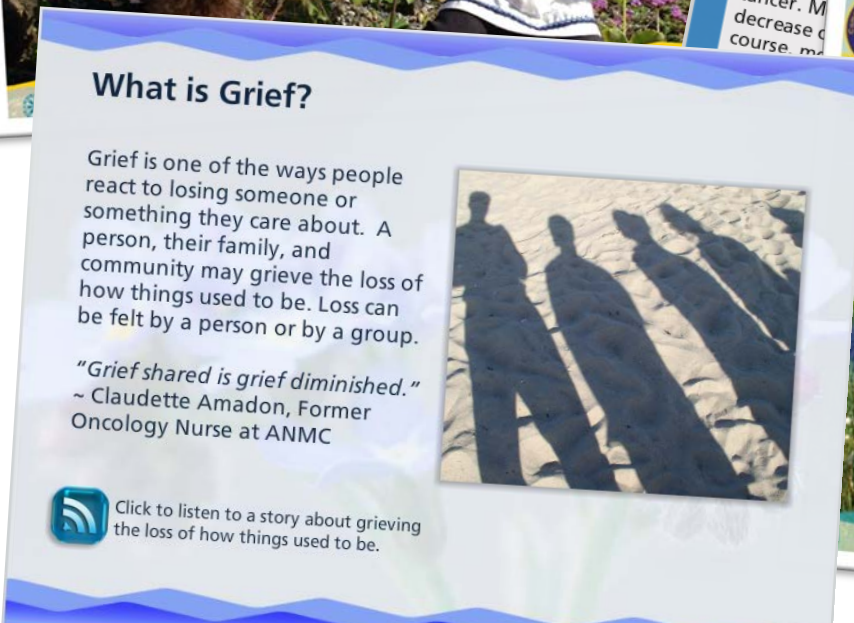


# The Alaska Native Health Care System Referral Pattern

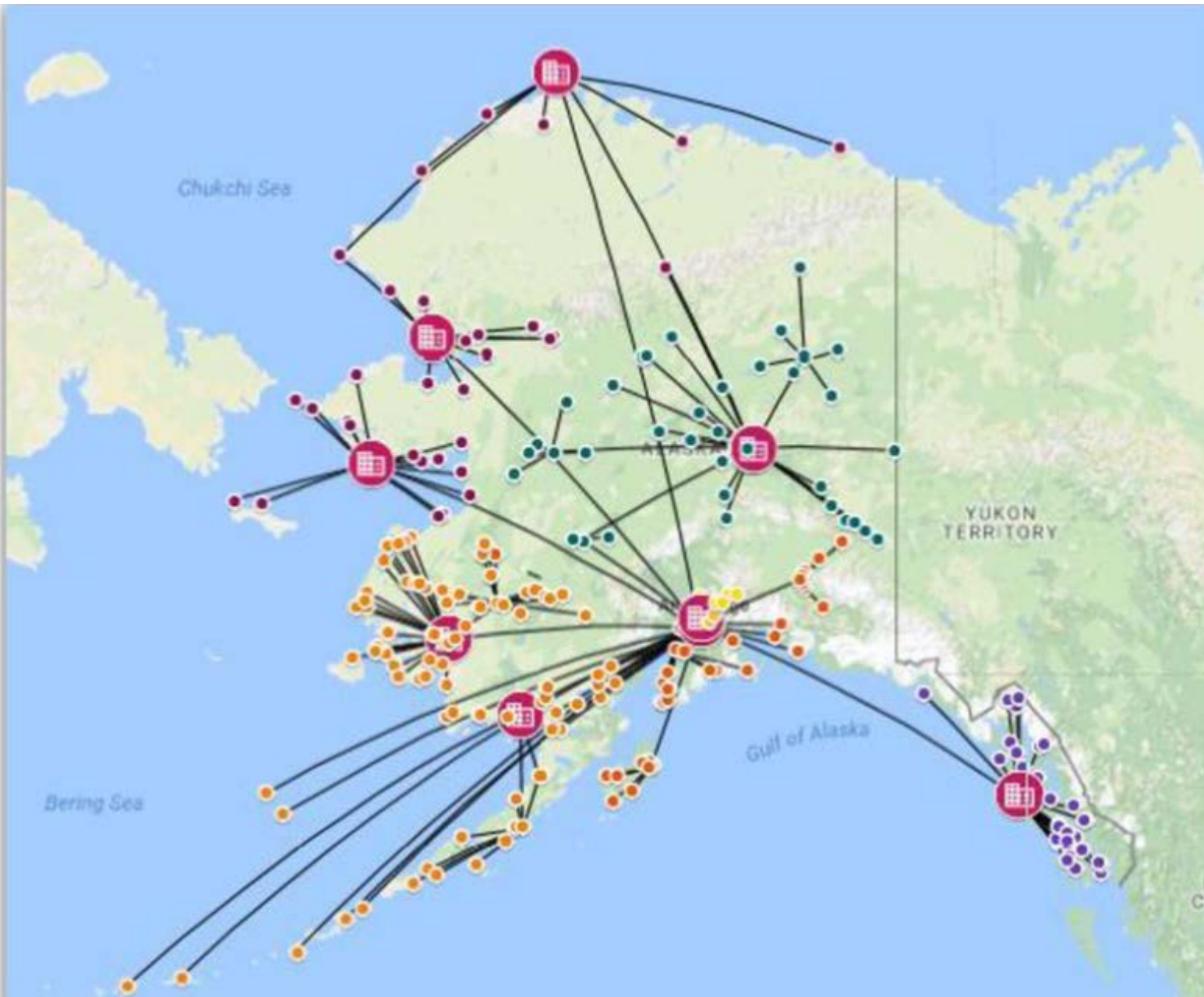




# Culturally Relevant Online Cancer Education



## Typical Telemedicine Referral Patterns



Telemedicine Utilization in the Last Frontier, Margaret C Brodie, 2017  
<https://slideplayer.com/slide/13615737/>



# Mobile Screening



Services

Careers

Providers

Locations



<https://searhc.org/service/wisewoman/>

# Opportunities for Equity

- \* Listen to communities: what do they need and want?
- \* Geographically, culturally relevant care throughout the cancer control continuum

Dance of Life



Cancer Education for Alaska Community Health Aides

# To Learn More...

- \* Alaska's Health Aides [Akchap.org](http://Akchap.org)
- \* Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium <https://anthc.org/>
- \* Wisewoman mobile cancer screenings <https://searhc.org/service/wisewoman/>
- \* Innovative Primary Care Delivery in Rural Alaska: a review of patient encounters seen by community health aides  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.3402/ijch.v71i0.18543>
- \* A Framework for Culturally Relevant Online Learning: Lessons from Alaska's Tribal Health Workers <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13187-018-1350-8>
- \* The last frontier: innovative efforts to reduce colorectal cancer disparities among the remote Alaska Native population  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4523058/>

# Thank You for Listening!



Cassandra Leigh Darrough,  
Paiute-Shoshone



**Igamsiqanaghalek**

**St. Lawrence Island Yup'ik**

*Quyanaq  
North Slope Inupiaq*

**Quyana  
Yup'ik/Cup'ik**

**Ha'w'aa  
Haida**

*Tsin'ee  
Tanacross*

**Spasciba  
Russian/Alutiiq**

**Qagaasakung  
Aleut (Unangax)**

**Mahsi'  
Gwitch'in/Han**

**TSIN'AEN  
AHTNA**

**THANK YOU**

**Ana-ba-see  
Koyukon**

**Tsen'ii  
Upper Tanana**

[kcueva@alaska.edu](mailto:kcueva@alaska.edu)

**Maasee'  
Tanana**

**Chin'an  
Dena'ina (Tanaina)**

**Doy'ksin  
Tysm'sen**

**Quyanaqpuk  
Inupiaq Nome**

**DOGEDINH  
DEG HIT'AN**

**Baasee'  
Ruby Athabascan**

**GUNALCHE'ESH  
TLINGIT**

**Awa'ahda  
Eyak**