

INDIGENOUS EMOTIONAL ECONOMIES IN ALASKA:

SURVIVING YOUTH IN THE VILLAGE

A

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty

of the University of Alaska Fairbanks

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for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

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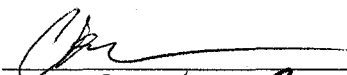
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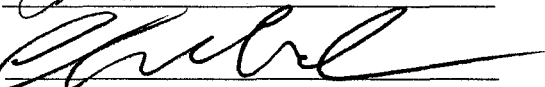
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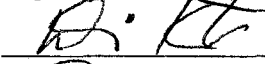
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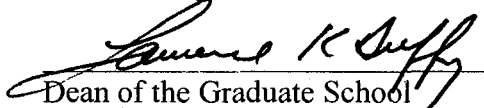


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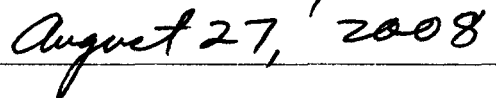
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Abstract

According to the *Status of Alaska Natives Report 2004* produced by the Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage, Native youth in rural Alaska experience significant mental health disparity. Suicide rates for Alaska Native youth are the highest in the nation, and substance abuse, social misconduct and teenage pregnancy rates are also much higher among the rural, indigenous population in Alaska. These disparate rates have caused many to ask; what is going on with the youth in the villages today? This dissertation reports on research conducted to help answer that question, and identify local intervention strategies for youth growing up today in the villages. The research for this dissertation was funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (1R34MH073601-01), and supported by the University of Alaska Fairbanks at the Center for Alaska Native Health Research, Institute of Arctic Biology. The study used a community-based participatory research approach and ethnographic methods to explore the affective lives of youth in Athabascan villages in Alaska. This dissertation is a contemporary ethnography of life in “the vill” from a youth perspective. Findings from the research demonstrate a model of Athabascan mental health based on the concept of an indigenous emotional economy. Athabascan survival has always required both technical skills to provide for the material necessities of life and emotional skills to support social life. In that sense the economy has also always been an emotional economy. As the balance between the need for technical and emotional survival skills shifted, the lives of young people have become increasingly focused on their relationships in the village. The contemporary social problems that youth experience growing up in the village reflect the changed and changing nature of their emotional decision-making in the context of the relationships that contribute most directly to their social status and survival. In an emotional economy individuals must adapt strategies for surviving feelings. This study provides information that could be used to create or tailor intervention strategies in the rural villages to the local models of emotion, behavior and mental health.

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Preface

My elders have taught me that the first thing I should ever do when making a public speech is tell people who I am. The second thing I should do is thank those people for making me who I am. Then I should say what comes from my heart and finally the last thing I should do is raise my hands in thanks to the people and sit down to allow another person to take the floor. I am still learning and my words will not be perfect and I may make mistakes.

So I will begin by saying first who I am. I am the daughter of my father and my mother. My father is non-Native and my mother is Native. I am also other things as incompletely. I am a student to some, a teacher to others. I am a mother to my children and an accomplice to my spouse. I am a researcher to some and a friend as well. I am unsure of myself but with a measure of confidence. For this, what I am about to say though, I am – *I, Anthropologist*.

Anthropology is a way of thinking about this life and all the many ways that we humans live it. Anthropology is, arguably, the most social of the social sciences. We get out there and we live what we “study.” We use our selves as the instruments in anthropology. If we study Yup’ik subsistence economies, we go fishing and hunting (Hensel 1996). If we study homelessness in urban centers in the United States, we go stay at a homeless shelter (Hopper 2003). If we study drug dealers in *El Barrio* (Bourgois 2003), or infanticide in Brazil (Scheper-Hughes 1991) or youth culture in the Arctic (Condon 1987); we go to these places and we do not just always live *among*, we sometimes live *as*, the people live. Anthropology is certainly not without its detractors (i.e. Tierney 2001), but sometimes it takes these charged discourses and social conflicts around the academic periphery to produce the intensity required to effect change within the communities and cultures at its center.

This work, what I am about to say from my heart, is the work of a full-blood anthropologist and half-breed Native. It is a study of the emotional lives of youth in an Athabascan village in Alaska. I was able to go to the village and live because of a grant funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (1R34MH073601-01: C. Koverola, PI).

I was the project director and ethnographer for the study. The study was about children's mental health in the villages and the things that are there for young people as they are growing up and experiencing those "problems of youth" that are so visible in the media and public discourses in Alaska. Things like drinking, suicide attempts, juvenile delinquency and interpersonal family violence, child abuse and so on. The study aimed to find out more about the "normal" and everyday lives of youth in the villages. The goal was to bring in the voices and perspectives of Native youth about what was going on and what more could be done. The research was in this way exploratory. I believe there is not enough currently known about the problem of Alaska Native youth living in the villages to effectively do anything about the problems from outside. Instead what is needed is an insider knowledge of the problem. The way this could be gained was by living in the community for a long enough period of time to begin to have this more "native" understanding.

Maybe you are wondering why it is me that is standing up about this issue, among these people and at this time. What gives me the right to write? I do not feel that it is the letters of support and permission that we received from the tribal councils, or the words of support and encouragement given to us after each community presentation of the research and the research findings that allow me to conduct this writing. These things are what may legally or ethically permit the writing-up and sharing of the research. I feel I write instead because it would do a terrible wrong to not. Young Native people are dying in the villages. I cannot stay silent and I will not remain "safe" as long as they continue to be in danger. There is such a desperate need for new ideas, new approaches and new methods for this "new" indigenous generation. In the end I felt that it was my obligation to try and contribute something that others could use to do something about what is going on with young people in the village. An emotional map of the village from the perspective of youth is one of the primary things I hope will contribute in some way towards this end.

None of this is really of my own creation. There are many people that contributed to this endeavor and made me who I am. Some I can name and some I cannot. My

gratitude for those who must remain unnamed in this medium has and will continue to flow in the more traditional way from me to them in the context of this real life. I will always be there for those that were there for me: those that opened their doors, ovens and hearts to me when I was in the villages. I have such love for the people that I could never express it rightly in this kind of way so I will not try. I will just do what I can when I can and hope it is enough. For those that I can name I will do so with the intention of making public honor for those that have helped make me who I am. I want to first thank my father. He helped me up off the ground when I didn't think I had it in me to rise again. I don't think he's let go since.

Next I have got to give it to my mentors. I have some really amazing mentors. I came to the University of Alaska Fairbanks to work with Dr. Phyllis Morrow and she has been the constant in my academic life. I worked hard to clutter up the landscape of my relationship with Dr. Morrow and she, with such infuriating tenor, would never allow it. Dr. Morrow chaired this dissertation and it is her accomplishment as much as it is mine. My other committee members included Dr. Chase Hensel, Dr. David Koester, Dr. Gerald Mohatt and Dr. Catherine Koverola. I have never been content being in just one place, or being just one "thing" and so I spent the majority of my anthropological training in research residence in the psychology department and Institute of Arctic Biology at UAF. I started off working as a research assistant on the "People Awakening Project: Discovering Alaska Native Pathways to Sobriety," where I worked closely with Dr. Hensel and Dr. Mohatt. Dr. Hensel brought me on and Dr. Mohatt kept me around. Dr. Hensel is an anthropologist with a vast knowledge and experience with southwestern arctic ways. He and I traveled throughout southwest Alaska and I observed some of the most impressive displays of rapport with local people that I have still yet ever seen. Dr. Hensel can hang is what I am trying to say.

Dr. Mohatt was the principle investigator on the project that Dr. Hensel and I worked on and it was his mentorship that made me a researcher at my core. I did not really believe that research could do anything for Native people but his work inspired me to consider the life and death importance of research. Dr. Mohatt is a gentle warrior, but a

warrior still. Dr. Mohatt has a great skill of bringing the right kind of people together. He brought Dr. Koverola on the team at its late stages and her passion and realism captivated me from the start.

Dr. Koverola is a real person. I saw in her, and I think she saw in me too, the commitment for keeping it real. Dr. Koverola was who I called when I needed help or just someone to listen to me as I cried or cursed my way through a clinical internship as the one mental health professional for four large villages in southwest Alaska. Dr. Koverola really listened to my answer when she asked what I thought could be done about the problems of youth in the villages. Dr. Koverola gave me the chance to be an anthropologist, and the freedom to be one of my own making.

Dr. Koverola took a risk with me but did not do so alone. She also brought on Dr. Kim Hopper, a medical anthropologist and research scientist at the Nathan S. Kline Institute for Psychiatric Research, who was one of the project consultants on the NIMH study. Together Dr. Koverola and Dr. Hopper mentored my development as a researcher and anthropologist. Dr. Michael Kral was also key in providing guidance around tricky anthropological issues that arose in the research and his contributions need mention as well.

Dr. Koester needs some special reference here for his slightly behind-the-curtain participation in my anthropological development. In the end Dr. Koester was the only fulltime member of the anthropology department left on my committee. He hung in there and at the right moments would push the curtain aside to bedazzle with his golden belt of theoretical know-how. Without him in the ring, working over my theory with his quick-stepping jabs and hooks, I think it may have beaten me down a bit more than it did in the end.

Also responsible for keeping me in fighting-condition during this time are the other members of the Children's Mental Health in Alaska research team. Liz Pawelko was brought on as the graduate research assistant and after a few disputes concerning the obsessive arrangement of books and the presence or absence of fanny-packs and sleeveless vests our relationship settled down into something I would describe as

necessary. Liz was necessary for me. I could not have survived the fieldwork in the same way had I not had Liz on the other end of the line nearly every day. Liz's spirit runs throughout this text. Liz is particularly able to bring my writing down to earth and turn my four meandering sentences into one three word statement that somehow says all that I wanted to but less. Fanny, seriously you rocked.

Then there were the team members in the villages: Violet Burnham and Cesa Sam. Cesa was a primary mentor and friend throughout the research. It is so hard to sum up Cesa; she is like home. Violet I admire for her strength and fortitude. I have never seen anything like it.

Finally, I return to those that I cannot name. So instead of naming I silently raise my hands to the people of the villages. What follows from this is what I have to say that is from my heart.

You know, one never gets fully used to walking on water. Such is the experience of traveling on the frozen waterways in Alaska. I always experienced that initial thrill through my being when crossing from land onto the ice. Yet, always aware of being suspended over deep and running water, I felt constant unease. Water under ice feels angry. I would see it, the water, as a live thing, trapped and raging against this forced pacification. When we would cut holes in the ice to set fish nets or go hooking, and the auger would break through the first time; the noise of the water's escape would sound on the edge of rapture and revenge each time. It is as if I stand there again now and look down between the space of my footing at ice that is dark yet light enough to see that I am in danger. If I do not tread lightly and am not cautious with the weight of what I carry I might fall through and be swept away. I must not take for granted the structure that supports me. I must remember what I have been taught, and let the knowledge of others who have been out here before and made it back guide me. Each step will be not my own, and in the end, if there is an end, the ice will flow and the waters will forgive.

Introduction

1.1 The Youth

The Boys

Jay Sparrow just turned 19 and lives in the village in a small log house with two of his older brothers. Jay is continuing to work on his high school completion from home and anticipates getting his diploma this year. Jay is worried though that the new principal at the village school will not accept his credits and feels like one of the teachers there is giving him a hard time.

Most days Jay gets up around noon and goes up to his mother's house, which is located on the far side of the village in the new housing. There Jay fixes himself something to eat and then sees if there is anything that needs to be done around his mother's house. Jay's father died when Jay was young, and he has taken over most of the household chores for his mother. Jay chops wood and brings some into the house. Jay sits around and watches TV for a while with his younger sister.

After a while, Jay goes back out and makes a few laps around the village on his modified Yamaha ATV. Jay bought the ATV from his uncle with his first firefighting money earned last summer. Jay's mother had bought him a snowgo when he was 15 years-old but it broke down last year and he hasn't gotten around to getting the parts to repair it. Jay's ATV is the racing kind and he speeds around the back roads for fun.

Jay sees a couple of girls walking up the road and slows down. He doesn't stop and only barely nods as he passes, but he knows they are watching him, as he cuts up the first road and out of sight. Jay goes back to his brother's house and sits around for a while watching movies.

Before 7 p.m. Jay goes over to the village store for a few cans of pop and some beef jerky. He sees one of his bros outside the store and he stops to say "what's up." There is talk that one of the boys has a few bottles and there might be some partying later on. Jay has been lying low lately because the last few times he partied he got into fights that left him with a black eye and busted-up wrist.

Jay goes back to his brother's and eats some soup and fish that his brother brought back from his mother's house. He decides to go over to the basketball court and shoot around for a while. Only the younger boys are out tonight and Jay shoots around with them for a while. A couple of teenage girls come by and ask Jay what's going on. He says he doesn't know and keeps shooting around. The girls sit on a bench outside the community hall that faces the half-size outdoor basketball court. The girls talk to each other and laugh and occasionally make teasing remarks to the boys on the court.

Jay gets tired of shooting around and goes back to his brother's and takes his ATV out for a ride around. Jay runs into a few of the boys his age driving around in a small white pickup truck. They have just started drinking and are driving around outside of the village to stay away from others that might want to join in. They ask Jay if he wants a shot and he takes a small sip and hands the bottle back. They are celebrating one of the older one's birthdays, and they do not ask Jay to join them in the truck. They sit around idling and talking for a while, and then Jay takes off up the road.

Jay drives outside of town into the trees and sees a spruce chicken that makes him wish he'd brought his rifle. Jay doesn't have much gas left for the ATV, and without a job it is difficult to fill the tank with the cost of gas being near \$6.00 a gallon. Jay usually has to get gas from his mother in exchange for the chores he does around the house. Jay drives slowly back to his brother's house.

By now it's about 11pm and he puts a movie in the VCR and lies down. The phone is quiet tonight; no one is calling him to come out. Jay thinks about going to check it out on his own but decides that there is too much potential right now for drama. Jay watches a couple of movies and tries to go to sleep.

The phone rings and it's Nadine Heron, a girl that he sometimes goes around with. Nadine is partying and asks Jay for a ride back into town to her house. Jay can hear someone crying in the background and Nadine tells him that she needs to get out of there. Jay knows that Nadine won't want to go home right away and since he hasn't been partying he is not too eager to go pick her up. Nadine tells him again to come get her and

he says he'll be over after a while. Jay lies back down and thinks about doing something else for a while. He can't think of what he'd want to do and instead goes to sleep.

The Girls

Nadine Heron is 17 years old and attends school in the village. This is her last year and she is excited about being a senior. Nadine and her best friend *Paula Sparrow* are both seniors this year and they along with two of their other girlfriends and two boys make up the graduating class. Nadine is excited about being a senior. Seniors rule the school and sometimes get to go check-out the partying scene in the village that is usually restricted to youth and adults that are no longer in school.

Nadine has plans to leave the village after graduation. She can't decide between enlisting in the Navy or going into the Army Reserves and trying out the university in Fairbanks or Anchorage. There is also Job Corps or working at Denali National Park or even babysitting for her sister who lives in the city; anything is possible as long as it takes her out of the village, for a while at least. Nadine and her friends talk of little else except leaving the village. Graduation is still a year away and right now it's about killing time and making the most of life in the village in anticipation of leaving it.

Nadine lives with her parents, her three younger brothers and one older sister. Nadine's best friend Paula stays at her house most of the time. Nadine's parents don't drink and are pretty strict. Nadine's dad works up North doing construction on the pipeline and is gone for two weeks at a time. Nadine's mom works at the city office and that leaves Nadine and her older sister to look after the younger boys during the day. Nadine considers herself spoiled and doesn't like to do much work around the house. Nadine's older sister is 22 and has recently returned from Fairbanks after completing her second year of college. Her sister is not sure she will return in the fall; her grades weren't that great and there is no more scholarship money. Nadine likes it when her older sister is home because she can sleep in later and not have to worry about feeding the boys or cleaning up after them.

Nadine gets up around 10AM and eats cereal or whatever is left in the skillet on the stove. Nadine's older sister is in her room on the computer. The boys are still

watching cartoons on TV and Nadine lies on the couch and watches for a while. Paula stayed over again and is still sleeping in Nadine's room. Paula gets up and comes out around 11am and Nadine tells the boys to go play out. Nadine changes the channel to a popular daytime soap and she and Paula watch for a while. At noon, Nadine's mother comes home from work and makes macaroni for lunch. She gives Nadine some money and asks her to go to the store and pick up some groceries. Nadine asks to use the 4-wheeler and Nadine's mother tells her to go ahead.

Nadine's mother goes back to work and the boys go back outside to resume play with their friends. Nadine and Paula pull on hooded sweatshirts and go to the store by 4-wheeler. Nadine and Paula ride around the village for a while before going to the store. There are few people out and so they decide to go visit another friend out town in new housing. They visit for a while and their other friend tells them that she might be able to get a bottle because it's her brother's birthday, and he always stashes his booze at the house when he's partying. Nadine, Paula and their other girlfriends rarely drink. But lately they have been finding that their opportunities are increasing, and it is getting easier to find drink or people to invite them.

Nadine and Paula decide to drive around the village again to see who else is out. They stop and talk with two of their other girlfriends, and spread the word that people might be partying around later on. The girls whisper and giggle about who they might see and who may end up with whom at the end of the night. Paula stays quiet throughout this talk. She hasn't been going out as much as Nadine and some of the others in her age group. Nadine is starting to get a little tired of Paula wanting to stay in, and she ignores Paula's attempts to rejoin the conversation when they have moved on to other topics. After a while Nadine starts the 4-wheeler and the girls go to the store. There they linger, talking to the store clerk (who is one of their older friends) and waiting around to see who else will come in. Nadine is hoping to run into Jay, one of the boys she regularly crushes on, but she hasn't seen him out lately. Nadine is getting tired of the boys in the village and can't wait to go to Fairbanks for her dental appointment and stay with her sister for a while.

Nadine and Paula get back to the house just before Nadine's mother comes home from work. Nadine and Paula watch TV for a while, while Nadine's mother fixes up the soup that Nadine's older sister had started while Nadine was out. Nadine's mother asks her to go find the boys and have them come in to eat. Nadine takes any chance to ride around, so jumps up and goes out. Nadine's mother asks Paula if she wants to eat and Paula shrugs but stays. Paula has not been home for over a week and stays at Nadine's to avoid the fights that happen when her mother and step-father drink. Even though the village has been dry for the past couple of days, Paula prefers to stay at Nadine's, especially when Nadine's dad is up North.

Paula knows that Nadine is getting mad at her more lately for not wanting to go out and be crazy, but she doesn't want to see this one guy, and she knows if she drinks she might do something dumb. Nadine comes in with two of her three brothers. Nadine and Paula go in their room after they eat and sit on the bed and talk about what they want to do that night. The phone is ringing lots and it's usually friend's of Nadine's and Paula's checking to see if they had heard anything about who is partying and what's going on. Nadine and Paula wait around until about 9 p.m. and then ask to borrow the 4-wheeler to take a ride around. Nadine's mom says okay but wants the 4-wheeler back by 11 p.m. Nadine wants to go pick up another one of their girlfriends. The three girls ride around the village for a while. There are a lot more people out now and everyone seems to be cruising around while they wait to see where things are going to happen. Nadine passes by two guys walking up town. The guys call out and the girls slow down. One of the guys tells Nadine where they are partying and says she should check it out. Nadine and her friends talk about it until its time to bring the 4-wheeler back.

The three girls go back to Nadine's house together. Nadine's mother and older sister have gone to bed. Nadine wants to go back out and tries convincing Paula to go with her. Paula doesn't want to, and instead goes into Nadine's room to watch a movie. Nadine and their other friend decide to go check it out. Paula watches movies for a while, waiting to see if Nadine will come back early. Paula wants to know who Nadine saw out and what they were doing. When Nadine doesn't come home Paula begins to feel

lonesome and wishes a little bit that she had gone out too. Paula falls asleep and doesn't hear Nadine come in early that morning.

1.2 The Village

Jay, Nadine and Paula are representative of youth growing up and coming of age in the rural villages of Alaska today. They do not represent any one young person that I have known over the years of living and working in villages along the Yukon, but instead could represent any one of these young people. Youth raised in the villages in Alaska share in the common experience of growing up "in the vill." Villages in Alaska are isolated indigenous communities, many located off the road system and separated by time, distance and culture from the surrounding hubs, cities and neighboring villages. Village economies are still predominantly subsistence-based, even if just in terms of the much higher cultural value placed on subsistence activities (e.g. Bodenhorn 1997). Large mammal hunting (seal-whale-walrus and/or moose-caribou) and fishing contributes substantially still yet to the Alaska Native diet, and to the Alaska Native culture in the villages. Life in the villages is as close as anyone living on the North American continent can get to an aboriginal existence today.

Living in the village is about surviving: surviving the land, the cold, the isolation, the boredom, the gossip, the rapid social changes, interpersonal intensities, and the hard times. Locals will refer to the village as the "vill" much like Natives in the Lower-48 use "the rez" to talk about reservation life. The term "village" is also a way to describe someone that indicates a certain set of traits or behavioral characteristics that are distinctly associated with the rural village communities and the people from them. The way people use the phrase "the vill" communicates the ambivalence many Native people have towards village life. Living in the vill is hard because living in the village is living on the edge: the edge of civilization, the edge of experience and the edge of survival (e.g. Duclos and Manson 1994). At the same time, growing up and living in the village remains the true measure of what it means to be Native, and there is pride associated with being able to survive in the village.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs federal register lists 225 recognized “Native Villages” in the state of Alaska. The villages are represented by the 12 regional Native Corporations. The Native Corporations are the primary political and economic representatives for the Native “tribes” or villages, and Alaska Natives are “shareholders” in these corporations and tribal members of a village (Berger 1985). The settlement of the indigenous peoples of Alaska into villages occurred across the State, uniting the culturally and linguistically diverse indigenous peoples of Alaska in a common history and polity.

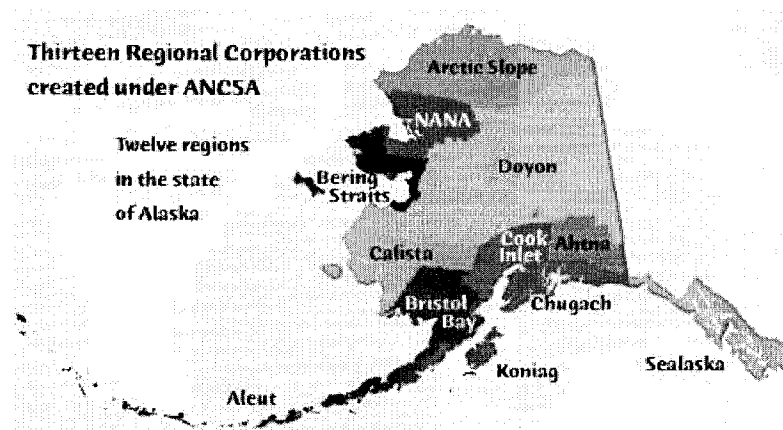


Figure 1. Map of the Thirteen Regional Native Corporations created under ANCSA. (P.L. Boggess for Cook Inlet Region, Inc. <http://www.litsite.alaska.edu/aktraditions/ancsa.html>)

Alaska Native is the term used to distinguish the aboriginal peoples of Alaska from the rest of the aboriginal peoples of the North American continent. The term originated in government documents, but has been appropriated by the indigenous people of Alaska and often shortened simply to *Native* as the accepted way of indicating cultural identity and shared experience. “Native Pride” hats and other regalia with this insignia are worn by Tlingits, Athabascans, Yup’iks, Inupiaqs, and Aleuts alike. A fundamental component of being *Native* in Alaska involves growing up or living for an extended period of time in a village. The shared experience of growing up in the village has created a kind of cross-cultural continuity between generational groups of traditionally distinct

tribal groups. For example, in an interview with a 19-year-old Yup'ik woman, I asked how she identifies herself to other people and she answered; "Well, my mom's real Eskimo, but I just say, I'm *Native*."

While there is a growing sense of unity among younger generations who identify as "*Native*," there remain important cultural distinctions that make generalizations about Alaska Natives potentially misleading. The cultural distinction in Alaska between Eskimos and Indians is arguably the most fundamental (e.g. Burch 1988; Dumond 1979). The term "Eskimo" and "Indian" are used here because these are the ways that Alaska Native people refer to themselves in everyday life. The term "Eskimo" has been replaced by "Inuit" throughout the Canadian Arctic and Greenland, but that term has not been adopted by the indigenous groups in Alaska. "Eskimo" remains the most common and accepted way to refer collectively to Yup'ik and Inupiaq peoples in Alaska. The terms "Indian" and "Native" are used to refer collectively to the non-Eskimo groups in the Interior and Southeast coast of Alaska including the Athabaskan, Tlingit, Tsimshian and Haida peoples. Scholars continue to debate the use of ethnonyms for purposes of generalizations and identification. Whenever possible, in this writing I will conform to local convention and use the terms that are used by the people from the communities.

Eskimo groups include the Yup'ik, Inupiaq and Aleut/Alutiiq of the Arctic and Pacific regions. The Indian groups include the Athabascans of the Subarctic Interior and the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian along the Southeast Pacific Coast. Historically, the relationship between Eskimo and Indian groups was characterized by rivalry and warfare (Nelson 1899; Osgood 1958; Wright 1995). Today, what remains of this historical rivalry is played out on the court or in the courtroom. Cultural variation within these groups is important and enduring. Eskimo groups in Alaska have wide variation in terms of language and environmental adaptation. Athabascans distinguish between Gwich'in and other Athabaskan groups along the Yukon. Despite these differences, the common experience of growing up "village" has provided a sense of connection that is most apparent in the younger generations that were born and raised in the vill.

Being Native in Alaska involves being from a village. Even urban born and raised Alaska Natives are “from” one or more of the Native villages, and will most often maintain connections to the village through extended kinship networks. There are no reservations in Alaska (with the exception of Metlakatla) and the treaties that were made with some Alaska Native groups were dissolved with the signing of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) in 1971 (Berger 1985). ANCSA established the “Native village” as a formal political group. Prior to this, the Native villages were winter ceremonial or summer subsistence settlements and settlements established around missions, trading posts and schools in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Berger 1985). These became a centralizing force for Native groups and families decimated by disease and disrupted by colonization of aboriginal resources and lands (Chance 1960; Fienup-Riordan 1986; Fortuine 1989).

The settlement of Alaska Native families and groups into continuously occupied communities was well documented in its early stages by ethnographers such as Margaret Lantis (1946, 1953, 1960), Charles Hughes (1960, 1974); Wendall Oswalt (1959, 1963); Norman Chance (1960, 1966), Cornelius Osgood (1958, 1959) and James VanStone (1960, 1967, 1974). Taken collectively these works provide the foundation for a follow-up study of the Alaska Native village after several generations of continuous occupation. The contemporary youth populations in the villages are no longer on the front lines of this change. Instead, they are the recipients of a village-based culture established by their grandparents and parents.

The literature available on Alaska Native life and culture has long been rooted in the “ethnographic present” (e.g. Burch 1988, 1998, 2005; Damas 1984; Fienup-Riordan 1983, 1995; Helm 1981; Mishler and Simeone 2004; Nelson 1983, 1986; VanStone 1974). This tradition remains particularly entrenched in Alaskan anthropology providing little sense of the adaptive processes at work in the rural, indigenous communities (exceptions include: Bodenhorn 1990, 1994; Fast 2002; Hensel 1996). When village life is documented it is often done with nearly singular attention to the ways that Alaska Natives continue to orient their everyday lives out on the land. So for example, Charles

Hughes' (1960) book, *An Eskimo Village in the Modern World*, is almost entirely about the ways that the residents of the Native village of Gambell continue to hunt, fish and travel on the land and continue to train their children to hunt, fish and travel on the land. We learn very little about modern village life except that the villagers he observed spent as much time as they could *outside* of it. What is less often depicted is the culture of those remaining in the village.

Life goes on in the village, even without an ethnographer present, as most settlements have always been continuously occupied by the young, the employed (most often women), those too old to travel, and the adults without means to go hunting or fishing (the poor). Subsistence has become a part of village life, a shift from the way that settlement life was once part of the seasonal subsistence cycle.

Fortunately, the literature documenting the rise of village life, particularly in the Eskimo/Inuit areas of Alaska, is strong and often marbled with clear images of the ways that the indigenous peoples were adapting their lives to the changed social, environmental, political and economic circumstances. A selective review of this literature provides the foundation for this study of the contemporary culture of Athabaskan Native villages.

From early on, researchers have observed that in the village, "youth reigns supreme" (Oswalt 1963: 25). Children and youth were both the most valued and most populous portion of the newly settled village populations (Chance 1966 also observes this). By the time Oswalt conducted his fieldwork in a Yup'ik village in southwest Alaska he found a clearly defined, peer-oriented culture of youth operating around the aboriginal requirements for young boys and girls coming of age in these societies. He observed that children spent great amounts of "unsupervised time" together engaged in play activities that would often go on until midnight or later and included card playing, checkers, ball games, racing games, avoiding the village marshal, storyknifing (girls), and a "great deal of visiting." (Oswalt 1963: 39-41). Oswalt observed some amount of adolescent-age drinking, but noted that most young people did not start drinking until they were 16 years of age or older. He reported that adults would very rarely participate

or intervene in the everyday activities of children, but would more actively initiate interaction with adolescents considered ready to take on more adult roles in subsistence and household pursuits (Oswalt 1963: 36).

At about this same time, Norman Chance was living and working in an Inupiaq village and observed similar trends in youth behavior. Chance found that:

Eskimo childhood becomes more peer-centered with increasing age and that older siblings take on much of the responsibility for socialization of the younger ones. By the time the child reaches adolescence, most of his time is spent with others of his approximate age. This traditional pattern still is given strong support by contemporary Eskimo parents. Most parents have limited knowledge or understanding of their adolescent children's thoughts and behavior. (Chance 1966: 29)

Chance argued that the patterns of childhood he observed in the village were based on aboriginal norms, but took on new characteristics with the dramatic increase in the youth population and the decrease in the necessary involvement of youth in economically productive activities. He argued that the freedom given the youth by their parents and elders is problematic in the context of contemporary village life that provides little incentive to the youth to follow the ways of the past. In this context of rapid social change he found that:

The strong emotional bonds formed between teenagers, in combination with their active interest in the outside world, tend to drive a wedge between them and their parents. Seldom do Eskimo youths voluntarily engage in activities, other than those associated with household chores or hunting, with their parents and older relatives. By fourteen they have won privileges younger children do not have; in particular, they may smoke, play cards, and stay up at night as long as they like. They also have greater freedom in making their own decisions, although the rest of the household may suffer resulting hardship. (Chance 1966: 31)

Similar observations were recorded by ethnographers over several decades in the subarctic Athabaskan and Inuit communities in Canada (Brody 1975, 1982; Hongimann 1949, 1965), but few attempted to fully understand the adaptive decision-making going on within this village-raised youth population. Instead, it became generalized that youth raised in the villages were bored, mischievous, and

disruptive because their traditional roles had changed and they were no longer included in the economic pursuits of the group. As these youth became less intensely involved with the land, however they became more intensely involved with each other.

These types of intense peer-group associations characterized the culture of the indigenous settlements throughout the North. For example, Nelson Graburn gave the following explanation of settlement-based youth behavior in his ethnographic study of Inuit on the Canadian Arctic:

Life for the Eskimos is not as hard as it used to be, and there had been a reduction in the number and urgency of essential tasks to be performed by family members. Also there are far more children together in one community than ever before and this allows the more idle ones to get together without supervision and encourages antisocial activities. These peer groups comprise children in the eight to fourteen age group, and the greater proportion of them are girls. With no housework to do and very few recreational outlets outside school hours, they roam around the settlement finding mischievous activities with which to pass the time, often carrying on late into the night. These activities are rarely large scale or serious but they are definitely antisocial and in contradiction of Eskimo standards of behavior. They are the results not only of increase in population size but also the consequent increase in opportunities to be away from adults who feel direct responsibility. (Graburn 1969: 182)

It can be seen clearly by these few works how early ethnographers contributed to the characterization of youth behavior in the villages and settlements as culturally and socially discordant. Youth in the villages have been engaging in certain types of behavior including intense peer interactions, extended outdoor play, and mischief for several generations now. In fact, it is these “mischievous” youngsters, as described by Graburn and others that are now becoming the contemporary elders and culture bearers in the villages today.

Twenty years later, the same social issues that were just emerging among youth in the villages and settlements at the midpoint of the 20th century were fully realized in Richard Condon’s (1988) foundational ethnography documenting the indigenous adaptations of Inuit youth. Condon’s research was part of the Whiting’s Harvard

Adolescence Project (e.g. Davis, Whiting and Davis 1989) that set out to document the experience of adolescence in seven indigenous societies. Condon had previously conducted research with Inuit groups in the Eastern Canadian Arctic and returned to one of these communities to examine the “rise” of an adolescent life stage as a result of contact and social change.

Condon’s major finding was that:

In societies where continuity of socialization and maturation was maintained by intensive intergenerational contact within small extended family bands or groups, the introduction of mass media, formal schooling, government subsidies, and artificially created settlements has undermined traditional patterns of life stage management and contributed to the aspirational dilemmas and adjustment problems faced by young people who can no longer look to members of the parental generation for appropriate role models. (Condon 1990: 267)

Whereas in the not-so-distant past,

The slim margin of survival ... effectively precluded any possibility of a prolonged adolescent period when young people could pass their time with game playing, socialization, hanging out, and generally not making a substantial contribution to the household economy. Young people quickly learned that survival in the harsh arctic habitat required that they observe and learn the skills demonstrated daily by parents and other adults. In addition, the small size of residential units and high infant mortality rates precluded the existence of a youth peer group that could distract young people away from the socializing influence of parents. (Condon 1988: 270)

This analysis helped explain the patterns of youth behavior that were normative at the time of his research. Condon observed youth deeply engaged in peer activities and relationships. Young people spent the majority of their waking days and nights with peers, hanging out, walking around, playing sports and games, “getting into mischief,” and seeking out opportunities for fun and excitement (Condon 1988: 84). Engagement in peer activities often precluded a productive engagement in activities and relationships with members of the adult and elder generations. Prior to the contact period in the Arctic, the future was essentially predetermined for young people, and conditioned by the

demands of the environment. Parents and grandparents provided a clear and consistent model for how to live and survive in this environment.

Condon argued that social change in Arctic communities has resulted in a pronounced decrease in intergenerational interaction, as young people create new strategies for surviving their changed and changing social world. Concurrent with the decrease in intergenerational interaction is a pronounced increase in social problems, including drug and alcohol abuse, suicide, domestic violence, sexual misconduct and social disorder (Condon 1990: 275). During an 11-month period, Condon (1990: 276) documented five attempted suicides by young people between 20 and 25 years of age.

Condon was careful to not reduce the social problems and experiences of youth in the Inuit settlements to culture loss or incomplete identity formation. He argued that Inuit youth were not at all confused about their gender roles and ethnic identities, but had created their *own definitions* of what it means to be 'real Eskimo' (Condon and Condon 1993). John O'Neil (1985; 1986), a student of Condon's who also conducted research with youth in a Canadian arctic community, argued similarly that there appeared to be a new way to be Eskimo among the youth that was in fact "cooler" than the "traditional way." The new way of being Eskimo involved a complex integration of aboriginal practices, such as hunting seal and caribou, with mastery of settlement based activities including basketball and partying. Both Condon and O'Neil found that the youth in the settlement more prone to depression and suicide were those that lacked close peer associations and spent the majority of their time to themselves, engaged more exclusively in subsistence activities. Success on the land no longer appeared to guarantee success in life; the terms of survival had changed.

There are no parallel studies of the contemporary culture of youth in villages in Alaska, yet many of the same problems of youth that Condon and O'Neil have described have been similarly documented as a part of contemporary youth culture in Alaska Native villages (D'Orso 2006; Fast 2002; Jolles 2002; Wallis 2002).

This is where the generalizations, though, must end. There are likely to be many areas of cross-cultural consistency in village culture between the various regions in

Alaska, but there are also likely to be significant differences along these lines as well. The aims of this research are to conduct a descriptive study of the culture of the village and to explore the lives of youth growing up and coming of age in these communities. The contemporary culture of youth in the villages today is based on the indigenous patterns of life lived by their ancestors. This study will focus on the lives of Athabascan youth in a village along the Yukon River in Alaska. These youth live the village life, passed down to them by their parents and grandparents. This study will have meaning and application for youth in villages across Alaska, and for other indigenous peoples in remote regions undergoing rapid social change and cultural adaptation. But this study is specifically about the changed and changing Athabascan world. This is the world that Raven made mischief and *Ts-o-sha* made good (McKenna 1959: 175). This is a world created so the people could survive it.

1.3 Surviving Youth

Youth is a term that encompasses a specific stage of life, post-childhood and pre-adult. The terms youth and adolescence are sometimes used interchangeably, but in academic study these have come to signify distinct ways of approaching individuals at this life stage. Bucholtz (2002: 258) describes the difference between the study of *adolescence* which “generally concentrates on how bodies and minds are shaped for adult futures,” and the study of *youth*, which “emphasizes instead the here-and-now of young people’s experiences, [and] the social and cultural practices through which they shape their worlds.” Most prior anthropological studies of youth in Alaska Native communities have taken a developmental and socialization perspective that is more characteristic with the studies of adolescence.

There has continued to be some debate over whether or not the Northern indigenous groups had a marked period of “adolescence” in aboriginal life at all (Lantis 1960; Osgood 1958). In general, indigenous childhoods in the North were examined in terms of the socialization practices used by adults to teach the younger members of the group the appropriate rules for living (Briggs 1998). Play was the only other component of childhood that was actively documented by early ethnographers, but mainly for what it

could teach the observer about the “proto-adult” world in these communities.

Adolescence was the time marked by the end of play, and in many groups, by certain rites and rituals acknowledging the achievement of a productive and reproductive capacity. Girls in Northern Athabaskan society underwent strict puberty seclusion rites at their first menarche (Helm 1961; McKennan 1959; Osgood 1937, 1958; VanStone 1974). Most of the time though in these Northern societies childhood would end with marriage. This practice is what led many early researchers to conclude that the adolescent life stage was in fact absent from Northern indigenous cultures, at least among females in the community (Boas 1888; Nelson 1899).

It was not until Margaret Lantis (1960) conducted her work on childhood on Nunivak Island with Yup'ik elders that anyone attempted to deal with the experience of young people coming of age in these cultures. Lantis did not herself work with young people, but instead interviewed elders in the community about their recollections of childhood and youth. What she found was what that early “first marriages” were often unstable and traumatic occasions for young girls. The majority of these first marriages broke up if a child was not produced in the first year. Lantis argued from these data that rather than adolescence being absent from pre-contact Inuit society, it was more or less “hidden” in the practice of early marriage for girls, and more demanding hunting requirements for male youth working to establish themselves as eligible for marriage.

Adolescence, then, as a distinct developmental stage characterized by physiological and psychological transitions, clearly did exist in Northern indigenous societies. It is quite telling that most puberty rites in the North involved the isolation of young people from the rest of the community at certain critical points in their lives. This is most pronounced among the subarctic Athabaskan groups (Osgood 1958). Among these groups in Alaska, adolescence was marked by certain rites of passage for both girls and boys that required a period of distancing or isolation from the rest of the community (McKennan 1959; Osgood 1937; 1958). Girls at their first menarche were secluded either in a small hut away from the rest of the group or in a walled-off corner of the house for periods of 40 days to up to a year. The girl was not allowed to even lay eyes on a male

member of the group during this period, and could only be visited and tended to by an elder female member of the group or her mother.

Boys, in many Northern Athabaskan societies, would be expected to undergo a spirit search in their later adolescence (Osgood 1958: 188). Boys 15 or so years of age would be sent out into the woods with no food or water and would be expected to survive for a period of 10 days, sometimes separated into two stages of five days each. Boys were coached before they were sent out in what types of things to look for that would indicate the animal spirit that would thereafter serve as their own personal “amulet” for luck, wealth and protection (Osgood 1937: 162).

It is significant that adolescence was the main time for rites of passage that involved the removal or distancing of the young person from the rest of the social group. Adolescence, across cultures, is a time of physical, social and emotional growth that involves the *intensification* of everyday engagement within the relationships most central to producing and reproducing life and culture. In Northern communities adolescence marked the time of intensification of male-female relationships *and* human-animal relationships. Girls that entered into marriage early could expect a reprieve from their relationship with their husband at first menarche when they would only be allowed to visit with a few females and would instead be expected to work on animal skins to the exclusion of all other practice. Puberty seclusion for girls indirectly involved the management of relationships, decreasing the intensity between female-male and increasing the intensity between human-animal.

The same was true with male rites of passage. These typically occurred later in the boy's life at 15 or 16, at a time when young men may begin to more urgently desire to intensify their relationships with females, but find their attempts frustrated by social norms giving preference to older males as marriage partners. Sending boys out into the woods during this time redirected their focus from establishing a male-female relationship to establishing a productive human-animal one. In both cases the redirection of young people during this time to activities related to establishing and maintaining

human-animal relationships worked to manage and control the intensity of early and developing social and emotional relationships within the community.

Young people were taught from early on how to manage their relationships with people through their relationships with animals. This relationship between humans and animals was not only economic and spiritual, it was also *emotional*. And it was the emotional aspect of these relationships that was also often most predicative of their productive capacity. For example, if a girl did not obey the menstrual taboos the outcome was that the *animals would be angry*, and would not come to the male hunters associated with the unruly girl (Atlla 1989; Nelson 1986; Osgood 1937, 1958). Restricting behavior and distancing youth from the social group during the more unpredictable periods of their adolescence worked to prohibit potentially disruptive and “unruly” behavior from becoming normative. Surviving youth, as well as surviving in general, required the institutionalized redirection of intense emotion into the human-animal relationship. In this way was the indigenous economy an emotional one.

Over the last century the intensity of the human-animal relationship in Northern economies has diminished to the point where the land no longer intervenes on behavior in the same way. Living year-round in the village limits the ability of individuals in these groups to emotionally distance, and centers the intensification of relationships almost exclusively on the human ones. People in the village still live with intensity, or in a state of hyper-arousal, an adaptive and necessary condition when living a survival existence on the land. The difference is that in the village there are now fewer outlets for redirecting this intensity. The human-animal relationship served to manage strong feelings, reducing the focus on the human relationships within the social group by taking the intensity of emotions experienced within social relationships out on the land. It is highly possible then that when the relationship between humans and animals became less emotionally charged, others such as the male-female relationships became more intensely so.

The ethnographic literature documenting the changes in aboriginal lifestyles across Alaska suggests that the major “problems of youth” in the village today reflect this transition away from an indigenous emotional economy managed through human-animal

relationships. Youth in the village are still socialized to respond to the unpredictable and potentially dangerous aspects of their environment. Socialization of young boys in the village continues to reflect the perspectives developed in the long term context of a hunting culture, with a present-focused time perspective and tendency towards risk-taking and immediate reward-seeking behavior (Kruger, Reichel and Zimmerman 2008). Often what happens today in the village is that the strong feelings that come from living in a state of hyper-arousal such as excitement, alertness and fear now find no other outlet or intervention and are channeled into the relationships and activities available in the village rather than those on the land. This would explain the development and presence of some of the more commonly observed problems of youth that have come to represent the everyday life and culture of the vill. These almost universally include substance abusing behavior, suicidality, interpersonal violence and social misconduct. Each of these “problems” indicates youth living with intensity but without the necessary social controls and local interventions meant to contain it.

Data from the , the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (<http://www.anthc.org/ref/hs>), the State of Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics (<http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/bvs/data/default.htm>), the State Department of Health and Social Services (<http://hss.state.ak.us/dbh/resources/publications.htm>), and the Institute of Social and Economic Research at the University of Alaska Anchorage (<http://www.iser.uaa.alaska.edu/Home/ResearchAreas/statusaknatives.htm>) indicate a pattern of health and mental health disparity that is distinct from that of the non-Native Alaskan population, and the U.S. baseline population. These data show that there have been significant shifts in type and prevalence of certain social problems that indicate a more complex cultural process at work than a response-to-contact-model would allow.

According to these data, suicide continues to be a leading cause of death for Alaska Natives, ranked fifth among Alaska Natives statewide for the years 1999-2001 (Goldsmith et al. 2004), and is the second leading cause of death in northwest and southwest Alaska for individuals 19-34.

Suicide rates in Alaska are among the highest in the nation with an average annual rate of 20.9 per 100,000, twice the national average of 10.6 for every 100,000. According to the State of Alaska, Suicide Prevention Council

(<http://www.hss.state.ak.us/suicideprevention>) Alaska Natives experience suicide rates that are four times the national average. In rural Alaska, suicide rates are twice that of urban Alaska with an estimated annual average of 40 for every 100,000 compared to 14 for 100,000 for the urban areas (Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics 2005). Three-quarters of Alaska Natives who commit suicide are young, unmarried males between the ages of 15-24 (State of Alaska Suicide Prevention Council 2007). Alaska Native males are four times more likely to die between the ages of 15 and 34 than non-Natives of the same age.

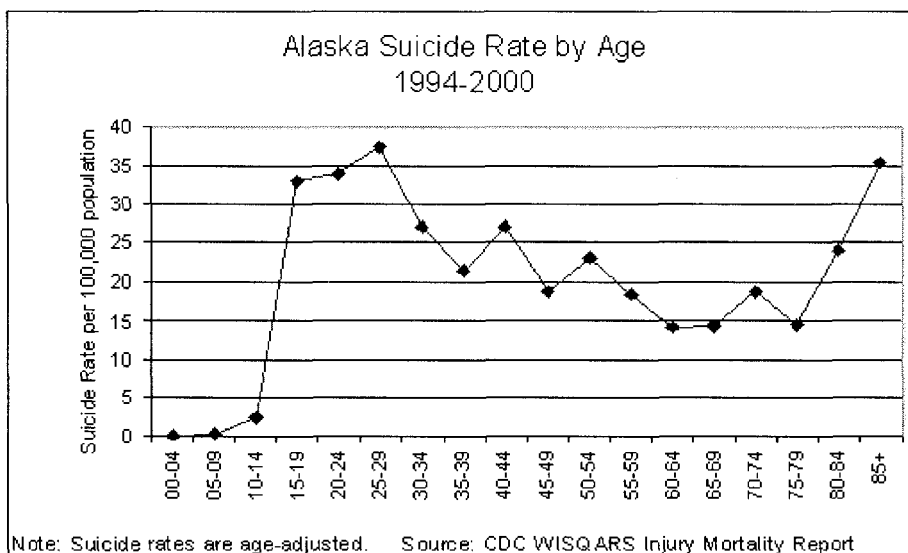


Figure 2: Alaska Suicide Rates by Age

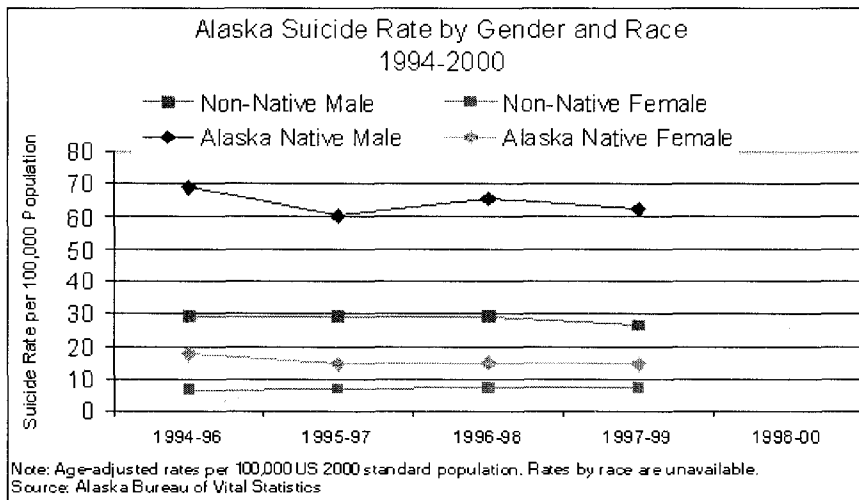


Figure 3: Alaska Suicide Rates by Gender and Race

Alaska Native females between the ages of 19-24 attempt suicide and are hospitalized for it at a far greater rate than Native males, and non-Native females and non-Native males (Fig. 4).

Accidents are a leading cause of death among Alaska Natives, ranking 3rd or 4th in every rural census area. Alaska Natives are twice as likely to die of accidental death from drowning, motorized vehicle crashes, fire or smoke inhalation and unintentional poisoning than non-Native Alaskans. Alcohol and drug overdose are the most common types of unintentional poisonings and alcohol is the leading factor in accidental deaths in rural Alaska (Goldsmith et al. 2004; Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics 2006)

More than a third of Alaska's prison inmate population is Alaska Native, although they make-up less than a fifth of the State population. Between 1993 and 2002, the number of Alaska Natives in state prisons increased 50 percent, while numbers of non-Native prisoners increased about half that much (Goldsmith et al. 2004).

Alaska Native women are at a much higher risk for domestic violence and sexual assault than other Alaskan women. From 2000-2003, 36 percent of the victims of domestic violence and 44 percent of the victims of sexual assault were Native, although Natives make up less than 16% of the total State population (Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics 2006).

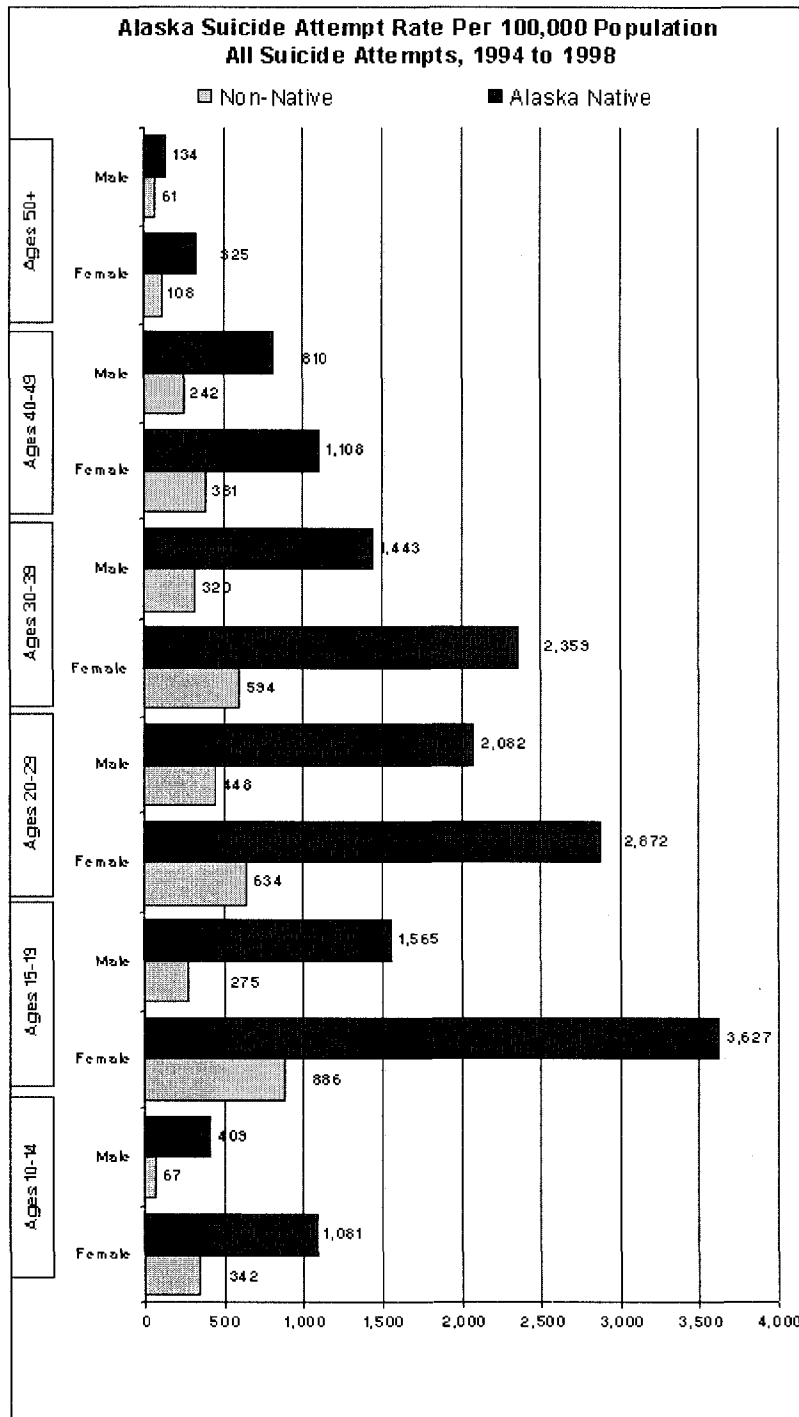


Figure 4: Graph from the State of Alaska, Suicide Prevention Council

In terms of substance use and abuse among Alaska Natives, inhalants have become a widespread problem among teens and children in the rural communities. (Goldsmith et al 2004). Alaska Native youth are more likely than other youth to use marijuana. Marijuana use among Alaska Native students increased from 29 percent in 1995 to 36 percent in 2003. During the same period, marijuana use among non-Native students dropped from 29 percent to 21 percent. Alcohol abuse is several times higher among Alaska Natives than other Alaskans. FASD is five times more common among Alaska Natives than other Alaskans and Americans generally (Goldsmith 2004). According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration, Office of Applied Statistics, alcohol abuse accounts for 90 percent of statewide treatment admissions among Alaska Natives.

Alaska Natives have much higher rates of reported child abuse than other Alaskans. From 1997-2001, Alaska Natives represented 53% of the substantiated cases of child abuse. Whites represented 37.2% of the cases. Out of the Alaska Native cases, 72% were for Neglect and 28% were for Physical and Mental Abuse (Goldsmith et al. 2004).

These data also report some “good news.” It appears that rates of infant mortality are down and life expectancy is up. Since the 1980s, rates of accidental death have decreased by over 40 percent, while still remaining twice that found among other Alaskans. Rates of suicide in some areas, such as in the Yukon-Koyukuk census region, appear to be declining and are at least not increasing since the early 1990s. Suicide rates still remain more than twice those of other Alaskans. Smoking (cigarettes) among Native adolescents is down and teenage pregnancy among Native girls has declined by 20 percent since 1995 but is still twice the rate than among White teenagers. This “good news” is not nearly good enough, and the facts of Native life in the village remain relatively bleak and one-dimensional in their representation.

Taken together, the early ethnographic data from the villages and the recent epidemiological data show a pattern of behavior that has developed and persisted over several generations. The relatively high numbers and the generational depth of certain social behaviors suggest that some of these are now cultural norms based on local

adaptations to settlement life. But there have been no descriptive studies done to examine the relationship between the culture of the village, the experience of growing up and coming of age in the village, and the social production of the “problems” characteristic of Alaska Native villages. This is necessary if we are to understand the ways that young people today survive the village.

1.4 Surviving Emotions

Surviving youth in the village means surviving the emotional motivations of youth. The primary problems of youth in the village, such as social misconduct, substance abuse and suicide reflect the intensity of emotions insufficiently managed by culture. All of these problems of youth have at their heart young people motivated by their feelings. Feelings are what move us into action; they are the cause, as well as the outcome of all human experience (Rosaldo, 1980). Emotions are those measurable “variables” that indicate relationships on an “experience-near” level and culture from an “experience-distant” one (Geertz 1973: 55-56).

Culture is what controls emotion in everyday life so that feelings do not intrude upon “productive” action (Levy 1984: 408). The relative success of culture to control emotion can be seen through external indicators such as relationships between individuals in the community and their level of “productivity.” Earlier ethnographic works by Irving Hallowell (1955) and Jean Briggs (1970) established the central importance of controlling emotion in aboriginal everyday interaction for social stability and survival.

Hallowell focused his work on the psychosocial processes of American Indian groups in the subarctic regions. Hallowell actively sought the indigenous representations of mind, emotion and self using Native terms and concepts to represent more traditional Western psychological processes. He found that “anxiety” is the most salient feeling in the Northern Ojibwa “behavioral environment.” Ojibwa individuals are often preoccupied with fear and paranoia regarding the motivations of others in their social group. This perpetual anxiety in everyday life worked to repress anger and hostilities towards others. He characterized Ojibwa emotional life as anxious and fearful. He went on to conclude that this was one of the reasons that substance abuse had become endemic to Ojibwa

society upon the introduction of alcohol. Alcohol provided an outlet that relieved anxiety and allowed expressive behavior. This idea will be explored more thoroughly in Chapter 3. Hallowell's work is noted here as one of the primary works on the economizing of emotion in Native life.

Jean Briggs' (1970) *Never in Anger* is another landmark contribution to this field. Briggs found that, "emotional control is highly valued among Eskimos, indeed the maintenance of equanimity under trying circumstance is the essential sign of maturity, of adulthood." She states early on that emotional control is necessary for life to sustain in Utku, an Inuit settlement in the Central Canadian Arctic, because equanimity between family members and close neighbors ensures productivity and reduces interpersonal stress. Briggs does not go on to question whether or not "anger" is even a salient emotion for the Utku. Instead the marked absence of real expressions of "anger" as it is defined in Western culture, is attributed to the Eskimo's proficiency at completely controlling it. Thus, Briggs assumes that Eskimos experience anger in the same way as she as a Western person does; the difference is they have learned to mask it in a way that Briggs herself has not. Briggs along with Hallowell would argue then that some emotions such as "anger" exist among Native people in a similar form and fashion as they do among non-Natives, only they are more thoroughly controlled. At the same time other emotions such as loneliness for the Utku or anxiety for the Ojibwa find heightened expression in these cultures as compared with non-Native cultures.

Briggs (1970: 202) found that loneliness among the Utku and other Eskimos is of central concern. "Loneliness," she argues, "seems somehow the essence of unpleasantness. It is a feeling often complained of and one that people are solicitous, by visiting, to prevent those that they care for from suffering" (Briggs 1970: 203). Briggs could not entirely understand the preoccupation with and avoidance of feelings of loneliness among the Utku. Loneliness was just "somehow" glossed with all that is unpleasant, the affective correlate to the isolation of the group environmentally.

These more universalist theories of indigenous emotion were challenged by the work of Michelle Rosaldo (1980, 1984). Rosaldo conducted research with the Ilongot of

Northern Luzon in the Philippines with the primary intention of studying the, by then, culturally defunct practice of 'head-hunting' among young aboriginal men. Rosaldo was eager to find the 'real' explanation for the seemingly brutal practice of killing and beheading individuals from rival tribes that marked a young man's entrance into marriageable status. Try as she might, she could not come up with a convincing interpretation of the practice that was resonant with cultural ideals and beliefs. Instead what she found was that,

Men went headhunting... because of their emotions. Not gods, but 'heavy' feelings were what made men want to kill; in taking heads they could aspire to 'cast off' an 'anger' that weighted down on and oppressed their saddened 'hearts.' (Rosaldo, M. 1980: 19)

Instead of filing this away as the 'Native interpretation,' Rosaldo accepted the Ilongot explanation as the basis for her analysis. To this end she focused on, "the emotional language Ilongots used in explaining how and why such violent deeds engage their interests," because, as she goes on, "it is clear that the meanings Ilongots find in taking heads is inseparable from their ideas of 'heart' and 'anger'" (Rosaldo, M. 1980: 27). Rosaldo's work is groundbreaking not only in her elevation of Native explanation to empirical theory in anthropology, but because she, for the first time, did not take for granted how 'anger' and other emotion concepts are *experienced* by Ilongots.

Rosaldo argues that anger is not experienced or expressed in the same way as it is among Western peoples. "Anger" is a Western concept that explains a way of feeling and behaving that is based on the norms and standards of these societies. Rosaldo argued that we should not use Western or English translations for aboriginal emotions because this assumes a universal experience of emotions. Rosaldo argues that "anger" among Ilongots is more accurately expressed as "heart," or even better through the Ilongot term, *liget*, which encompasses processes similar to Western concepts of "energy/anger/passion" (Rosaldo, M. 1980: 29-30).

Liget is not simply the Ilongot version of "anger." She argues that Ilongot emotions differ not just in language or expression but in the actual experience of the emotion. Ilongot men do things different from men in other societies because their

feelings provide them with, “a way of understanding the significance of disturbing feats of force for daily interactions” (Rosaldo, M. 1980: 27). In other words, Ilongot men headhunt because it would feel bad not to. There is a type of emotional socialization that occurs in every society through ongoing interactions beginning very early on in life (Briggs 1970; Markus and Kitayama 2001). Feelings are both produced and managed through these interactions. Rosaldo adds to this the mechanism whereby young people feel out their social worlds, learning early on to negotiate the complex relationship between internal states and external action.

Rosaldo was not able to fully explicate her theory of emotion in culture, but others have carried her work forward. Catherine Lutz’ (1998) analysis of “fago” follows directly from Rosaldo’s theoretical base. Lutz found that *fago* is used among Ifaluk to express or gloss feelings that are defined in the West separately as “love” “compassion” or “sadness.” These distinctions of *fago* are not culturally relevant among Ifaluk, instead *fago* is not so much a state that one *is* at a particular time, but more a condition that implies certain meanings within a social context. “Fago is used to alert others to the strength of particular relationships, to talk about the pain involved in the severance of those relations by death or travel, and to signal a readiness to care for another” (Lutz 1998: 121). To examine *fago* among the Ifaluk one must begin with an examination of those relationships that matter to people, and just how they matter, and the kinds of actions that are needed to maintain these relationships. Lutz’s work demonstrates the social production of emotions, moving people in culture from interaction to action.

Another contemporary of Rosaldo is Theresa O’Neill (1996, 2004). O’Neill went out to the Flathead reservation in Montana to examine the role of “depression” in indigenous emotional life and social history. Similar to Briggs’ work among the Inuit, Theresa O’Neill (1996: 136-137) found that “loneliness” was a salient emotion among the Flathead people she worked with on the reservation. But O’Neill found that loneliness was more than just a local way of talking about “depression” on the reservation. Instead she argues, “loneliness implicates an entirely unique, cultural, social, and psychological order of belonging, interdependence, reciprocity, compassion, and historical being” (O’Neill

2004: 223). She distinguishes between three types of loneliness: “feeling bereaved”, “feeling aggrieved”, and “feeling worthless.” Each of these feeling states motivated different types of actions from individuals experiencing them. Individuals feeling bereaved would be motivated into actions to express their grief. Contemporary Flathead society provides formal ways to express grief and experience loss. Individuals feeling aggrieved would often be motivated by their prolonged or unremitting feelings of loneliness due to loss or trauma in their lives. Individuals who are feeling aggrieved would often begin to experience symptoms of clinical depression as outlined in the DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association 2000). Finally, feeling worthless is often what is described as the “cause” of social problems on the Flathead reservation including substance use, suicide and violence. An individual who feels worthless is more likely to be motivated into these actions.

The loneliness experience for Flathead individuals is mediated by a variety of other factors, with cultural expectations and social norms playing a key role in mitigating the experience. For example, O’Neill (1996, 2004) found that the experience of loneliness, like the experience of depression, can lead to an increased risk for certain behaviors such as suicide, interpersonal violence and substance abuse for Flathead individuals, but that loneliness, unlike the Western construct of depression, does not necessarily indicate pathology or psychological deviance. In fact, there are certain instances in Flathead social life that anticipate the experience of “feeling bereaved” and “feeling aggrieved,” and pathology may be more rightly associated with the absence of these feelings. O’Neill points out the potential mental health implications when particular ways of feeling, such as “depressed,” become associated with particular ways of being, like “Indian.” O’Neill argues that Native identity today involves, at its center, the shared experience of hardship, trauma and suffering. Being Native means that you have experienced hard times, particularly during childhood, and the collective trauma is a powerful force not just for experiencing individuals, but also for collective social bodies (see also e.g. Scheper-Hughes 1994).

In the Alaska Native villages the aboriginal mechanisms for managing emotions have changed, shifting the balance between internal state and external action. Athabascan socialization practices are no longer based on managing behaviors and emotions on the land, through the human-animal relationships. Young people in the village no longer grow-up learning how to manage their feelings through the indigenous emotional economy. People in the villages still exist on the very edge of survival, but the terms have changed such that one must now learn how to survive the hazards of the heart.

This dissertation is an ethnographic study of the affective lives of Athabascan youth growing up and coming of age in the Native villages today. I will attempt to answer a desperate question posed to me on the edge of the Bering Sea: what is going on with the youth today? I will do this by examining what motivates Athabascan youth in the villages into action. This dissertation is based on a research project funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (1R34MH073601-01), titled *Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska*. My role on this project was as the lead ethnographer and program director. Our aims for the research included a descriptive analysis of childhood and youth in the village to determine Athabascan models of children's mental health, along with a descriptive analysis of local ways of intervening on youth in the village. Findings from the research indicate a set of primary *emotion schemas* guiding the behavior and actions of youth in the villages. The emotion schemas of youth in the village today are based on the consolidation and intensification of aboriginal emotions unmanaged through the transition from a subsistence to a settlement life.

I have chosen to use Lutz's (1987: 293-294) concept of "emotion schemas" as the primary unit of analysis to reveal Athabascan emotional decision-making processes. Lutz posited that a generalized sequencing of emotion and action response could be constructed socially rather than psychologically. She describes how the experience of emotion is formalized through the sequential structure of cultural 'emotion schemas' that move from the social event to the emotion, to the action response. Lutz provided ethnographic examples of emotion schemas for suicide among the Ifaluk in Micronesia. She found for example, that a rule violation (event) could lead to justifiable anger

(emotion) which could lead to suicide (action), or that being observed in failure (event) could lead to shame/embarrassment (emotion) which could lead to suicide (action).

Working from a similar theory, Michael Kral, a psychologist and anthropologist working among Canadian Inuit in Nunavut, has spent the last decade attempting to uncover the “cultural schema” of suicide within these groups (Kral 1994, 1998; Kral and Dyck 1995). “Cultural schemas,” Kral and Dyck (1995: 203) argue, “allow us to organize our worlds according to prototypical event sequences.” These will vary by culture, history and environment. Individuals from different cultural backgrounds will possess different underlying organizational patterns for feeling and action response. So when we are attempting to understand what motivates human actions such as suicide, we must understand that the, “specific act of suicide is moderated by one’s more general attitudes toward it.” Kral challenges mental health researchers to understand the underlying personal and cultural conditions producing the behavior in a society. Understanding the cultural schema of suicide among Inuit is one of the first steps towards breaking the pattern of the behavior. Cultural schemas reveal how culture is internalized and how emotions, produced within social interaction, are transformed into individual action (Kral 1998: 229).

The emotion schemas of youth in *Yookkene* reveal how Athabascan *feeling-states* are socially constructed (e.g. Wierzbicka 1999). The term “feeling state” is often used by anthropologists instead of the term “disorder” to describe the process through which culture mediates the behavioral environment and emotional experiences of individuals in a social group (Kleinman and Good 1985: 40). So for example, exploring “depression” as a feeling state rather than a disorder takes into account the more universal experience of distress and the human responses to it through time and space (Keyes 1980: 154-155).

Through the research conducted with Athabascan youth in the village, I have identified four primary emotion schemas motivating youth into action. The following table lists the emotion schemas emically in one column with the corresponding etic terminology for the most common behavioral problems associated with each emotion schema in the other column (e.g. Goodenough 1970). The approximation sign (~) is used

to indicate that the emotion states and emotional actions in the emic column are related, but not in a precisely causal way. Their relationships will be explored later in this work.

Emotion Schemas (Emic)	Behavioral Disorders (Etic)
Fun ~ Boredom ~ Mischief	Juvenile delinquency, conduct disorder
Love ~ Jealousy ~ Fighting (~Hooking-up)	Assault, arrests, teenage pregnancy, STI/STD
Excitement ~ Drama ~ Partying	Substance abuse, arrest, accidents, injury
Loss ~ Lonesomeness ~ Going Crazy	Suicide/suicide attempts, substance abuse

Figure 5: Emotion Schemas of Youth in the Village

These schemas are clusters of related feeling-states that intersect along developmental and experiential lines. Fun, boredom, excitement, jealousy, love and loss are all indexes of emotions, each of which describe a feeling-state of an individual produced within the context of a specific relationship in the village. Mischief, fighting, hooking-up, partying and going crazy are all potential behavioral outcomes of experiencing individuals within and outside of these feeling-states. The emotion schemas of Athabaskan youth in the village are based on the cultural norms, social values and environmental requirements for survival. The emotion schemas describe what is going on with youth in the village using the local terms and explanations of the behaviors. These schemas do not provide causal explanation or describe movement from feeling state into emotional action. These emotion schemas are component parts of an interconnected web of emotional decision-making that forms the basis of social life in the village.

By constructing emotion schemas of youth and mapping them into potential behavioral pathways in the village two things become immediately apparent; first it is not the “delinquency” or the “substance abuse” that is the problem. It is the cultural value placed on having fun and avoiding boredom – or rather it is the emotion schemas motivating the behavior that constitutes the “problems of youth” in the village. It is probable then that interventions based on decreasing juvenile delinquency among youth

in the villages will not effectively mitigate *mischief*. Second, when we break down the behavior into its emotion schemas we can see that these are not actually “new” to the culture or the group. Mischief has been around since Raven’s time. Raven in fact was the original maker of mischief. Mischief has always come with a social cost and was generally not considered appropriate behavior for “real people,” but was allowable to some degree for children and youth. Drama, gossip, jealousy, and lonesomeness are all part of aboriginal emotional life as well. So how did people survive their feelings before? If jealousy and lonesomeness are aboriginal feeling-states why did we not see the same kinds of problems among youth during the first part of this century?

Chapter 1 introduces the village of *Yookkene* and its people by exploring the transition from a land-based aboriginal culture to a village-based one and the implications of this change on the experience of growing up Native. The presentation of three extended narratives of childhood experience; one from an elder, one from an adult and one from a youth, will demonstrate the profound changes that have taken place over a very short period of time. An analysis of the most significant shifts will reveal how the terms of survival in Native life have changed. The adaptive processes engaged within each generation in response to new or transformed social expectations and experiences are examined. The youth today are not on the frontlines of this social change. Instead, they are the first, sometimes second, generation beneficiaries of a village-based Athabaskan culture. The emotional decision-making of youth takes place within this rapidly changing context, and from the cultural conditions and environmental constraints of the vill.

Chapter 2 presents an ethnographic overview of daily life of young people in *Yookkene*. Living in the village involves a fairly limited but highly elaborated set of social activities locally adapted to a settlement context. Playing out, hanging out, riding around, playing sports, going to school, hunting and fishing, and going to camp are the main activities that produce “fun” in a village context. Having fun is a primary motivation for children and youth. *Fun* is a socially produced feeling-state in the village (see Lutz 1987; White 1990). Youth in the villages are motivated to have fun to avoid

boredom. Boredom is a local way of talking about culturally aversive feelings that are generally produced by the lack of fulfilling or productive social activity. Children and younger youth are motivated *fun* and boredom to engage in *mischievous*. This is the primary emotional decision-making for this age group in the village.

Chapter 3 explores the role of *partying* in the affective lives of youth in *Yookkene*. Partying is a common social activity in the villages among older youth (>18). Partying involves the use of alcohol and other drugs in a social setting. Partying is one of the primary means through which young people of a particular age set can interact as a social group. Partying is a primary form of village *excitement* both for partiers and non-partiers. Partying creates *drama* and drama is the captivating force that keeps everyone connected through gossip. Substance abuse in the village reflects the emotional decision-making among youth in the village who are motivated by the *excitement* and *drama* that is produced by *partying*. Partying is a way of “*being wild*” within the domestic context of the village. Partying reproduces the “wildness” of the land in the village by introducing unpredictability and risk in relationships and creates “survival” situations for those involved.

Chapter 4 examines the central importance of *relationships* for young people in the village. Adolescents and youth spend the majority of their time engaged in social interactions with peers. Intergenerational relationships, such as those with parents or grandparents, are highly valued but are fewer and often less intensely engaged in youth. Peer relationships include those with siblings, friends and boyfriends/girlfriends. Every aspect of social life in the village is associated with relationship rules. Relationships in the village are motivated by and sustained by *love*. Rules for living and rules for loving commingle in the contemporary village context. Being loved is the most valued and desired feeling-state that has the greatest constructive and destructive force for individuals. *Jealousy* is a response that is produced by loving too much or not being loved enough. These feelings can occur in any type of close relationship in the village but are most commonly associated with *girlfriends* (female-female and male-female). The

relationships between youth in the village reveal an emotional decision-making process based on *love* and *jealousy* that produces *fighting* and *hooking-up*.

Chapter 5 describes the experience of *loss* in the lives of young people growing up the village. Villages are places where people represent the scarcest resource and each individual is highly valued for what they can contribute or potentially contribute to others in the community. Loss represents the termination of a relationship. Losing a relationship through death or break-up can be even more devastating to those with already limited social networks and can cause *lonesomeness*, the most culturally undesirable feeling-state for Athabaskan youth in the village. The villages are small and geographically isolated places where options for mentors, mates and friends are restricted. Losing a best friend, boyfriend/girlfriend or social support to death or through break-up might present the need to go outside the village to create new relationships to replace ones lost. Opportunities to go outside are likewise limited or undesirable; and loss can prove to be an overwhelming experience for some and is the primary motivation for *going crazy* in the village. Going crazy can involve self-harm and harm to others. Suicide and suicide attempts in the village reflect the emotional decision-making of youth who experience *loss* and *lonesomeness* and sometimes *go crazy*.

Finally, Chapter 6 charts the emotional landscape of youth with an *emotional map of the village*. The emotion schemas of youth provide a local explanation of what is going on with the youth, and the emotional map provides a local explanation of how youth move from emotion to action. In an emotional economy individuals must adapt strategies for *surviving feelings*. In the indigenous emotional economy survival was largely based on the relationships individuals had with the animals (see Chapter 1). This chapter will return to this concept and provide support for the existence of an indigenous emotional economy using evidence from Athabaskan oral traditions. With the transition from the land to the village survival was no longer fundamentally dependent on the relationships that individuals had with the animals. Survival in the village was always at least equally dependent on the nature of the relationships that the individual had within the social group. Mapping the emotional landscape of youth in the village demonstrates the shift of

the indigenous emotional economy from an emphasis on ecological relationships to an emphasis on village social relationships.

The conclusion suggests areas of further research and application for the findings presented in this analysis. These include: 1) focused and collaborative research on indigenous emotions and the role of emotions as motivations for action in Alaska Native communities; 2) creation of a village-based emotion index; 3) examination of how emotions map onto the social structure of village life and relate to status and power; 4) development of an Athabascan emotional decision-making model for youth in the village; 5) development of village-based intervention strategies utilizing the concept of village-based emotion schemas.

1.5 Surviving the Anthropology of Youth and Emotions

Not everyone in the village survives their feelings. When it is a young person that does not survive it can be particularly devastating to a small, interrelated group of people who must struggle to come to terms with the loss. It is in this context that I have come to ask the question: what happens when research becomes a matter of life and death? The short answer that I have come to now know is: you do anthropology. But this was not as apparent to me as I began a Ph.D. program in cultural anthropology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

I had just completed an M.A. in anthropology at Western Washington University working with my “home tribe” out on the Lummi reservation. I had worked for the Lummi Indian Business Council on issues primarily related to cultural patrimony and repatriation (Rasmus 2002). I had listened to my elders tell me that it was of critical importance to protect the things of the past for the future generations. I accepted this then and still do now, but I wondered about those young people living today. Maybe it was because I was part of that generation and had struggled as young people everywhere do with certain issues coming of age, and I could not help but feel dissatisfied with the answers to the “problems of youth” on the reservation. I could not accept that a return to “culture” was going to work for young Natives, because they have a culture of their own already. I knew it because I had just barely survived it myself. But I was in no position to

do anything with this hypothesis. I was younger then, without voice, a not-quite-Native that could leave the reservation at the end of the day. And at the end of my graduate program, I did just that.

I left for Alaska with the intent of not working with Native Americans anymore. Anyone who says that it is easier working with your “own people” is *crazy*. There are certain things that may initially seem easier, such as establishing rapport and navigating social norms, but then things quickly become much more complicated due to the excess baggage brought in by a researcher with claims to a shared identity. Furthermore, I was interested in the culture of substance use and abuse, and this is an issue fraught with ambivalence and politics in Native North America. I was determined to seek out a place where I would have no chance of discovering myself in the midst of the “others.” Okay, so that was naïve, and soon after beginning my program at UAF, I became involved in *The People Awakening Project*, a National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA, 1RO1 AA 11446-03) study of Alaska Native pathways to sobriety (Mohatt et al. 2004; Mohatt et al 2008; Rasmus, Atuk, Orr and Mohatt 2004).

I worked on the project for a couple of years and then funding ran out and our first few attempts at renewal funding were unsuccessful. As a research assistant on the project I traveled out to twelve Yup’ik villages in Southwest Alaska. The project director of the study was an anthropologist who had previously conducted fieldwork in this region. While traveling out to the villages and conducting the data collection for this project, it became clear that there were aspects of the research that worked better than others, and some parts that did not seem to work at all. The open-ended life history interviewing that was conducted as part of the qualitative and exploratory part of the project elicited the richest, and in my estimation the most *useful*, data. The main limitation here was that there was no context for the life histories. They were stories disembodied from their source, and it was difficult at times to make sense of the meanings of certain experiences in people’s lives without knowledge of where and how they lived.

Despite this limitation, the life histories of non-drinking Alaska Natives demonstrate how sobriety stories have become part of the contemporary oral tradition of Alaska Native groups throughout the state (Mohatt and Rasmus 2005). The indigenous oral tradition of alcohol emphasizes the cultural force of drinking and *non-drinking* in the social life of Alaska Natives (e.g. Hensel, Haakenson and Mohatt 2004). Each status carries with it deep consequence and meaning. The fact that non-drinking is as complex and intentional as drinking demonstrates how the relationship between Alaska Natives and alcohol has taken on deep cultural significance. By the end of this project, I felt like we had more questions than answers, but the questions were getting better and truer.

These short trips to the villages in southwest Alaska had only fueled my lonesomeness for living a Native life. On one of my last trips out to Bethel, I was introduced to the director of behavioral health at the regional Native health corporation. She had indicated that there would be work available in the villages if I wanted it. I decided to follow-up with her offer and was placed in a clinical position at one of the sub-regional clinics. I had been taking graduate courses in the community psychology program at UAF, thinking I was going to jump disciplinary ships, and this position served as an internship and immersion into the world of mental health service delivery in rural Alaska.

I lasted 21 months. During these 21 months I responded to seven suicides in one community of 790 people. Six of these suicides were of young people under the age of 24. I also responded to four accidental drowning deaths. Three of these were of young people under 19 years old. Two of the cases involved drinking. And then there was the near constant response to youth being suicidal in the villages. It got to a point where I would see the lights of a “snowgo” (the locally preferred name for a “snowmachine” or “snowmobile”) or 4-wheeler through our clinic-adjacent apartment window and I would stop whatever I was doing and run, heart-racing to stare out. There I would stand, waiting for the phone to ring, or the steady stream of 4-wheelers and snowgos to begin, all signals that something bad had happened and I would be called to respond. Finally, with the suicide of a 14-year-old boy from the village I had come to most deeply love, and from a

family I knew well, I realized I had no more responses left. Save one. I could try and find out what was going on with the young people.

This is exactly what I was asked to do at a community resource meeting in the village where the suicides were occurring. I had developed a good and trusting relationship with the tribal administrator of this village and it was his feeling that more work needed to be done on the problems of youth in the village, to find out what their lives were like. He and others on the tribal council acknowledged that little is known about the younger generations by the older generations and vice versa. The gap in the village had become all but impassable over the last 20 to 30 years. Young people were dying and nobody knew why. It was at this meeting that I realized I had something better to offer the communities than a response; maybe I could offer an answer.

Unfortunately, where life and death can happen very quickly, research most often moves very slowly. I had kept in contact with certain members of the psychology department at UAF for support and guidance while I was living in the villages. I called one of them when I got back from this meeting, and he and I started talking about a grant to get some immediate localized support in place for these villages. At this same time, I also received a call from another member of the psychology department who had received a request for proposals related to children's mental health in Alaska Native communities. Both prospects offered a chance for answers to the life and death questions being asked of me in the village and I went back to Fairbanks to renew my relationship with research and assert my alter-identity as an anthropologist.

I have a longstanding love-hate relationship with anthropology. I love what it is, and hate what it is not. I love that it is the most "human" way of doing science. Anthropologists learn about life and behavior by observing and participating in it. They use their own bodies and senses as instruments for assessing and understanding other people and other practices, beliefs, traditions and behaviors (Denzin and Lincoln 1998). Anthropology can be non-reductionist, anti-positivist and irritatingly relativist. Anthropologists can keep it real. Among these are works by Philippe Bourgois (2003), Jean Briggs (1970), Michelle Rosaldo (1980), Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1979; 1991), and

Unni Wikan (1990). All of these works in some way maintain that fundamental humanness of the human condition in ways that feel real. Through these works you can relate to the people and their problems, no matter if they are smilingly inscrutable Balinese women or sexually stymied Irish bachelors or rapacious crack dealers in East Harlem. Sometimes anthropologists can keep it too real, and their products reveal things that are private or sacred or have the potential for misuse by non-benevolent outsiders (e.g. Benedict 1946; Castenada 1970; Chagnon 1968).

Sometimes anthropology can also be too unreal such as when a single cultural “fact” comes to stand as metaphor for a theory of humankind or *culture-kind* (Bateson 1958; Geertz 1980; Levi-Strauss 1983). I hate it when anthropology loses its humanness. I think when it does, it loses its ability to effect change or relate directly to the people living the culture that is being explained away. It also makes people question the intentions of anthropologists. Why provide a window into a way of life only to have the blinds shut by the person on the outside?

Interestingly, the reasons anthropologists gave for describing the cultures of Native North America have historically been described in terms of life and death. Franz Boas (1897, 2004) and Lewis Henry Morgan (1962) both stated that it was of critical importance to document as much as possible about the aboriginal life ways on the North American continent as the Native peoples were destined to vanish from disease, genocide and assimilation. Boas, in particular, felt the problem most urgent and encouraged his students to conduct their research among those groups closest to this edge of extinction (Kroeber 1976, Mead 1941, Benedict 1934, Sapir 1909 are several examples among many others engaging in this type of salvage ethnography). When anthropologists realized that the Native peoples were not going to vanish, they began instead to work on describing the culture that was “left over” from the colonial era. This was done with the life and death urgency of protecting traditional land and resource bases that were being stripped away during the Indian policy era in the United States (1830s-1950s). Without these resources there would not even be any Native “left-overs” hanging around, and the aboriginal cultures would, once again, cease to exist. In the following decades many

anthropologists working in North America would focus on explaining what is Native about Native culture in the contemporary world (e.g. Ackerman 1996; Miller 1997). This was often accomplished by ignoring certain segments of the population or certain everyday practices. The aim appeared to be to convince others that Native people were still alive and worth “saving.”

Explaining the relationship between old and new ways has been a cornerstone of anthropological scholarship in Alaska as well. One would think from a review of the ethnographic literature from the 1960s and 1970s that these populations could no longer be vital; how could another generation survive the rapid changes and social disruption accompanying this change? We have been asking this question ever since Boas first tolled the death knell for the Native North American in the later half of the 19th century. But have we ever really attempted to answer the question?

Not really. Instead, we continue to “hunt for tradition,” by searching for some other aspect of Native life “unchanged,” or at the very least clearly and firmly rooted in aboriginal ways (e.g. Fienup-Riordan 2000). This scholarly trope is the academic version of “6-Degrees of Kevin Bacon;” only it’s the “6-degrees of Traditional Culture,” where everything contemporary can be related back to “traditional culture” in six or fewer chapters. What often occurs in this game is that you eventually forget where you started, and it doesn’t even really matter because it all ends with Bacon, and that’s what everyone really wants anyway. While it is, of course, true, that contemporary life is always related to past practices and beliefs, the relationship is always complex and reductionist explanations are invariably too simple. In the meantime, Native people and Native cultures will continue to exist, and not as “left-over” *survivals* but rather as fully realized *survivors*.

It is this capacity for survival and adaptation that I now give as the rationale for explaining culture in this study. If we can answer the question of how Native people survive, maybe we can get closer to understanding those that somehow cannot. Natives are survivors, and they always have been. In the Alaska, and the Northern communities more generally, survival greatly intensifies everyday life. There were times in these

regions when making it through each day required a test of one's ability to survive. Living this close to the edge has long been a part of traditional culture in the North. It is a source of pride, Native pride, to be able to survive life under these conditions, then and now. Conditions have changed but *surviving* remains a central value among Alaska Natives.

Surviving is something all people of all cultures do, but in different ways. Surviving means something different in an Alaska Native context. *Surviving* is not just something that you *do* when necessary, it is something that you must *be* at all times. This is how it was explained to me by members of the community experiencing such devastating losses in Southwest Alaska. Elders brought into the schools to speak to the youth about suicide or loss would always speak about survival on the land. They would say that young people need to learn how to survive on the land. They need to get back out on the edge of the ice to learn how to not fall in. But what if the edge is no longer out on the ice? What if the edge is right in the village, and the elders just cannot see it? How then to stop youth from falling in? It would make sense that if land-based survival culture is so highly valued in Alaska that village-raised Natives would create a *survival culture* of their own.

It was the amazing ability of people in the villages to survive that became the basis for this research. Even during the hardest times in the villages, the people would dance. They would sing through sorrow, laugh through loneliness, tease through tears, hunt through heartache; and within this experience of surviving together the people grew stronger and became more *real*. I would like to think that I did as well.

I did not go back to that Yup'ik village to do the research I had planned. It became clear that a service grant would make more sense for the communities in Southwest Alaska and this was the type of funding that was most immediately available. There was also the ethical issue of doing exploratory research with populations experiencing profound health disparity and social disruption. Communities such as these may be willing to do anything to address the dire needs of the people and may not be in a position to give fully informed consent to participate. The goal became about getting the

communities stabilized so they are in a position to participate as more equal partners in the research process. I remained convinced that research was the answer to the life and death questions and chose the project that would allow me to be an anthropologist for the first time in my graduate career.

I began work as Project Director of a study funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, *Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health Research in Alaska* (Koverola, C. PI, 1R34MH073601-01), in July of 2005. The project had two specific aims. The first was to develop a culturally-based definition of "children's mental health" in Athabascan villages based on local norms and values. This aim was designed to get at local ideas of what constitutes a healthy child and positive childhood experience. This would test the hypothesis that standards of health and wellbeing may be culturally conditioned such that assessment tools and intervention strategies that work in one culture or context may not work well in another. To effectively intervene one must first understand the nature of the problem. As I have shown, there have been few attempts to explore the localized and cultural aspects of the "problems of youth" in the villages. Universal standards of what indicates a healthy child have been used to assess young people in the villages of Alaska. The disproportionately high rates of disorder among Alaska Natives may stem from the application of culturally-biased ideas of what constitutes "normal" or "healthy" childhood behavior.

Our second aim was to describe a village-based intervention strategy known as *Wellness Teams* that were present in some communities in the Interior of Alaska. This aim was developed to test the hypothesis that locally grown services would be more responsive to culturally-based norms and values, and would therefore find greater success in reaching children and families than outside service providers. The idea to study Wellness Teams as a grassroots social movement came out of our initial collaboration with members of a SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Association) program that was based in the Athabascan villages where we proposed to do research. This collaboration led to our establishing relationships with two Athabascan villages in

the Interior of Alaska. One community had a long established and currently active Wellness Team, and the other had a more recently established Wellness Team.

Our aims came out of a collaborative process between several organizations with members representing each organization. As we developed the research plan our research team composition shifted to best represent the groups involved. The research team was comprised of members of the university, Fairbanks Native Association, and the participating Native villages. We also had outside consultants to provide expertise in areas of qualitative health research and community-based participatory research with indigenous communities. The research methodology that was proposed was entirely qualitative and ethnographic. There was no existing research on how Wellness Teams actually worked, and very little data available on Athabascan childhood and youth (an exception is Wallis 2002). The decision of the research team was to have the research be field-based. The critique from our Native research team members was that researchers never stay long enough in the communities to really know what Native life is like. They also felt that surveys and quantitative measures do not capture experience, and are not consistent with Athabascan ways of communicating and learning. They wanted us to just talk with people in the community, and see how things were done for ourselves.

The research questions posed by the team were clearly the turf of psychology, but the proposed research methods were a lot more like anthropology. So our team took on another level of diversity to include both anthropologists and psychologists. I was brought on to be the ethnographer and project director for the research. I would receive mentorship from Kim Hopper, a medical anthropologist (Hopper 1991, 2004); and Michael Kral, a clinical psychologist and anthropologist (Kral 1998, 2003). I would also receive support from the local Village Research Assistants (VRAs), who functioned as “key informants” in the village as well research team partners.

I spent the first three months of the project developing a field manual that would guide the research from data collection to data analysis (Appendix 1). The field manual was circulated to the research team in sections and the final version was approved by the entire research team prior to the start of the data collection. The research would be

divided into two phases. Phase I involved the primary fieldwork in each participant community. Phase II would involve follow-up visits to each of the communities along with data analysis and write-up. The follow-up visits planned in Phase II proved unnecessary due to the amount of data collected in Phase I. There were many things we did not anticipate at the writing of the field manual because there are few ways to anticipate or “manualize” a fieldwork experience before it happens. We were able to put together guides for interviews, focus groups, observational activities and consents/assents and these remained fairly consistent over the course of the research.

I moved to each community for a period of three to four months. I brought my children out with me to both communities but they would stay for shorter periods of time and I was often out in the villages alone, solely inhabiting the large log homes I rented for my period of residence. I lived in one of the villages for the entire winter and the other for most of the summer and fall. While I was living in the villages I was expected to be as self-sufficient as possible. I had to find childcare for my children. I had to haul oil and trash. I had to somehow acquire the wood necessary to heat my home and then also have it sawed and split; and I had to do these things without the assistance of a vehicle. I became quite dependent on certain individuals in each of the villages to assist me with these everyday tasks.

Because the length of time in each village was relatively short, it was important that I immerse myself into community life as quickly as possible. I attended every public event in the villages including city council, tribal council and school board meetings, Head Start parent meetings (in the village where my child was enrolled), fundraisers, wakes, funerals, potlatches, church services, dances, basketball and baseball games, tournaments and open houses. I visited the homes of elders, made daily check-ins with the VRAs at their respective offices or homes and conducted one-on-one interviews and focus groups. I also participated in social activities such as going to dinner at people’s homes, checking fish nets, berry picking, chicken hunting, working on moose meat, taking snowgo/4-wheeler/truck rides, taking boat rides, taking walks, playing cards, playing Scrabble and just hanging out (watching TV or talking).

Many of the things that I did as part of the ethnographic endeavor also served to satisfy my own human needs to be around other people, eat, engage in physical activity, sustain my household, and so on. And one of the most challenging aspects of this project proved to be the constant negotiation of my multiple roles and identity while in the field. It is very difficult (if not impossible) in a small, kin-based community to construct or maintain a private identity. People are often assigned roles in small communities based on the collective knowledge of who they are, and this is often determined, if not even pre-determined, such as in Yup'ik communities through the conferral of an ancestral name (Morrow and Hensel 1992) by the family they come from. Being an outsider, entering a small community with a kin-based social organization, the reason for your presence in the community automatically becomes an essential quality determining *who you are*.

In both communities, I was introduced as “the researcher” *from* the university. And being “from the university,” like being from Holy Cross, Alaska or being from New York, means that people will have certain expectations regarding the way you should or should not behave and the things you (probably) can and (probably) cannot do. People in these Athabascan communities are generally unfamiliar with anthropological work. The term “research” seemed to call up in people’s minds things like fish counts, surveying, or lots of digging. The idea of hanging out and being a part of the community as part of the research did not fit with people’s expectations of what research is or should be.

I also struggled to balance my own individual roles as researcher, mother, woman, Native, outsider, and friend, to carve out an ethnographic self that I could live with everyday (e.g. Fine 1993). I was also acutely aware that I was being observed as much as I was observing others. This became most apparent in terms of my involvement with young people in the communities. Our specific aim was to understand and describe the normative experience of childhood and youth in the villages. To do this I particularly needed to gain the trust of the young people. This proved tricky, as several anthropologists before me have also noted.

Hongimann (1965), working among Canadian Inuit and Kaska Dene groups, attempted a study of childhood experience but noted that the younger children and

adolescents had “closed social groups” to which he could never gain full access. John O’Neil (1985), also working among Canadian Inuit, had better success gaining access to the private lives of youth, but it came with a cost. O’Neil was chastised by elders on the tribal council for hanging out with youth and engaging in activities with them that were not considered appropriate for him as an adult and as a researcher working on improving the lives of young people. He argued that the only way he could find out what was going on with the young people (the group he was asked to study by the same tribal council that criticized his methods later) was to hangout with them. He said he did not engage in all of the activities that the young people did (abstaining from drug use), but it was clear that his association with them was enough to make people assume that he did.

I experienced a similar reaction to my open association with younger adults in one community. This led to many important decisions, common to the anthropological endeavor, but negotiated differently in each the given culture/context/locale. During my fieldwork experience, these involved decisions related to relationships in the field (informant or friend), gossip and social control, drinking and socializing, sex and sexuality, and insider/outsider identity dilemmas.

1.5.1 Relationships in the field

Franz Boas wrote this letter in 1897 to the Kwaguilth First Nations:

Friends: I am Mr. Boas who is speaking to you. I am he whom you called Heiltsaqaolis [he who says the right thing]. It is two winters since I have been with you, but I have thought of you often. You were very kind to me when I was with you, and I always think of your kindness. I am thinking of it, that it is difficult for you to show to the white man in Victoria that you[r] feasts and your potlatches are good, and I have tried to show them that they are good. My friend, George Hunt, will read this to you. He will also read to you what I have told the people in Victoria. I am trying to do the right thing. I am trying to show them that your ways are not bad ways. [April 1897 – letter written by Franz Boas to the Kwaguilth First Nations of British Columbia the year of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition]

From the earliest examples of ethnographic writing we find evidence of the long standing overlap between the roles of “friend” and “informant” in anthropological research. Boas and others had to contend with translation issues when describing their

role and the roles of local people in the research, and *friend* was often used to describe to the relationship of an “informant” to the “researcher.” Also used are teacher, mentor, assistant and guide. Regardless of what they are called, these relationships are the basis of every anthropological effort. The success of an anthropologist’s work is a measure of these relationships. The relationships are so fundamental and intense that they quickly take on other qualities. Anthropologists going to live in other cultures and communities are often dependent on the local people for their own initial survival. After a period of uncertainty, the stray anthropologist will sometimes be taken in by a particular family, and these relationships will closely approximate kinship relations. The anthropologist is no longer a lone researcher, but is aligned with a certain family or lineage. This is not always the choice of the anthropologist (e.g. Briggs 1970), but may instead be a requirement of the community.

It is one major goal of the anthropologist to establish these types of close relationships with local people in the culture/community of study. In our study we built into the VRA position a key informant role. The VRAs, by nature of their role as the primary community representatives on the project, had daily contact with me while I was in the village. My relationships with the VRAs were also quite distinct each from the other. In the first village, I maintained a professional relationship with the VRA, but did not develop a social one. In the second village, my relationship with the VRA took on social and familial qualities from the beginning and progressed along these lines.

Other relationships in the villages flowed from my everyday contacts with people in the community, such as when I would go to the store, or go to church or attend a meeting or basketball game. They also arose directly out of the interview process. Often during or after an interview with an individual, the person would invite me to check out some aspect of the community or culture that they had talked about in the interview. I would often get invited to eat at their home or go out on a snowgo ride, or go check out a party or game, or go check fish net or marten traps. This made sense in the context of the fieldwork interview situation, even as it challenged the conventional boundaries of formal

interviews in other disciplines such as psychology. I accepted some of the invitations and gently refused others.

In each village, the relationships I developed and maintained with local people were as intense and *real* as any other aspect of the local culture. The importance of female-peer dyads in the villages became a finding in the research realized through my own experiences with forging close relationships with women my relative age in the communities. I was sought-out by several women in the villages as a confidant and friend, someone with whom to gossip, ride around, sit together at events, watch movies, and work on meat. I tried initially to maintain all of these relationships, but eventually it became clear that I could not be close friends with all of the women especially as one primary relationship began to eclipse the others. Such relationships are normative in the sense that most of the adult women are paired off with a best friend or “sister,” but my dual role as a researcher caused this relationship to be a point of concern and speculation in the community. I was told (second-hand of course) that there was the growing opinion that I should not be forging this type of relationship with another person in the village because as I was “the researcher,” I was supposed to be there for everyone. My obvious friendship with any one person raised questions of favoritism and potential bias. It caused the following concerns: that I would be a less impartial observer; that, in an unguarded moment, I might reveal to my friend private things others had shared with me; that I would not have time to do things with other local people; and that I would do favors for only my friend and her family.

I talked with trusted advisors in the community about these concerns and was most often told to “not listen” to jealous people. As a person I could have followed this advice, but as a researcher I felt obligated to modify my behavior. I attempted to not visit or see my friend during the day when I was working and to visit others more visibly. Despite these small efforts, I continued to spend the majority of my “free” time with this friend and her family. I did this quite simply because I liked her the most. We had daughters the same age, we had similar goals and life issues, and we shared the same

wicked sense of humor. I would have been her best friend anywhere, but we happened to be in the village.

This was less of an issue in the second village, and this demonstrated again the unpredictable nature of this type of research. Coming out of the experience I could see how having a close relationship caused complications in the research, but made the data collection easier on other levels. Not having close relationships while in the field made the research less problematic, but much lonelier. The emotional needs of the fieldworker are still a taboo subject in most anthropological writings (Kulik and Wilson 1995). This remains so because tales of the fieldworker in the field often do not travel across oceans to reach members of the researcher's home community. This is changing in our ever more wired-world, and researchers will increasingly find themselves confronting their ethnographic selves at home.

1.5.2 Gossip and social control

From the time I landed in the first small community loaded down with my now infamous purple and blue Rubbermaid totes, I was entered into that whispery quick thing called rumor. In my first fieldnote from that same night, after all had gone quiet around us, I wrote:

After arriving under the cover of darkness and being literally whisked away to the house, I realized that I knew nothing of what was outside. The windows revealed only dark and shadows. We couldn't even see the lights of the other houses. Almost anything could be out there. It was strange this false quiet when I know there is teeming social world just a few feet away and in all directions. I wonder when I will be a part of that? I wonder if will?

I was the stranger, I was the odd-thing thrown into a well-established community where everyone has known the other since birth. I knew I would be talked about and I was ready for it (or so I thought).

When I was out in the villages I did and said things that quickly coursed through the community. The local knowledge that any public action or statement will be critiqued by others in the community factors largely into the way people choose to behave and conduct themselves in the villages. People would use gossip to try and influence my

relationships with other people in the village or sometimes to try and curb or change what I did or who I spent time with. In my role as a researcher, I worked to not let the gossip influence my own decisions unduly.

Gossip is a powerful tool for relaying information and exacting social control, and in the villages it functions as a kind of local news network and indigenous justice system. It can easily incapacitate someone unfamiliar with the ebb and flow of it. If I tried to act on everything I “heard” I would be consumed every moment with the eternal climb up and down the local grapevine. If I tried to ignore it too completely I would miss out on what is most important to people in the community at that time (Haviland 1977). Negotiating the gossip taught me much about cultural norms, things I probably would not have learned if I’d stayed out of it.

Once gossip has begun, it can be incredibly difficult to stop. Essentially the object of the discrediting gossip has two options: 1) stop engaging in behaviors that are contributing to rumors (or at least remove the offending behavior from public view); or 2) wait until the gossip becomes “old news,” a local idiom for gossip that has been repeated too many times and has thus lost much of its power.

Our research project did not allow for us to wait out the gossip; we were there for too short a period of time. I was there just long enough to immerse into the local gossip network, and then it was time to leave the community. But in my case, leaving the community meant going back to the regional hub city that serves as an extension of the villages in the interior. So, for purposes of the gossip network and its reach, I never completely left the community. I continued to be speculated about and sometimes censured, with this one difference: I was no longer in a position to undertake corrective action. This is something most anthropologists do not have to deal with. When they leave their host community they are usually separated by a continent or an ocean and the daily lives of the anthropologists in their “natural settings” are hidden. I would have had to end all relationships with any Alaska Natives upon my return to the university to have achieved this sort of anonymity. This was not something I was willing to do. The upside of all of this is that being taken seriously enough to be gossiped about is in many ways a

form of flattery as well. Not all gossip is negative, and the fact that I entered so fully into the local private speak is an indication of the level of immersion I was able to achieve in the community.

1.5.3 Drinking and socializing

Drinking alcoholic beverages is part of sociality in many cultures, and in each the fieldworker must face the choice to participate or to refrain. In some cultures drinking alcohol it is both universally expected and free of negative social consequence. So for example, fieldworkers in Russia or Mexico, where drinking alcohol is socially obligatory and positive, will find their choice to partake an expected one (Eber 1995; Koester 2003). Fieldworkers interested in rituals will often find themselves confronted with the decision to participate in ceremonies or rituals that involve drug use (Aberle 1991; Chagnon 1968). In cases where the substance use is legal and obligatory, fieldworkers will often have to find ways to limit their participation because of risks to themselves and their research.

In Alaska Native villages, and among most Native North American groups in general, drinking is a common and highly social but morally ambivalent activity. Alcohol is strictly regulated in most Alaska Native villages through local option laws (Lonner and Duff 1983). First there is the “dry option,” chosen by some villages in Alaska, where it is illegal to possess and consume alcoholic beverages. Some communities choose a second option, the “damp option,” where it is legal to bring in quotas of alcohol for personal use, but is illegal to buy or sell alcohol in the villages. Finally, there is the “wet option,” where it is legal to both possess and sell alcohol in the village. In “wet” communities, sales are typically through a tribal liquor store. The interior Alaskan villages, where I conducted the research, are damp communities. That means it is legal to bring in a limited amount of alcohol for personal use. Each village had their own local quotas for alcohol importation. In one village the quota was 6 bottles (750 ml) of liquor and 2 cases of beer (or 2 boxes of wine); in the other the quota was 2 bottles and 2 cases. Despite the legality of alcohol possession, drinking in the villages is not generally a public activity, and remains fairly secretive. There are occasions when public drinking is more tolerated,

like when there are tournaments and dances, but in general drinking is a private social activity.

The decision to drink or not when in a village is not just a decision to imbibe alcohol or abstain. Drinking involves relationship building. There are times when the choice not to participate becomes a barrier to acceptance and affective understanding. The invitations to “sit around” or “have a few” or “party” came after I had been in the village for a while. These invitations were typically extended only after a trusting relationship had already been established. Sometimes drink was offered to repair or equalize a relationship. Sometimes it was offered as a sign of respect or reciprocity. And sometimes it was plainly not offered to signal my marginal “outsider” status.

Drinking is one of the primary social activities in the village, especially for young adults. I felt it was within the boundaries of the research to observe and document this activity while maintaining ethical and moral standards of conduct. This typically meant that I would only observe drinking activities engaged by adults over the age of 21 years, I would moderate my own alcohol intake, and I would entirely avoid illegal substances. Despite these precautions, there were those in the villages that felt that any involvement with drinking or people who were drinking was inappropriate for a “wellness” researcher. The critics were often drinkers themselves, but felt that outsiders should be held to a different standard. I was told that people not from the village should not try and “act village.” It was a constant dilemma: be too much myself and people think I’m trying to act village; be too “professional” and people think I am trying to act too White. It’s a balance I have yet to strike in my research with Native peoples.

1.5.4 Sex and sexuality

Another significant issue that arose in the field related to my status as a female, and an apparently single female. I went out to the villages alone, with my children accompanying me only part of the time in each of the communities. It was announced that I was married, but the absence of my spouse made me seem available in certain important ways. In the villages there are relatively clearly differentiated gender roles in terms of economic and subsistence practices. Women tend to more typically partake in

indoor activities such as office and professional work, processing food, childcare and household chores. Men tend to do more outdoor based activities such as hunting, trapping, labor and construction, working on snowgos/trucks and hauling wood. My work in the village adhered to my expected gender role, but I also required things that would traditionally be done by a male relative or mate. I attempted to do some of these things by myself and with the assistance of women friends. Most adult women in the village pride themselves on being self-sufficient, hauling oil, chopping wood and driving snowgos, but very few women haul their own wood.

During my first month in the village, I had plenty of wood left by the owners of the house. When I began to run low, I started to ask around about who I could hire to haul wood for me. During one interview with an adult male, he paused to ask me who hauled my wood. I told him that I was in need of someone to haul wood and he volunteered. I paid the going rate for a cord of wood. He hauled a large load of birch logs and left them in front of the house. I then needed to find someone to saw the logs and split the blocks. I relied on a female friend for a time to help with chopping the blocks, but this arrangement did not last.

There was a general assistance program in the village for elders and single women, and several men regularly put in hours around the village. A couple of men came to my house one day to ask if I needed anything, and I said that I needed the wood outside sawed and split. At this point I had hired another local man to haul a cord of wood, and he was in the process of bringing logs back to the house. At one point during that day I had four men around the house; one hauling logs, two chopping and stacking wood, and one young man whom I was interviewing in the house. The one hauling the logs came in the house to warm up at one point and told me, a bit grudgingly, that he would have chopped the wood when he was done hauling it. The two guys chopping the wood came in next and said they would have preferred doing an interview, and teased the young man who was already there to go help them chop wood. The young man doing the interview laughed at the teasing, but got serious as soon as the other two men left. He cautioned that I should be careful and make sure the man hauling the wood didn't cheat

me and that the guys chopping the wood didn't keep coming around after the wood was chopped up.

Up to this point I had been entirely unaware of the connection between wood and human relationships in the village. I had thought I was engaging in a purely economic relationship with these men and that cash payment for services would negate any "feelings" being attached to the activities. This is not how it works in the village. Hauling wood to heat a home is not just for economic gain, it also for social and emotional purposes as well. The size of a family's wood pile is a marker of social status, particularly of male social status. It says that the house is always kept warm, even hot. It indicates wealth and prosperity of the male head of household, in particular. Men do not engage in much of the professional work around the village, so a large wood pile says the man is productive and has resources of his own.

Nearly every man, young and old, asked me during the interview about my wood (who hauled it, who chopped it). None of the women I interviewed ever asked me about my wood. This was only an issue in the village where I lived during the winter months. This presents a bias in the data collection that is quite significant. When I realized the connection between wood and sex and love, I began to severely limit who I would ask to help me with these activities.

I began to just ask one young man in his early 20s that I had interviewed and who had quickly become a "key informant" and friend to do the household chores that I physically could not do. I thought it was a perfect choice. He was unmarried, unemployed and we had clearly established our relationship with each other. Initially it appeared to un-complicate matters tremendously. Men stopped coming over to my house to offer assistance, and more importantly, the talk about the men coming around my house stopped. I felt that I had rather nicely solved the problem of wood and men and sex and everything. It was not until I was back in Fairbanks that talk of this relationship began to weave its way through the village. There was some drama and some investigation, and then the news got old and life went on and so did the research.

There were several things we did differently in the second village to account for my presence as a “single female” in the community. Although unanticipated and problematic, these experiences were integral and contributed important information regarding gender roles and male-female relationships in Athabascan villages. We remained open about these aspects of the research process and held a public symposium at the UAF campus to share our experiences with a broader community. We also continued to talk with tribal representatives about these issues, and the communities remained in full support of the research throughout the term of the project.

1.5.5 Insider/outsider identity

Every anthropologist going into the field will struggle to establish and maintain their own identity throughout the term of the research. It is generally considered bad form to “go Native” while in the field conducting anthropological research (Powdermaker 1967: 115). To “go Native” typically implies the complete loss of objectivity, or of any attempts at a more objective observer stance. It is also common to hear the term “going Native” applied to those anthropologists who marry a local and stay in the community. Although rarely discussed, *returning* from the field is as important in anthropology as the initial going out into the field. The issue is that much more complicated when the anthropologist is Native. How does a Native anthropologist not “go Native?” How does a Native anthropologist return from the Native community? There has been good work in the last decade by Native academics on these very issues (e.g. Medicine 2001; Mihesuah 1998). The experience will be different for everyone; I can speak only about my own.

When I got out to the village, I felt fairly confident and competent about some things, and less so about others. I had lived in a Yup’ik village for nearly two years and I had been raised half-off a reservation in the Lower-48. I felt comfortable in a village context and knew things that a novice would not. I knew how to ride a snowgo, conserve water, prevent pipes from freezing, use a woodstove, use an oil stove, and pack in food. I knew some things about village life as well. I knew things got going a little later, moved a little slower, got a little crazier and tasted a little spammier. I knew how to eat Native foods and honestly enjoy it. When I am in a Native context, I invariably get asked where

I am from (meaning what village or what tribe). I do not have to assert my “Native status.” In fact, I never do. It is only recently that I have begun including it in personal introductions. I wait until I am asked, and I will volunteer that my mother is Native, my father is White. On reservations, I will then get to play the “do we have a common relative” game. This establishes identity and common experience and creates something for us to stand on together as we build our relationship.

It would not be the same way in an Alaskan village. In the Yup'ik villages, I would be asked by the very bold, the very old or the very young who are my relatives. I would then answer, “I'm not from here.” The next question would typically be, “what are you?” That fast, I would go from being a “who” (person) to a “what” (non-person). Being “Indian” was not all that different from being “White” in the Eskimo villages. I never felt the same kind of affinity with Yupiit as I did almost immediately with Athabascans. In many ways, it made my professional work a bit easier in Yup'ik areas, but it also made my personal life a bit harder.

So, while I was prepared for some aspects of village life by my experience out in the Yup'ik villages, I was not at all prepared for others. Principally, I was not prepared to *feel* the things I did when I got to the village. The village and the people felt like home, and right off I began to have conflicting issues regarding my “role” in the community. I was there as a researcher, not a Native person, but there were times when it was expected (and demanded) that I be “a Native” and not just “a researcher.” One experience early on set the stage for even larger conflicts to come.

A few weeks into my residence in the village I ran low on fuel for the house. One of my neighbors offered to help me haul and dump the fuel into the 55-gallon drum sitting up on a raised platform at the back of the house. This neighbor, a formidable elder woman, had a strong and fierce way about her. She was entirely self-sufficient and extremely knowledgeable. She spoke her Native language fluently, and was one of the greatest storytellers I have ever encountered. She scared the hell out of me. I was grateful for her offer to help and we set out to the fuel depot on her snowgo one afternoon. It was a good day to haul fuel. It was sunny without any wind but very cold (around 25 below).

She filled five, five-gallon jugs from the diesel pump. She towed these back to the house and then proceeded to climb up on an empty 55-gallon drum that was lodged in the frozen ground. She told me to undo the spout on the first jug and hand it up to her. I looked blankly down at the glaring red jugs and wondered what she meant. She repeated her instructions only this time louder and a little more forcefully. I couldn't get the nozzle to stay in place and after watching my efforts for a little while, she got down from the drum and silently popped the nozzle into its appropriate position. She gave me a hard look and then heaved the 5-gallon jug up on top of the upright drum. She then lifted the jug up to the small hole in the fuel tank and shoved the nozzle in flush and heaved the jug upwards dumping the contents neatly inside the tank. When she finished that one, she got down and told me to get up and she'd hand me the rest.

I climbed up but when I went to take the second jug she was lifting up to me, I nearly unbalanced and had to drop the jug down quickly onto the plank where I was standing. Some fuel sloshed out of the spout and got on the gloves I was wearing. She warned me to be more careful and not get any on my clothes. I took off the jacket I was wearing and threw it on the snow. I tried to then heave the jug up parallel to the tank and line up the nozzle to the hole in the tank. More fuel splashed out when I tipped the jug upwards because the nozzle was not flush in the tank and it splashed down my sweater and onto the snow below the tank. Just as this happened my elder helper shouted out, "Be careful! What kind of Indian are you, anyway? Can't pour fuel!" I had up to this point not claimed to be any kind of Indian, but I was clearly not stacking up to the local standards anyway. The other three jugs got easier, and she was kinder with me after that, but I was left stinging from her comment. There I was again, back to that same place I'd been so many times in my life before, wondering just what kind of Indian am I, anyway?

This was the most benign of the experiences that I collectively term, "acting White, and being Native" in the village. These terms come from the two most common comments made about my behavior in the village. Either I was acting too White, or being too Native at any given time. If I left an event early or refused a drink, I was acting too White. If I stayed out too late and accepted offers to drink, I was being too Native. Taunts

of acting White affected me personally in ways I had not experienced since my own youth. I felt at times compelled to prove myself as a Native, just as I felt compelled to prove myself as a researcher. In the end, I never felt I had proved myself in either capacity completely, but that partialness is what allowed for a diverse range of experiences and relationships to occur in the field.

1.6 Writing Feeling Worlds

I came out of the field with 62 recorded interviews, averaging between 1-8 hours in duration, and over 500 pages of fieldnotes. We had all of the interviews transcribed by a professional service and then proofed by one of the research staff members for accuracy. The fieldnotes were anonymized using a pseudonym key to replace names of community members with names of indigenous bird species of Alaska. We used pseudonyms instead of numbers or initials to preserve the human element of this scientific inquiry. All of the data was coded using a modified version of grounded theory and content-analysis (Corbin and Strauss 2007; Strauss and Corbin 1997). The data were then entered into a data management system (atlas.ti), and queries provided data sets from our code lists that were then used to answer the specific research questions. These data provided evidence for the theoretical interpretations put forth in this and other research products. A final report was prepared by the research team and presented to each participant community (Rasmus, et al. 2007). Both communities approved of the findings from the project and supported the publication of these findings. In this work, I provide the anthropological context and my own theoretical interpretations of the data and findings from the final project report and from my observations and experiences while in the field.

I have chosen to write up these results as ethnography. Ethnography is essentially the “writing of culture” for the purpose of providing innovative or alternative meanings, representations, explanations and critiques of human behavior in culturally specific contexts (Clifford and Marcus 1986). The inherent value of ethnographic writing is to provide the information that is needed to answer those “what” and “how” questions about human behavior (Denzin and Lincoln 1998). Good ethnography can tell us much more

about what is going on within a group or society than other methods of research because of the participatory nature of the work. The ethnographer situates him or herself within the community and writes from the perspective of the “Native” (Geertz 1973). This provides that insider information about what is going on and how things are doing down.

The primary purpose of ethnographic writing has historically been to inform. This goal for research is no longer sufficient, in and of itself. Many grant funding agencies specifically forbid proposals seeking solely to “fill a gap” in our “general knowledge” of a particular people or problem. Anthropological and other forms of qualitative research need to aim to do more than inform; they must also produce. The product of ethnographic research has traditionally been the description itself, the “ethnography,” but within the last two decades this has not been the most common outcome of ethnographic research, particularly when conducted among Native North American groups. This may be due to the locally perceived inutility of ethnographic writing among indigenous peoples today. In the villages where I conducted the research for this project, the local expectation of the research involved qualitative methods (“talking to people”) with quantitative outcomes (“stats” or “numbers”). When I explained that the results would be written up as “narrative” or more “like a story,” there was some confusion about what would or could be done with this type of product. It has been a long time since either community had been exposed to ethnographic research, and the meaning or purpose of the process was never more than partial. But “partiality” is inherent to the ethnographic endeavor (Clifford and Marcus 1986). We can never completely represent culture nor can we ever “control” for our incompletely known and partially established ethnographic selves in the process.

June Helm (2000) has recently stated that it is now a commonly accepted fact that “general ethnography” about Native North Americans is no longer being produced. Helm is a central figure in Northern Athabascan research and does not herself lament this loss. Helm specializes in what Marcus (1986: 165) terms the “salvage mode” of ethnography, where she seeks to “salvage a cultural state on the verge of transformation.” Helm is not alone in this. Nearly all recent products of ethnographic research conducted among

Subarctic and Arctic aboriginal populations have been of the “salvage mode” (e.g. Kari and Fall 2003; Mishler and Simeone 2004; Nelson 1983; Simeone 1995; Thomas, et al. 2005). Then there are contributions to ethnographic writing that are clearly within what Marcus (1986: 165) would label the “redemptive mode,” where the ethnographer seeks to demonstrate “the survival of distinctive and authentic cultural systems despite undeniable changes.” The works of Fienup-Riordan (1995, 2000), Jolles (2002) and Kulchyski (2005) as well as the edited works of Billson and Mancini (2007) clearly fit within this tradition.

Ethnographic writing has come under severe critique by researchers and theorists who debate its utility in a global context (Marcus 1986). How can we write culture in a time when lifeways change so fast through ever expanding spheres of influence and interconnection? It remains an essential practice, however, because even as ways of life change, the adaptive processes involved in surviving retain their power and relevance across cultures for all humankind. This ethnography is not about the way it once was or still is, this ethnography is about the way it is at this particular moment and about the youth that are currently living it. We can learn from our young people. If they can survive, so can we all.

The results from the research will be presented as a composite ethnography of an Athabascan village I will call *Yookkene*, the Koyukon Athabascan word for “Yukon River” (Jette and Jones, 2000). During the research we referred to the communities as Village A and Village B. For the purposes of this study a composite description will protect anonymity and establish important connections between the two communities in terms of youth experiences. There were differences noted in some areas of everyday life and in commonly shared practices and beliefs, but the similarities between the two communities in terms of local adaptations to a changed and changing world provide a common basis of experience that was equally apparent.

Finally, I am writing this ethnography because I feel it honors the people and the relationships established in the communities. People in the villages allowed me into their community and into their lives. They shared with me their food, their wood, their

knowledge, their drinks, their hurts and their hearts. I believe they did this not just because of their relationship to me, but out of their love and responsibility to the people and the community. This is my way of keeping it real and giving it back, to this same end, for the people.

Chapter 1

Yookkene

And we'd see that when we were growing up, how our way of life needed to be. We'd seen that our younger men, younger children, needed to learn how to live here in the village. Cause if they don't know how to live in the village then what do they have to live for? I can say I know how to live here. This is my village. This is where I was raised, and this is where I am going to die. –John Peregrine (Yookkene, 2005)

1.1 Village on the Yukon

John Peregrine grew up in *Yookkene*, a small village of less than 300 people on the Yukon river. He was raised in a two-room log home with his brothers and sisters and parents.

His father worked in a coal mine and was gone for nearly six months of the year. He and his brothers were left with the responsibilities of maintaining the household that included hauling wood, chopping wood, hauling water, feeding the dogs, fishing, and hunting for meat. John was in the age group on the front lines of the transition from semi-nomadic camp life to fully sedentary village life that in many places did not happen until the last half of the 20th century. John's cohort was the first to grow up entirely in the village, rather than out at seasonal camps. It was John's age group that suffered the higher rates of suicide, alcohol abuse and accidental death while growing up than any other age group before or after. John knows the life and death urgency of teaching young people how to live in the village so that they might survive what many of his peers did not.

Yookkene was originally a winter gathering place for families that moved around the land sharing proximal fish camps, net sites, hunting grounds, log yards and trap lines. By 1840 fur trading posts had been established near many of these winter camps along the Yukon and its major tributaries by Russian and English fur trading companies (VanStone 1974: 72). The annual subsistence cycle for most families came to revolve around visits to these trading posts, called "town" by many elders in this research.

Families would stay in town for short periods of time (weeks) before traveling back out to camp for longer durations (months). Mining camps began to appear on the *Yookkene* landscape by the late 19th and early 20th century. These outposts also tended to include Catholic or Episcopalian missions and a primary school (K-6) taught in a small log cabin (Clark 1981). The amount of time a family would stay around these town settlements began to lengthen considerably, with many families staying the entire winter. Families began to construct their own log cabins to use for the winters spent in town, and children would attend school. Fathers would continue to go out to their winter camps to tend the trapline, but they would often make this trek alone or with another male relative. By the mid-20th century most Athabascan families living along the Yukon had established permanent log homes in the settlements that now consisted of a trade post, a general store, a post office, a primary school and a church. Families would still travel out to camps during the spring, summer and early fall but the length of time at camp steadily decreased as life became increasingly village-based.

With the passing of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) in 1971, most of these Athabascan settlements became *Native villages* with IRA tribal councils, and residents were enrolled as “shareholders” in one primary village corporation (Berger 1985; Dombrowski 2001). Residents of *Yookkene* who shared kinship relations in other villages were forced to choose membership in a single village. After ANCSA, the village became the basic unit of tribal political and cultural affiliation. There are currently 168 village corporations in Alaska and there are 226 federally recognized tribes. The Native villages were then assigned to one of 12 regional corporations. A 13th regional corporation was assigned to non-resident Alaska Natives. The regional corporation for the Athabascan villages in the interior of Alaska is Doyon, Ltd. Doyon is responsible for managing and distributing dividends to shareholders based on the cash disbursement from ANCSA, and the investments and business ventures supported by the corporation. Doyon owns the subsurface rights to the tribal lands in the region and profits from these developments go to the corporation, and to all at-large shareholders in the corporation. Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) is the non-profit corporation that provides social

services, health care, legal services and rural development to the villages in the Doyon region (Dombrowski 2001).

Tanana Chiefs Conference established clinics in every village by the early 1970s, and is responsible for training local health aides to provide triage and basic health care services at the village level. *Yookkene* has a newly constructed health clinic with three exam rooms and a dental office. There is also an office for an itinerant mental health clinician. The clinic is run by three local health aides with varying degrees of clinical training. A nurse practitioner and public health nurse will come out to the clinic every two to three months and a dentist and dental hygienist will come out two to three times yearly.

Villages in Alaska have a fairly uniform content and construction consisting of new housing (government-subsidized), old housing (log cabins), one or two churches, tribal and city office buildings, a community hall, post office, health clinic, local store and a K-12 school with a gym. Some villages also have a Boys and Girls Club or teen youth center. Most Athabascan villages are accessible only by air, boat or snowgo and have populations between 60 and 700. Eskimo villages are generally larger in size with an average of 500-600 people in each village, while the Athabascan villages in the Interior are smaller with an average of 250-300 people per village. Villages are kinship-based, often comprised of several large extended families. Villages in close proximity remain connected along kinship lines and maintain these connections with frequent visiting and exchange for memorials, potlatches, dances, tournaments, sports games and church events.

In *Yookkene* the village is divided into sections along the river. The older log homes line the river bank and the “downtown” part of the village. The new IRHA (Interior Regional Housing Authority) houses intersperse with the log homes in some areas but generally are constructed “backtown” in newly developed sections farther away from the river.

Families in *Yookkene* continue to build log homes, often with IRHA subsidies, using wood gathered from the boreal forest surrounding their village and constructed with the help of family and community members in the village.

When a new home is completed in *Yookkene* there will be a ceremonial “open house” before the family moves in. Large tarps will be laid on the main floor and food will be served potlatch style for the guests. The entire village will be invited. The house will be blessed by a village elder and church leader and then there may be dancing and singing. The older style village houses were single room log cabins. The newer style log homes have increased in size and many now have two stories with four bedrooms. The IRHA houses range in size from two to four bedrooms and are constructed on a single floor. Most homes continue to use wood burning stoves as a primary heat source. Most homes also have an oil burning stove for back-up heat.

Yookkene has one main general store that sells basic grocery staples and supplies at village cost which is typically between two to five times what the city stores charge for the same item. The store in *Yookkene* is well stocked with cans of soda, chips and candy, and also has all kinds of dried and canned goods, including Cup o’Noodles, Hamburger Helper, Koolaid, Spam, sugar, salt, flour, Jello, and Chef Boyardee. Fresh produce is a rarity and extremely expensive. Eggs and cheese are usually, although not always, available. Frozen “warm up” foods such as pizzas, Hot Pockets and Banquet Fried Chicken are very popular and will typically sell out quickly. A frozen pizza will sell for \$12-\$18 in a village. A bag of Doritos will sell for \$6. A dozen eggs is \$5. A half gallon of milk (if available) is \$6.50. A pound of hamburger meat is \$5.50. The village store in *Yookkene* is used primarily as a supplement or back-up to the shopping that is done once every month or two in Fairbanks and to the meat and fish that are taken from the land.

Villages also have one or more churches. In some villages, the church is very prominent on the landscape such as in Russian Orthodox villages in Kodiak or along the Kuskokwim River in Southwest Alaska. In most villages there will be the majority church, typically Catholic, Moravian, Russian Orthodox or Episcopal, with one or two

“newer” church sects such as Assembly of God, Baptist, or Protestant. In *Yookkene* the primary church is Catholic. The great majority of village residents are baptized into the Catholic Church. Catholic ceremonies and blessings are a common part of village social and ritual life today. Women and the elderly are the primary church goers in the community. Men attend church for special occasions such as a confirmation or baptism of a family member but in general do not regularly attend services. In the last ten years a Baptist church has attempted to build a congregation in *Yookkene* but with limited success.

Nearly all Alaska Native villages have a K-12 school. In most villages the school will be all in one large building, most often the largest building in the village and sometimes the only building with running water. Village schools resemble small compounds with the school, teacher housing, outbuildings, outdoor basketball court and playground set apart from the rest of the community and fenced. Most village schools have a full-court gymnasium that is the center of village activity from late fall through spring. In *Yookkene* the K-12 school is all in one building with grades combined into levels and each level taught in a single classroom. Grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12 are taught by the four teachers working at the *Yookkene* school. In the last 10 years the school in *Yookkene* has experienced a large out-migration of high school age students whose families elect to send them to one of three boarding schools in the region (Nenana, Galena and Effie Kokrine). The high school was down to 5 students in residence when I was in the village. This has a serious impact on high school sports in the village, an important activity for the entire community (see Chapter 2).

Villages also have tribal and city offices that house the few full-time paid workers in the villages. The tribal offices and city offices are separate entities in the villages. Most villages operate as 2nd class cities with IRA (Indian Reorganization Act) tribal councils. In *Yookkene* there is an IRA tribal council as well as a city council. The tribe makes decisions regarding community governance and service provision and is the direct representative to the regional corporations. The city manages the utilities, water, and building and development. Both offices are overseen by a council of elected community

members. The tribal council consists of a 1st chief, a 2nd chief, a treasurer, a secretary and two other tribal council members. The city council consists of a mayor, a vice mayor, a secretary and three other members. These are not paid positions but come with other benefits including status, local power and control and travel. The tribe in *Yookkene* provides between nine and eleven positions including the local health aides, tribal administrators, environmental coordinator, ICWA (Indian Child Welfare Act) worker, and elder cook and hospice workers. The city has several positions for water treatment operators, janitors and maintenance and city office workers.

The post office is another prominent feature in an Alaska Native village. In *Yookkene*, the P.O. is centrally located and is on the daily round for most people in the village. In the last decade many villages have also constructed Head Start centers for children under the age of five, and teen centers for adolescent age youth. In *Yookkene* the Head Start is an active program while the teen center has not been active for several years.

A prominent feature in every Athabascan village is the community hall. Athabascan community halls are based on the traditional gathering house structure that was octagon (hogan) shaped with a central ceiling entrance. The community hall is used for village-wide gatherings such as potlatches, memorials, funerals, corporation meetings, dances and Bingo. The hall is heated with a large bunker stove and maintained by the tribe.

These features of *Yookkene* describe the landscape and settlement patterns of the village that are shared by most Athabascan villages. Villages are limited places surrounded by limitless spaces. The process of social change and the rise of the village has been one characterized by consolidation and intensification of experience, emotion, economy and social life (VanStone 1974). We only have to look so far as those living in the communities today to witness the adaptive processes at work within each generation to accommodate the transition from the land to the village.

1.2 Contemporary generational borderlands

In *Yookkene*, boundaries (social and spatial markers) and rules for behavior (taboos) remain an important part of village life (e.g. Nelson 1983). There are geographic boundaries such as in the village and on the land, and downriver, upriver and backriver. There are gendered boundaries maintained between men and women, and familial boundaries between kin and non-kin. There are social boundaries for participation in certain activities or practices, and there are generational boundaries that shape interaction between the younger and elder members of the group. The social rules for navigating aboriginal Athabascan cultural boundaries have changed to accommodate the transition to village life. The boundaries between the age groups were once traversed through socialization requirements for each upcoming age group as they learned how to survive and adapt to their behavioral environment (Condon 1987; Hallowell 1955). The transition to a village culture meant that the rules for living that once worked well for survival and success had to be adapted to meet the demands of a new and changing environment. As the borders of the Athabascan physical environment contracted, the behavioral environment and generational borderlands expanded.

In *Yookkene*, the elders (55+), adults (30-54) and youth (15-29) tell very different stories of growing up, but no one story is any more *Native* than the next. The youth grow up living a “Native life” but with different rules, strategies and motivations guiding their behavior. The “gap” between the generations that typically occurs in rapidly increasing, highly interactive and/or disrupted societies is extremely pronounced in Alaska Native villages. Within single generations in the villages there were disruptions and developments to social, linguistic and biocultural processes including Native language, economy, religion, governance, marriage and socialization (Helm 1981).

What the stories from elders, adults and youth also demonstrate are areas of significant cultural continuity between the generational cohorts. It is vital to recognize this process as one of adaptation rather than loss or acculturation. Rapid social change and “culture loss” have been suggested to be the central cause and explanation for many, if not most, of the social problems documented among Alaska Native and American

Indian groups throughout the United States (Waldrum 2004). These studies do not typically describe the processes through which change has taken place among indigenous peoples. Instead these studies equate social change with culture loss. My research contributes descriptive information about the process of social change, cultural continuity and adaptive strategizing that has occurred within and across each generation.

To demonstrate the nature of the social changes and local adaptations that have occurred in the last half-century in *Yookkene*, I will present three narratives from participants who grew up in the village, one from each broad generational cohort. The generational cohorts are not homogenous and are not clearly bounded. There are some older adults who maintained a more seasonal way of life and traveled extensively with their families on the land. There are also younger elders who did not travel with their parents, and instead were sent to boarding school and stayed with their families in the villages during the holidays. In *Yookkene* these age sets are locally identified to represent a shared experience among individuals who grew up under similar social conditions and were motivated by similar forces towards action in their lives.

1.2.1 Elders

Hazel Kingfisher is an elder matron in *Yookkene*. She was 78 when I interviewed her and was actively involved in the community. I would often see her buzzing around the village on her four-wheeler. Hazel currently lives alone, but has daily visits from her grandchildren, her son and her daughter-in-law and her women friends. I sat with Hazel for two days to complete the interview and then continued to visit with her on several occasions thereafter. Hazel is a strong-minded elder, with an infectious giggle. Hazel speaks her Native language fluently, but is also fluent and comfortable speaking in English. I began the interview by asking her to talk about what it was like for her growing-up.

HK: Growing up... I thought our world was very beautiful, because we were never -- kids were never, ever in one spot. Like stay in the village, not for very long. People, like in the fall time got by the water, where they got fish net out

and putting up frozen fish and then split fish and they hang them up for dogs. So we help our parents.

We go to fish net with our mother and we go down the bank and we pack all the fish. We pack most of the fish up. And then from there, after freeze-up, we move to winter camp -- winter cabin. And it was nice, you know. I just remember we used to be walking and the small kids are riding in this dog sled, and hardly no snow. And on the lakes, the ice is just glare a lot of places. I just remember that kind of life.

But all of us big kids, we all walk, not too far, you know, the winter camp was. But that's the way all the kids grew up in old days. Just moving around. Never, ever we stayed in -- just like right now, we stay in our house all winter and, well, we're old anyway. We can't even walk nowhere. But that's the way the whole life is right now. Just never get out of town; never get out of the village.

Back in old days was -- Okay, we stay in our fall camp, then we go to winter cabin. And somewhere after January we move on up to the mountains, like 40 miles up or maybe 50 miles up, close to the mountains where they beaver trap for two months. So we stay around there in beaver camp. Our mother and our dad, they get enough limits. In the old days limit was 10, so all of us get -- get about 10 skins or something to tag, but all of it go to the bills -- grocery bills -- but at least you get all the supplies, you know.

From there we come back again. Then we stay in our winter cabin for a little while, then we -- they set up spring camp for duck hunting, another camp. And people don't just stay in the same spring camp all the time. They move around to different sloughs, different lakes and all that. And we mostly choose spots where we're going to set fish net for fish as soon as the sloughs are thawed out and all that. Then we get muskrat meat, ducks, ducks' meat, geese meat, crane meat. Then we get fresh fish, too. Oh, my, we thought we were in heaven.

Our mother, she caught white fish. You know, she slice it all the way across and she hanged them up. We hanged them up. We help her. And then we just smoke a little bit. But we did lot of that, dried white fish, dried pikes. That's for after we go to town, then we'll feed it to dogs, too, you know.

After that we go down [river], which is 200 miles from around here to the mouth. Then our parents, we used to stay in the village for, I don't know, a few weeks. Then just like we're in town, you know. Then after that, they moved the fish camp, too. And then when the fish camp thing is over -- they get salmons; they get dog feed for the winter; they get dried fish for the winter supply and that was the most important part, that fishing during the summer and putting up fish for the winter.

Then same thing again. We go to fall camp and -- every year, every year, it's the same thing. Every year it's the same thing, spring time we go out and we help our parents. They're going to get fish wheel poles or fish wheel logs. We don't go for logs with them, but we go out to get poles with them. We help out and we peel them and they dry it little bit before they -- that's the fish wheel.

And we don't go to school. When we get to [one village], it's on Yukon River and they have a school teacher there. They have school there. So while we're there, we go to school and we learn how to read right there in school. That's how a few of us learned how to read.

But kids, they know how what to do. They know how to survive; they know how to go to fish net; and kids can look at fish net and take fish out and bring it home. Come home and clean it for whatever, to cook or to cook for dogs. Sometimes there's just enough to cook for dogs.

And all day we have chores. We got to pack water from down the bank and we got to get wood over there where we cook for dogs. And then we pack water for the dog pot, too, or we water dogs. Or we saw wood, or we help our parents to go out and get a load of smoke wood, drift wood, to keep the smoke going in the smokehouse. See, kids got something to do all day.

Every day when we're in the camp in the fall time, our mother or our dad, before they leave, they told us what to do, what to take care of. We got to cook today and they tell us, too, to haul wood. And we chop wood, you know, a little ways from the camp anyway, bring in some fire wood, too. Every day is the same thing over and over. Kids just know what to do. Kids used to help their mothers and their fathers quite a bit. And it always was a big families, you know. Lots of little -- lots of little kids in the house and there were bigger kids take care of them. We help each others.

Most of the years, we were on the Yukon River. But when we're up here, we're with the other kids in the one fish camp. Oh, might be late 1930s. We were already big kids, big enough kids and I don't know how we know how to play baseball. But we made baseball team with the Kingfisher kids and the Tern kids. And we play baseball all summer.

We can't wait until the last little work is going to be done around the house. We pack water or we do all the stuff that we're supposed to do. Then we go down the bank, there's a [sand] bar there and oh, man, we run all summer. We play hide and seek and then, gee, I forgot how that game went, but we had little can and we come out from nowhere and, you know, we kick that can and we run after each others. And that one game, too, that we played, red over, red over. That was fun. Kids never play those games right now. Whenever we go to the village, we play these kind of games. Oh, my, there was no end to running after each others.

And what a good memory is -- we're stopping overnight in tent. We're going to be there maybe two nights or three nights or something, while we're resting dogs, you know. And we're resting us, too, because we're all kind of walking except the little kids is in the sleigh. And in the evening time for light, we have candle and we got those spruce boughs [for flooring]. They smelled clean. They smell like medicine, clean-smelling in the tent and we have Yukon stove out there. Our fire is full blast going and our candle -- it's right there. They poke

stick down through the snow or ground or whatever. And we got about one candle. That's for the light in the evenings. That's what I never forgot that, just being in that tent and there's fire out there and that one candle, yeah. I never forgot that happy memory.

And now that I talk about it, getting back to such simple days. People never talk about gas cost high; people don't even mention gas. Everybody have dog team and that's to haul all the stuff. It's safe to haul all the -- all the freight, all the stuff, all the belongings. The dogs are hauling it. People don't even mention gas. We don't worry about it.

SR: What kind of hard times that you had growing up, you and your family?

HK: The people that are -- we're elders right now -- we grow up without baby shots, kids' shots; we grow up without all that and we're only lucky that all of us came out alive. That has got to be a miracle without medicine. We grow to be big man and big woman without medicine. It's got to be a miracle because we're working at the clinic now, you know, and we got all kinds of medicines, antibiotics and some vitamin drops or iron drops for babies. We didn't have those kinds. But we didn't know. We didn't know those were there, too. We're lucky, all of us to all come out alive.

But anyway, it was pretty tough times, I know. That lots of babies passed away while we were growing up. Lots of babies passed away. Supposedly, there was no medicine and no nurse; no hospital especially up on this river, you know. Just like everything is so far out. That's -- well, it's still like that. We're so far out. It's still like that. But the difference is we're lucky that we get airplanes everyday and I don't know how many times a day airplanes land. That's with food and medicines and all that.

We never had no medicine right here; nothing. But everybody is out camping. And, well, sometimes we don't have very good story. Right before war time maybe, we lost a two-month-old baby up in the camp. There again, no medicine. That little girl just caught cold, two months old. And maybe she was

born with some kind of a birth defect, because when she cried, she go hupp, hupp. She couldn't catch up with her breath, and she caught cold. She got it during the night, 10:00 o'clock at night. We really cried. That's first time we saw death, but by the time we were all big kids, and we're all helping mama; we're all helping her work. Kind of a big by that time. But we cried really hard.

And that was nothing compared to what happened after that. Again, we were on the Yukon River, after trapline all winter. My parents end up -- they go downriver in their little boat outfit. We had a -- like little scow-thing, like barge. For us it's big, and other rowboats is tied on the sides and dogs are tied in them. Just everybody moving.

In middle of August, I think, the water was really rise on the river. And we're coming back up and we're stopping overnight and one kid was missing. It's pitch dark. One kid got missing. We were so many that we were sleeping all over. And when we woke up, we found out that our eight-month-old little baby sister was missing. We don't know what happened, but that was an accident. And, see, if that happened -- things happen right now in the villages and people -- the counselors or psychiatrists and people like that, they fly into the village and they kind of help out the families, you know.

We didn't get no help. And we were down there in [camp]. We would turn back and we went back to [camp]. And while we were there, the guys were searching every day, but she was nowhere, so we had to come back up the river.

And lots of things happened. And right now, whenever I'm going to Yukon River, I still look for that spot where it happened. And I thought, she might be around there somewhere.

Even people used to lose their babies out on the trapline, yeah. There's springtime, you know, and it's a breakup time. There's no way to travel. We're all stuck in the camp; can't go nowhere. Well, I got to say, we're lucky nowadays, you know.

SR: When do you remember seeing alcohol for the first time?

HK: I think we saw -- to tell the truth, we saw drinking all the time. But people never just drank every day. Whenever we come to town like for Christmas, then people are drinking. They drink for about two days or something like that and then that's it. Then everybody is back to normal again. And they're hauling wood. See, they have to haul wood to keep the house going. They're hauling wood and they're doing other stuff like hunting, even -- even at holidays, they do -- they do a little bit. In the springtime, after muskrats hunting, too, we all come to the village. Then they drink again, little while. They don't just drink every day and every day.

We used to come to *Yookkene* and there's liquor store there and we used to see guys just be sober, you know. Everybody come from camp and they're sitting -- sitting on the bank or somewhere like that and they're telling each others everything and telling each other stories and all that. These are men and they're good stories there. About a week will pass and they'll be not drinking. And somehow they get started and they drink, but they don't just drink -- you know, like every day, every day, every day. They don't. They control their own self.

We seen drinking when -- when we were kids, but after awhile, you know, that drinking was too out of control. Yeah. I don't know. It's just a sad world, too, if we drink. I know we can't just be that way every day and every day, you know, just wake up for it. That's not the way the people did it long time ago. And we never seen no women get into it. We didn't see no women get into alcohol in the old days. Guys, that's all.

SR: Did you ever try it?

HK: No. I never did. I never did think I even was going to try it. And I don't think I'll keep still if I'm an alcohol user. I don't think I keep still. I'm going to be mischief, even I'll go beyond that. And I don't think anybody could handle me, because I got too much -- I got too much tough head.

And us, you know, we stayed out camp pretty much of the time. Dad, he hunted and hunted. And my mother, she had fish net out all that time. And we go out and we go berry picking. But we're all busy, you know. Everybody is -- is busy. Like we wake up in the morning and our dad will probably be out in the mountains hunting. And some of us will pack water; some of us got to cook for dogs; some of us got to -- got to cook, make lunch or something like that. And if our mother is going out to get wood, some of us go with her. And if she's going to rabbit snares, then some of us got to go with her.

And nowadays kids wake up and there's no work to do. There's nothing to do, and that would be for all day. And to do little stuff, you know, that's a little too tough. Even us, when we were [downriver] and we were raising our kids, they're down to school. This was Catholic school, you know, they're just after them. They just got to get their school work done or else. So we never tell them to work. Maybe they go pack in the wood. I leave some work for them. They're going to saw wood little bit, not too much. They're going to wash dishes sometimes; not all the time. And that was a little too tough.

But it's pretty much on account of the school work. I thought, well, they got to pass their grade or something. And I'd rather have them pass their grade than they're going to fail. And, oh, I had lots of fun doing that anyway.

And even our [son] --when we lived [downriver] -- he come in, in the evening, and he's taking his skin boots off and all that, and he's pulling his socks and he's piling it up right there and his daddy is walking around here on the floor and he say, Dad, you want to hang my socks? We tell each others, my goodness, kids got it made nowadays. And we have to do all that for ourself when we were growing up. We got to take our own boots off. And we got to dry it ourself. We can't say, when our daddy is so tired from being out and checking traps or hunting, we couldn't put him to work and tell him hang our socks.

And right now I think about it and their dad, he haul wood and all that. He take his time and he hauled wood or cooked for dogs, and then he's walking around on floor and [our son] would say, oh, dad, hang my socks.

SR: And would he do it?

HK: He'd do it.

SR: What are some of the problems that young people today are facing, do you think?

HK: They're bored. They're bored. Even the people, they're bored. That's what's wrong and there's too much -- too much free time and that's not good for nobody.

My mother used to say, they go up that way up on this trail and they go on a mountains, she said, when the guys get caribou, then they take the sinew out, you know, the sinews around here on the back on the caribou. They be careful and they don't cut it. They take that sinew out. That's to use for sewing up their boots and all that. And then the skin -- I seen my mother. The skin, they clean it on this meat side, nicely. Just clean. And they try not to make marks on them. And the hair, they cut it off with big butcher knife. And then pretty soon they have it -- they spread it out outdoors and they freeze it. And they scrape it with bended scraper to clean it. And when they clean the two sides, it's just white; just clean. And they bring it in and they thaw it out and they cut -- they cut right in the middle. And then they cut it for a man's strings. Somebody is holding it like this and we go like this and their knife hit -- they keep going like this. They keep going.

See, they don't throw away nothing and they save the legging parts too for boots. And the way she talk about it is, she say, we have no time to say I'm lonesome or I'm bored. They're trying to survive. That's everybody. There's no time to say, I'm sad or I'm lonesome. No, she said, no time. She say, no time to say they're sad and they're lonesome. Everybody is working hard to try to survive. They got something to do all day.

1.2.2 Adults

Willa Sparrow was 36 years old when I interviewed her for the project. She is an active member of the community and generally regarded as “a little elder.” Willa loves to go out on the land and often takes her children and other children out with her to pick berries or go “chicken hunting” for spruce and willow grouse or ptarmigan. Willa’s childhood was exceptional for several reasons but represents the common experience of individuals her age who as the first generation growing up in the village were on the front lines of social change in response to settlement life.

SR: Well, maybe you could start by telling me a little bit about what it was like for you to grow up here.

WS: Okay. It was fun. I always think about, like, kids growing up here versus Fairbanks, and like when I bring my kids to Fairbanks, they have to be within sight of me or something, because I worry about, you know, -- it’s a big place. And so like here growing up it’s just like you’re just free to run around, and everybody takes care of everybody’s kids.

But that’s how it was when we were growing up, too. It was just like we could always depend on like our aunt or our uncle or our mom’s friend or something like that to be keeping an eye on us, and if we needed something and couldn’t find our parents -- you know, they might be cutting fish somewhere or something. So I think what I’m trying to say is, it was just like a lot of freedom to kind of like run around and play here and there and stuff, -- and so many people keeping an eye out for me, you know, when I was little. And it was just cool, I think.

And there was just like so much to do. We never had like TV when I was little. That came like maybe when I was still young. But so we always like cut out paper dolls out of the catalog -- or else we used to make a little like smokehouses and little camps, fish camps, out of the sand and Barbie doll houses out of the sand and stuff. And it was just fun. Of course, climbing trees and, you know, building little playhouses and stuff outside, so it was just a lot of

different stuff like that. And then -- let's see what else we did when we were growing up. Like my kids do, I learned how to like cut meat early on and do stuff like that.

I mean, I always think about that when I think about when I learned how to do stuff, because I learned how to do stuff when I was really little, and so I even knew how to make my own bottle. But, you know, I was taking care of other little kids and stuff like that

And then learning how to help dad with dogs. He's had dogs since, well I couldn't even remember when he never had dogs. And then they always -- I mean, my parents always, always told us how to have respect for other people, you know.

[My parents] they used to be really heavy drinkers when I was younger, and then they quit. And I remember times when they would drink really hard and stuff but that was like when I was so little, they just would go for days. And then they really like got religious. And then that was the thing -- I think that's why they were so strict with me and my sister, my adopted sister, is because they got really into the Lord. But my other friends, their parents were still drinking really hard, so they got to like run around and go to the dances and just do whatever they wanted, because their parents were busy partying. And I had to be home, because mine were sober, and they were right on top of everything. But I remember as a kid I used to think, God, I just wish that you guys just still drank. I never told them that, but I just used to say that, like wishing myself. And then when I started getting a little older, I was so thankful. And then so I told them, when I got older, I said, I never did tell you guys that I'm so thankful that you guys brought me up strict.

Like for example, [when I was 16], me and my younger sister, we shared a loft right above my parents' bedroom. And my brothers shared a loft on the other side, and then so anyway, I snuck out the window, and I was so quiet about it.

And I thought there's no way that they would know it, and they wouldn't have found out either. There was a dance going on here that time. And somehow they always let the boys do stuff, but the girls always had to be in the house. And -- and now I think back about it, and that's probably because girls could get pregnant and boys couldn't. You know, and things happen to girls that, you know, probably didn't happen to boys or whatever, and so it was just their way of protecting us and making sure we were safe and they knew what was going on with us. But even my younger brother, he would always get to go out and do stuff more than I could, and I used to just hate that.

But, anyway, so I snuck out the window wanting to go to the dance, went down to my friend's house, and we were sitting there and just laughing away, and I was bragging about how I snuck out, the first time probably in my whole life. Anyway, all of a sudden somebody knocked, and we're all laughing away and then the door opened and she just -- her face just dropped, and she said, your dad. I said, yeah, right. Dad's home sleeping. He just looked around the corner at me, and he said, you better get home right now. Boy, I was just out the door in a flash, and I was walking really fast, and he just came up behind me - and he would say, you better get in your room right now. And, what do you think you're doing sneaking out and stuff. And he said, look at what you made your sister do. She snuck out, too. And here that's how they found out. She snuck down the stairs thinking she'd go out the front door.

But then he was like, you're not being a very good example for your younger sister. And so it was like that really kind of stuck in my head, you know? It was like he was right. I was supposed to be a role model for my younger sister, and here I am sneaking out, so that's showing her that she could do that.

So just little lessons like that in life all the time, all the time while I was growing up. [Like] when I had my period, I didn't know what was wrong with me, and so I just hid my underwear and -- and then I just went outside. And then my mom was doing laundry, and she came across it, and this is like the

same day that she was doing laundry, and she came across it, and she started hollering for me to get in the house. And so I ran in there, and she's like, what -- what's happening with you? And I said, nothing. And then by then I was like already probably tears all over the place, and she said -- she said, get in the house. And so I went in there, and she went in the bathroom with me. So she showed me -- well, she didn't really show me. She just told me what to use, and so I did, and then she told me, you have to get in your room right now, and I said, okay. And then I had no idea why she was doing this, but years later I learned about it, but so I guess like in the old way, they used to -- when a woman first had her menses, then they used to put them in a room where boys couldn't see them.

And so that's what she did. She put up a curtain in our girls' bedroom, and she told me just to lay down in the bed and just stay there, and -- so only if I need to use the bathroom, then that's the only time I could come out. And she just brought me like a bunch of -- she had a table like set by the bed -- bed for me, and she had like bowls of like candy, little bowls of just all different kinds of really yummy food.

Anyways, and so I just never had to get up to get anything, because she just constantly kept those things filled with snacks for me and bringing me dinner and breakfast and all that stuff, and I don't know how many days I stayed there, but I just remembered that. And then I remember me and [my brother] used to play, play, play all the time, and so when I got put away in that room, he was like, what did you do? You know, he thought -- he thought I was in trouble, and I said, nothing, and I couldn't talk to him about it, because that was like really bad. Couldn't say nothing to him. I couldn't even look at him.

So one time, you know, we were starting to get really lonesome for each other, and so he was sitting on the floor on the other side of the curtain, and so he's like, could I just peek at you? I said, I don't know. Mom is out there? And he said, no, and I said, okay. And so he was just opening the curtain to peek at

me, and all of a sudden, "You get away from there!" But so that was like an important milestone, I think. I didn't understand it at all, though, for awhile until way later, and here it's just like a girl passing into her womanhood kind of thing.

And then sometimes when I was feeling really -- sometimes when I was like feeling bum or feeling down about whatever, then I could just sit down and talk to them [my parents], you know, and they just always had good things to say. They would never try to like solve the problem for me, but they would just like give me encouraging words and tell me like what kind of person I am and the person that they see. And then always tell me to find that inside of me and I could go from there. So I always thought that was pretty cool.

But then a lot of times there was like really hard stuff that happened, of course, probably for everybody. You know, we all grow up, because everybody is so close-knit, everybody knows everybody, and it's like that here [in the village] and then like upriver and downriver, everybody just knows everybody.

And so, you know, there's always like -- there has to be a lot of death, and so, you know, it's always really heart wrenching when someone passes on and stuff.

But anyway, so like when I was eight, we lived in a little log cabin right in front of the house I live in right now, and it was just a log house. It had two rooms in there, a bathroom, a kitchen, and kind of an open area, and so there was me, my parents and my two sisters and three brothers, we lived in there. And anyway, so we lived there, and then one of my sisters, who was 15 at the time, she committed suicide.

SR: Did you see any indication about what was going on that she -- that she was even considering it?

WS: You know what? Man, I often wonder about that myself, but I know that like just a few nights before that happened, her and her friends got in some kind of a scrap and so it was kind of a big deal and everybody was talking about it around town and stuff. But I never -- I never really knew her to be... She was

always like this bubbly personality person, just always laughing and joking and stuff and just popular, you know, really friendly, and so I never knew her to be thinking like that or anything.

So all kinds of people came from everywhere. My parents just knew so many people from all over, Fairbanks, upriver, downriver... There were just so many people here, and they had a big tarp set up outdoors and stuff, and there was just a lot of love, lot of sharing and stuff. And that's how it is every time somebody passes away.

So early on in my life, I learned how to deal with something like that. For the first year, that time, everybody told me and I kept trying to tell people what happened that day, but nobody would listen. Everybody kept saying, it's okay, you don't have to talk about it. It's okay. You don't have to talk about it. And so I just had this bottled up inside of me, and I was only eight, and I just had it like held in. Every time I tried to tell somebody, they just thought that it was going to be -- it would be better for me if I just forgot about it. But then, you know, I could see why they would think that, but that's just not the case.

So anyways, one year a bunch of me and my friends were having a slumber party, and they wanted to tell scary stories, and so I told them, I'll tell you guys a really scary story -- and it's true. So they were like, okay, and then one of my friends, she just knew what I was going to tell, and she looked at me and she said, are you sure? And I said, I'm sure. I said, I really, really want to tell you guys the story. And so they sat there and they listened to the whole thing. By the time we got done telling it, I was just bawling in tears. I was only must have been nine, because that was the year after. Anyways -- and we just all sat there, just all of us girls that were around the same age like eight, nine, ten, eleven, maybe, and we just sat there in a circle, and I just cried and cried and cried. And it was like the first time I did that since that time, and I just remember that it was such a relief, though, for me, I remember. And then -- and then from then it was just like that bunch of girls, we've just been super close. And we probably were

already close, because, you know, in a small town, you have to have friends and stuff, you know. But I just think that kind of experience is probably what like molds people to be who they're going to be.

And then so after that, it was like I just had to learn that people are going to die, you know, and we'll just have to keep going on, because after that there was -- there was so much like people dying when I was young. And so I just learned how to just know that people are going to die and there's nothing we can do about it -- except for just to keep living and keep doing what you're doing. And so early on I learned about that.

SR: So what are some of your just happiest memories of growing up? The best times.

WS: My happiest memories. Oh, my God. Like being in fish camp. God, we used to have so much fun. Just like wake up early in the morning, and mom and dad are cooking breakfast outside on the grill and, you know, having breakfast together as a family. And then going to the fishnet or just staying in camp. We used to stay there for months at a time..... during the summer. And we used to just pack up everything and go to the fish camp as soon as school is out. And then stay there for months, and that's where we learned how to make our little play fish camps and stuff in the sand on the side of the bank and play dolls and stuff and learn how to carve and just do all kinds of fun stuff out there. So a lot of things like that and probably -- trying to think of what other -- everything that I think is happy, it seems like that revolves around us doing stuff as a family. I mean, that must have been a big thing for me.

Oh, I know the really happy time for me was. The house I live in now, we, as a whole family, all of us went way upriver and we camped there, it seemed like for the whole summer, and just cut logs, peeled them, put them in the water and then when it was all done and we had all the logs for our house, dad made a big raft, him and my brothers, and we floated all the way down from way, way

upriver. Took us days to float down, but that time was so nice, because we just lived on the raft.

Then I remember it was like fall time, I think, when we were moved in it, but I remember they had a big open house dance in there. Everybody came over and just danced away. The house was just wide open. I just remember how new it looked -- just really, really cool. And so everybody came in, and they made a bench all the way around the wall, so everybody sat around. Then we all ate together and that was like -- that's the way you kind of like welcome everybody into your home and you start off your new home like that, sharing a meal, everyone together.

1.2.3 Youth

Henry Peregrine was 19 when I interviewed him for the project. Henry was raised in *Yookkene*, but has been living in the city attending the university. I interviewed him while he was home for the winter holidays. Henry possesses great verbal skill and is outgoing with new people. He demonstrates the early characteristics of a traditional leader for his people. In these ways he is not entirely representative of his age and gender, but his descriptions of growing up in the village reflect what was told to me by others in his generational cohort. Henry's account is presented here to demonstrate certain significant shifts from his parent's and grandparent's generations to his own and serves as an introduction to youth culture in the village today.

SR: So first, what was it like growing up around here?

HP: I grew up when the district was rich and they had all this money. They sponsored all these events, and there was skiing, there was basketball, there was running, there was a Spring Festival, that was like an all academic thing, and traveling. The sports was awesome, and there was just like a lot of community involvement.

The community was really involved in sports, and it was an active lifestyle. There was basketball tournaments, everything, and it was really just really fun growing up for me.

Like my friends and everything, we were always doing something, getting into mischief. It was going out and just building tree houses and hideouts all the time, that was a big thing for us in the summertime. Playing hide-and-go-seek, track-down on bikes, track-down on foot, like all the kids in town, like 30 kids maybe, just running around town playing track-down. And it was like playing tag, but all over town.

And another game was manhunt. That was a crazy game. Like we got willows, we didn't sharpen them, they had a blunt end. We used to play manhunt running around in the willows. We used to throw spears at each other, and if you got hit, you were dead, you were "it". That was a crazy game, because some of those spears were huge, you know. And they leave big old bumps, scars practically.

That was like when I was maybe in elementary. And a lot of crazy high schoolers, like my cousin and all those guys. They were always traveling on snowgos, and just everybody had a snowgo back then. It wasn't like now how, you know, how it's all boring. Because back then gas was cheap. And like everybody's just cruising around, always doing something. Hunting just driving. Just doing something. People always hollering. People always partying. This town was never dry.

There was a lot more people here than there is. A lot of people moved away for work these days, and everybody just settled down you know, and all their kids went to school. But I don't know, for me, growing up, it was fun to live here. But after a while, like I was one of the people that just really noticed how much community involvement really went away.

When I was younger, I was raised by my grandpa and grandma, so I'm really close to my grandpa. Like I don't know, my mom, she was always working and stuff, and my grandma, she used to have a fish net. My grandpa used to pick up me and [my cousin] from Head Start and we'd always go over to the fish net

with my aunt, my grandpa, my grandma pulling out fish. Counting all the fish, used to get lots of fish. Used to get fish for the dogs.

Used to have like 30, 40 dogs in the dog lot and so that's what I used to do too, I used to feed dogs every day. And that was a routine thing for me, too. We used to chuck out fish from the cache, bring it over to my house, put out logs, used to get those, you know, at the beach, all those long fish, the dog salmon. Used to chop them up into tiny pieces and put them into a dog pot with some hot water and some leftover food. Feed like 30, 40 dogs, just go around the pen, just feed a whole bunch of dogs. That was a routine thing for me. For a while, the dogs, they kept on, they died off and died off, and pretty soon they only had the key dogs. That was a lot of work, that was like 45 minutes out of my day.

They used to have commercial fishing in the summer, so most of the time we'd spend three or four days at a time down at the camp just cutting fish. They used to have a commercialized to where you used to buy the salmon roe. So in the summertime, yeah, like from early June to late July. There used to be a whole bunch of fish eggs, and you wouldn't believe it, it's like countless hours just out there just gutting and fishing. And I'd be out there, they were hanging up these fish. This time we used to have a couple of rafts out in front of my camp, big like 15-by-15 rafts. And we were always swimming. You know those big case and those grey tubs. My cousins and them used to paddle around out in the Yukon with them.

Oh, my God, in the summertime. All the kids come back from camp. The Yukon used to be pretty cold, but the lake, that's when it used to get up like almost 80 degrees sometimes in the summer, man, for like three or four days. And like that's how it is still these days, but long ago there used be countless kids in the lake, man. Holy smokes. Plus, not including the people that went back there and partied and swim. It was like, I don't know how many, maybe

50 kids at a time just going back there. But I used to go back there three or four times a day, just riding bike, you know.

That's why I had fun growing up, there were so much things to do. By season, you know. Like fall time came around, oh, my gosh, fall time, that was so much fun. Because there was just so much people, they used to all get together and just collaborating to one thing, "Oh, what's the best thing we can do? Oh, let's go check it out." Big groups of people just walking around you know. Partying all the time. I don't know, in the fall time that's the thing to do.

Me, my cousins and whole bunch of us one time, every fall we'd egg the teachers' houses, it was like a traditional thing ever since I was like in early junior high. Because fall time, I don't know, everything gets crazy in the fall time, you know. And like there were some teachers we didn't like. And even if we liked them, we'd go ahead and egg their house anyway.

Oh, yeah, man, there was this VPSO, we basically ran him out of town, because after he began patrolling, it was like, 15 or 20 of us kids that were just running around. We went on to the ski trail and we had a whole bunch of these snowballs, we were climbing up his roof and stuff. And his wife came out and we all whistled at her, I think taunted her so much. The VPSO came back and we'd throw it at him, and throw it at his house. We're out there just hauling away. I don't know, we were just crazy rebellious, you know.

SR: Did you ever go hunting in the fall time like for moose?

HP: Oh, yeah, all the time. With my uncles, we'd always head out. My Uncle John and Uncle Paul they always took a boatload of us over, all the cousins and anybody who wanted to head out. And they were always crazy, always cruising.

My Uncle Paul, like a few of us went out one time, he had this 70 Johnson, that's like an 18' aluminum weld, and he had trim on there, and we were hitting jumps over a beaver dam. We're like, "Hang on, hang on," because there was so much beaver dams over there, and it limited our hunting spots, but we'd just

jump over them. And we wouldn't hit, it'd chop like a little V, so when we hit it, we just launched up and landed on the other side. I don't know, this was exciting, you know. We were all into it, it was something to do. We were all mischievous. "Oh, man, it's so awesome, look at what we're doing."

Plus there would be like, you'd run into so much people; like the people from [upriver], people from here and stuff. I had some coffee and lunch around noon. We'd head out early in the morning. It was a whole bunch of us, getting up in the morning. That was a cool thing, though, man. Just all of us, just going out hunting, and all of us just hanging out. I just did most of the hunting, too, just to know the campfire stories, all the crazy stories my uncles say when they get together.

And then winter time... was it men's night? Let's see. Fall going into winter time after the crazy fall time, and in men's night after Junior High ball practice and hanging out -- I'd just go out to men's night all the time and hang out down there.

Like all through my junior high going into high school years, it was like, all about where we go to sit, like, go to the blue building, and I'd kick back there for a couple of hours. And basically that was the hang out spot, you know. Right there on the steps on the side of the store. We'd just kick back there and everybody would stop by and just bullshit. That's when I started smoking cigarettes back then. It was just like after men's night. Listen to people party, come walking down the street.

We were always curious about what was always happening when I was younger. But now I see it totally different. As I was growing up, it was always, "Where's the hollering coming from?" We'd go down there and we'd check it out. People used to get pretty crazy; guns going off, guns flying, there was a lot of suicide, too. There was a lot of suicidal people. I guess it got to them after a while, you know, partying, and staying here the whole time. And I don't know,

it's really quieted down cause the population with suicide and people dying, crashing into stuff.

Men's night used to be really something. And they used to shoot up for teams, you could never get like on a team. If you missed the first time, you were always on the challenger side. It used to be, everybody used to go down there, it used to be like people lined up from the free throw all the way to the other free throw. There were so many, like 30, 40 men down there always ready to play. And that's when [the villages] always used to bring down their best teams. Everybody used to travel along with us, too, because everybody was down there having a good time.

And a lot of those people you don't see around here no more. They're all six feet under, or some of them, you know. Plus a lot of people are taking off to school and work. I know it's not going to be like it was, but it was something to see long ago, you know. There was a lot of competition out there, a lot of people raising dogs, and snowshoeing and Spring Carnivals. That was the active lifestyle here. There was always people doing something.

After they quit letting us go into the gym, we played football around that light at the hall, behind Sonny's. Yeah, a whole bunch of us used to be Captain, Jordan, Trips, Jay, Thomas... I couldn't name how much kids used to go out and play football. We'd just go out, a whole bunch of us, played tackle football. It was so awesome. We had a whole bunch of us. I don't know, it's just so much of us. I used to hang there every night and play like for three hours. It was something to do. There was just so much to do. I don't know, because the more there was of us, the more fun it was, basically.

I used to trap when I was younger in junior high for a couple of years. I used to trap right across from my grandma's grave, there's an old snowgo trail. I had my own snowgo I bought with my dividend that year. I bought my Uncle's Bravo, he sold it to me. And that lasted me forever. I traveled in that snowgo for I don't know how long.

And I had a trap line from there all the way back down to the base of the mountains, back there and it went around in a big circle and came back. And my cousin had a trap line all the way down that whole road. He got a wolverine before me, and I was kind of jealous.

And towards I started to get older, like sixth, seventh grade, I started to get out more often, on the snowgo, my Bravo. Just like I used to work for elders, I used to pack in wood for them and get gas money. I don't know, I lived pretty independent, cause there was no father figure around for me, so I was always doing stuff like that around my house.

And like I just started going out breaking trail, because my uncle was always doing that, and always breaking trail all over the place. So like back here, right straight across these woods, there's like, for like a whole spring there, there's nowhere in the woods there wasn't a trail, snowgo trail.

Anyways, it was really fun for a while until I got like ninth grade year, my freshman year, it didn't go too well. That's when I went to school in Edgecumbe. I was really lonesome though because Sitka is a long ways away. It was totally, I was like I had to go through a culture shock and I didn't want to get used to it. After awhile, I met a few people there.

Oh, my first time drinking was here in [the village] my freshman year. We had this big old party and I woke up next to this girl. Like we're partying, like we started partying like 10:00 o'clock. We had coke bottles of Seagram's, I don't know if we got another one. I came to, I'm holding this girl, like everybody started coming into the room. I was like, "Oh, man, what the hell happened?" Like, "I don't know. I just came to." And I was like I didn't want to go home, it's like 12:30, [and] man, my mom's going to be so pissed.

I was grounded for like two weeks. She made me do my own community service. I was out there cleaning up the hall, and I was cutting wood for the hall.

I don't know, it's crazy. I heard about it the whole next day, everybody said, "What the hell were you doing drinking last night, you little alchy?" And I

heard it from all my uncles and everybody. I was so hung over. I was sitting on those stairs, it was like breakfast didn't look good, nothing looked good. I was just downing all the water I could. Get out there and pack in that wood and go pump that oil, too. I heard about it from all my uncles and my mom's like, "Get doing it." She didn't let them have nothing to do with me. Now here come the jokes a couple of days later. "Oh, geez, going down the same road as your uncles -- *crazy*." It's like, oh, well, I know. That's like, I don't know, everything I did after that was like they'd get mad at me and then the joke came out.

SR: What about hard times, did you know anyone personally who committed suicide, that you knew?

HP: No, they were all basically older than me. I never really knew anybody personally. I saw somebody that killed themselves though. Me and Bunker, we were out playing on the bank and this guy... Right after my uncle built his log cabin, he just had a platform right there. And we were playing up there and we saw something. "Oh, he's just drunk, you know." We were playing, we were eating raspberries and stuff. He had this big old raspberry patch in front of his house and we snuck over there. And I saw him, he shot himself. Me and Captain, David and Zach, we're just hanging out, and David goes "Oh, shit." And we're looking at him and he's fucking dead. And Captain started crying because that was his uncle. I was too young. And I saw the whole thing. And everybody in the community just went up there. And it's like, oh, man he's crazy...

It's depression, I guess. Being here too long. And I don't know why, but I guess a lot of people get depressed around here after a while. I was like, I'd better do something with myself before I head down that same road. It's just I had to get out of here. If you're not active and not doing anything, you just see stuff day to day. That's what I think it is - people live day to day here.

I don't know, I don't even know where all the money goes anyway. And experience, if you don't have it, like there's not too much jobs economy-wise here, the economy is pretty low, because there's just not too much job opportunities. It's just like seasonal work here, people really look forward to firefighting in the summer.

And that first summer, I went firefighting, I made over \$9,000. I gave \$1,500 to my mom, and I paid off the water bill. Went to Fairbanks and bought that snowgo for \$4,300. Bought a whole bunch of clothes. I just hung out here. I had spending money for a while. I had my snowgo, that was my gas money. And I was one of the three people that bought snowgos that year.

And everybody has dreams and aspirations of buying a snowgo. But me, over here, there were only three ones to buy a snowgo, and nobody else did. My uncle was really proud of me, he was like, "Well, he worked for that money. That's hard earned money. You better do something with it." I'm so glad I bought my snowgo.

I always had to travel a lot, because I got my own snowgo, and all. Do a lot of traveling, lot of hunting, like to get out a lot. My uncle, he decided to try, he had like, had that bear hunting trail and we always used to travel back to that like, I don't know, me and him we broke out that trail every year, bring supplies back there, setting up this camp.

And I always felt kind of disappointed because he never really asked me if I wanted to help him out, but lately he's like giving me the option, when I was in school. "If you want to come back and spent a week with me, I can do a hunt." And I was like, "I got school and there are things I got planned. Too late." I don't know, that's how I really want it. So I can go out and be more independent. I'd rather go out and do stuff by myself now.

That's another thing, you've got to do things. Only way things are going to get done is if you go out and do them. And a lot of people around here, they have a lack of resources to go out and do those things. A lot of the elders are

really good to me, because I go out and do things for myself. I'll be there to help them out, just do a few things and help them out. And hopefully, they wish me good luck, you know.

1.3 Athabascan Adaptations, Revisited

These narratives demonstrate how aboriginal ways of surviving youth have changed in response to the settlement of families into the villages. Elders living in the villages today were among the last generation to travel around, as children, to the seasonal subsistence camps with their parents for extended periods of time. Most elders in the Athabascan villages today can speak their Native language, but also speak English fluently. These elders, as children, witnessed their parents' struggle to adapt their mobile, opportunistic lifestyle to a year-round settlement life. Through these narratives it becomes apparent that indigenous economies were also fundamentally emotional economies. For Hazel there was no time to feel bored or lonesome growing up on the land because "there was always something to do." People *could not* be bored or lonesome or sad "too much" when they were growing up because they had to keep moving and working to survive. Essentially, the cost of emotion on the land was prohibitive of strong feelings being acknowledged or expressed in social life. Living on the land required an economizing of emotion in everyday life.

If a family member was lost out at camp the rest of the family would have to move on despite the loss such that members of the social group would not become preoccupied with sadness or grief. Strong feelings were avoided while out on the land. This does not mean people did not feel things deeply. Instead, it means that strong feelings had to be put away while out on the land to be *taken out* when there was time and space for emotional action.

John Honigmann (1981) has described the aboriginal Athabascan personality as one based on strict "inner control" of affective and expressive states. Other researchers have also noted this trait as common among Athabascans (Brody 1982; Osgood 1959; Savishnsky 1994) and acknowledge the necessity of suppressing feelings and emotional action in everyday life in small, kinship-based hunter-gatherer societies. They also point

out that there have always been formal mechanisms in place for the release of these strong feelings at certain times and places throughout the year.

Aboriginally, Athabascans would gather together at a few times during the year, and in the winter months for extended periods. Sometimes several families would come together for feasting, dancing and potlatching. These traditions were modified and some discontinued after the coming of the missions and trading posts to the Interior. Many Athabaskan families continued the tradition of travel to the seasonal subsistence camps interspersed with trips to a central gathering location for extended visiting. Hazel describes going to “town” with her family to trade furs and stock up on basic supplies and witnessing the drinking. Going to town was a much anticipated activity for everyone in the family. It was a time to reconnect with friends and family and make new relationships. Town was *fun*. It was a place where adults could socialize and children could play. Going to town was like taking time off from the everyday demands of life on the land. The strict inner control that was necessary for survival on the land was often given release in town through organized activities such as dances, memorials, potlatches, and drinking parties (e.g. Helm 2000).

Alcohol has been a central aspect of settlement life in Alaska from the establishment of sea ports, fur trade posts and mining camps. Most elders recall their parents drinking periodically, mainly at holidays or when they would come in from camp to the village to sell furs, restock supplies or enroll their children in school. Elders typically described observing only their father’s drinking and most emphasized that it was periodic and for a shorter duration than it is nowadays.

Binge-style drinking is the most common form reported in our research from all generations. This type of drinking involves the consumption of a large amount of alcohol over a period of time (sometimes days, sometimes weeks) alternating with periods (sometimes weeks, sometimes months) of abstinence. From the life history accounts of elders in the village it became clear that the periods of abstinence from drinking have varied over time. Elders witnessed long periods of abstinence when their families would

travel and stay out at seasonal subsistence camps. Then there was the significant shift in periods of abstinence within the adult generation.

The contemporary adult generation was the first to grow up in the village. They described witnessing significantly shorter periods of abstinence with their parents and more frequent alternation between binges and quitting. Quitting continued to correspond to seasonal rounds on the land, but the time spent at camps was steadily decreasing. By the time the adult generation was coming of age, survival no longer necessitated long periods of non-drinking.

This focus on extended periods of abstinence (rather than on increased amounts of drinking) provides a critical insight into aboriginal substance use behavior that could have important implications for intervention and treatment of alcohol abuse disorders in the village today. Currently most programs focused on treating alcohol abuse disorders focus on reducing drinking. The narratives from elders and adults in the village though suggest an alternative focus on extending periods of abstinence. Elders and older adults tend to explain the problems associated with drinking coming more from the changing social conditions that led to the break-down of the external social order controlling drinking behavior.

VanStone argues that changes in Athabascan adaptive strategies in response to contact and settlement can be understood through the process of consolidation and intensification of aboriginal social and resource utilization patterns (VanStone 1974: 102).

Concentration of the population into permanent settlements has meant a less efficient utilization of the environment. Under these new settlement conditions, hunting and trapping are likely to be fairly intensive only in the immediate vicinity of the permanent settlement. Large areas once utilized for the procurement of traditional resources are no longer visited by the Indians. (VanStone 1974: 108)

Village life did not just entail the consolidation and intensification of aboriginal economic activity it also involved a parallel process of consolidation and intensification of social life and emotional activity. In the village, people were using less of the land and more of their heart.

The children of the contemporary elder generation are adults between the ages of 35 and 50 years of age. The adult generation was the first to be raised in the village. The older adults of this generation were the last to be required to attend boarding schools for their high school years. By the 1970s most villages had established high schools. By this time, though, sending children out to boarding school had become integrated into local ways of life and many families continued to send their high school age children out to boarding schools in Sitka or St. Mary's. The adult generation, as children, continued to travel out to subsistence camps, particularly in the spring and summer, to hunt beaver, birds and fish. Nearly all adults spent the entire summer at fish camps as children. These were often their only respites from the emotional intensity of village life.

Relationships with peers became the basis for survival in this generation. Settlement life has always been characterized by age-set activities, while camp life was characterized by intergenerational activities. In town children would congregate together and play for extended periods while their parents would shop, trade, drink and socialize with other adults. When families began to occupy the villages year-round this same pattern continued with children and adults spending the majority of their time engaged in peer-based activities.

The contemporary adult generation, coming of age between the 1960s-1980s, confronted an entirely new social environment where alcohol was freely available, access to high paying (pipeline and construction) wage employment readily accessible and reliance on the land and animals no longer vital to everyday survival. The problems associated with alcohol abuse appear to have peaked in the 1970s and 1980s. Velma Wallis (2002: 148) also provides evidence for the 1970s being the roughest years in the villages. She states that the "1970s were a time when everyone in Ft. Yukon seemed to be drinking. A whole generation of us spent our teenage years with no concept of rules, discipline, or order. Nor did we feel safe at any time of day."

Through my research it became apparent that the social problems with alcohol in the villages, while still the most significant issue in these communities today, *have improved*. Most participants report that, while problems with alcohol may still be "bad"

they are certainly better than what they were 20 years ago. It was also among this generation that suicide rates began to peak among youth. Every adult between the ages of 34 and 50 in this study had lost someone in their age set, a family member or close friend, to suicide while growing up.

The adults today, as children, would often travel out to fish camp with their parents in the summer. Many of the adult males would also go out to fall camps for short periods to hunt moose with their older male relatives. The periods of time spent at these camps were shorter in duration and the child's role while out at camp had shifted dramatically. Willa recalls camp as the happiest times in her childhood. She talks about the games she and her siblings and cousins would play while the adults were putting away fish. She also recalls learning to cut fish herself, but the majority of time that children in Willa's generation spent at camp was spent with peers, swimming and playing. Camp was no longer as much "work" as it was for the elders. Camp instead is described universally by adults and youth as *fun*. The hard part about going out to camp for these generations is being away from peers and getting bored after a while. The labor of children in the family was no longer required to maintain minimum subsistence goals. Camp still served as an important socialization experience and remains one of the few occasions in Athabascan childhood experience where children get to spend extended periods of time away from the village with their parents, grandparents and extended family engaged in a shared activity.

While growing up, today's adults were still being raised to observe ritual avoidances, locally referred to as "*hutlanne*" things. They were raised to follow traditional rules for behavior in the village, as they would have been on the land, but the changes in survival strategies no longer necessitated their strict observance. Willa's experience of puberty seclusion at her first menses was exceptional for her age group. Most women her age had less acknowledgement of their first period by their mothers. Many adult women describe having to go to an older sister to learn what was going on after getting their first period, or having an older sister tell them beforehand. Even within

the “stricter” families, such as Willa’s, indigenous rules were broken in the village and soon began to have less power to direct people’s behavior altogether.

In the village, survival is no longer about meeting basic physical needs. Starvation and exposure are no longer the primary perils. This does not mean that life in the village is not dangerous or risky. In the village, adult life may be in many ways easier than it was out on the land, but childhood and adolescence in the village has become more difficult. Elders and adults will both say that they think that youth today have it harder than they did growing up. Both Hazel and Willa lost siblings while they were growing up, but for Hazel it was a natural part of life lived out on the land. Willa’s sister’s suicide was much harder to deal with because it was not a “natural thing” and there was no cultural explanation for it. Willa’s parents, the elder generation today, had no experience with youth suicide. Aboriginally, suicide was an uncommon, although not unheard of, practice, and was generally associated with the elder and/or infirm members of the community (Wallis 1993). The response by Willa’s older relatives to not talk about the suicide most likely has to do with traditional ritual avoidances of dangerous subjects and strong feelings that go back to the way emotions were managed in the indigenous economy of everyday life. It was clear that Willa’s parents and older relatives literally did not know enough about what was going on with the youth even then to be able to understand or interdict the emotional decision-making within this generation.

Willa instead turned to her peers to help her survive her feelings following her sister’s suicide. The power of these peer relationships for young people in *Yookkene* cannot be understated. Willa identifies a recent conflict with friends as the precipitating factor of her sister’s suicide. As will be shown later (see *Chapter 5*) this is a common explanation among youth for suicide attempts and completed suicides. Alienation from peers or even the threat of isolation can be devastating to a young person. Close peer relationships are essential for survival in the village. They are what “saved” Willa and allowed her to heal from her grief. Being isolated from this safety and support system is like realizing you have driven your snowgo onto rotten ice. Stranded alone, if you fall through you will have to pull yourself out, a feat many cannot manage on their own.

Suicide was not the only thing young people had to survive growing up in the village. Children in *Yookkene* have to learn early on how to navigate their social and physical environment independently and in the company of slightly older and slightly younger siblings, cousins and friends. They develop strategies to avoid harm and have fun, these not being exclusive of each other. One of the primary things young people have to learn early in their childhood is how to avoid and deal with drinking people (see *Chapter 3*). Willa describes how her friends with drinking parents got to do more things and stay out later. As a child Willa envied her friends their seeming autonomy but realized as an adult how much harder it is to survive this type of childhood than it was to survive her own “strict” one. Willa was expected to follow rules and ritual avoidances, and her friends were not. Her friends got to have more “fun” but without any types of direction or external controls on youth behavior they also suffered a higher cost when fun seeking got “crazy” (see *Chapter 5*).

The children and youth growing up today are the second and sometimes third generation to be raised in the village. Village life today does not demand that children contribute to household production. The contemporary youth generation is characterized by the end of summer fish camps as an economic necessity and familial rite. Only the older youth in their late 20s recall spending significant amounts of time at camp. Family size has decreased substantially from the adult generation. The types of wage labor necessary to maintain the household do not allow parents to include children in their daily work life in the way traditional economic activities like trapping, hunting and gathering once did. There has been a significant increase in the amount of time available for young people to engage in activities of their own choosing. Introduction of media and technology, including satellite TV, Internet and DVD, re-center the base of everyday activity indoors.

From the adult to youth generations, the transition from dog teams to snowgos as the primary means of winter travel on the land potentially had the greatest impact overall on the indigenous emotional economy in *Yookkene*. The importance of dog teams diminished rapidly after the adoption of reliable motorized sleds in the 1980s. Some

Athabaskan villages retained dog teams for competitive purposes but most completely abandoned the tradition. This meant that dog feed was no longer necessary so many families also stopped going to fish camp, and significantly reduced their fishing. Most families in *Yookkene* could catch and process enough fish for direct human consumption from the river bank in front of the village.

Caring for dogs was generally children's work and would require twice daily feedings that could take up to two hours each. Initially only adults had snowgos and youth were rarely allowed to drive them. The transition to snowgos also severely limited how many family members could travel together out on the land. Dog sleds could pull several children and their parents and others could keep up by foot. Travel by snowgo is often limited to one or two people per machine. Fathers sometimes had to choose which child they would take out with them to check traps or fish net. This type of selective socialization with overt preferential treatment of offspring is another part of what makes growing up in the village harder for children than it was on the land.

Henry's narrative clearly demonstrates the importance of the snowgo today in the villages. Youth have grown up with the snowgo as the "traditional" means of travel. Snowgos have been thoroughly "indigenized" in Athabaskan culture (e.g. Smith 1999). Snowgos indicate power, and power remains an important concept among Athabascans. Getting a snowgo has also become an important rite of passage for young males in the villages. Henry and every single one of his peers talked at length about their snowgos or their ambitions towards acquiring a snowgo of their own.

Snowgos are an essential means for survival in the village today. Young men are motivated to work to acquire a snowgo. Most young men will greatly anticipate turning 18 to be able to go firefighting in the summer. Their first firefighting check will almost always go towards purchasing a snowgo. Having a snowgo motivates young men to go hunting and traveling to other villages for tournaments. For male youth, having a snowgo is a primary motivation to live in the village. Recent publications have suggested that young men are no longer hunting with aboriginal regularly and are no longer engaging in traditionally "male" activities on an every day basis. They are also not going to college or

working in the villages or getting married or getting out of the village (e.g. Brems 1996; Hensel 1996; Richards 1984; Segal 1998). We seem to know much more about what young men are not doing than what they are doing. Focusing on what youth are not doing is often an easier task for researchers and adults than trying to understand what their lives are truly all about. In fact, the young men that are not going out on the land are often those more intensely engaged in the village culture.

Henry's descriptions of growing up in the village provide detailed information on what children and youth are doing everyday. What is striking about Henry's account is the apparent absence of adult interaction he experienced growing up in the village, or at least the lack of impact these interactions had on his memories of childhood. Henry and his friends spent the majority of their time outdoors when they were growing up. Children are always "playing out" in the villages, even in the cold and dark of the winter. Older adolescents and youth spend more time indoors, typically locked away in a back bedroom with friends watching DVDs, Myspacing/Beboing/IM-ing, burning MP3s and listening to iPods. But even they will break this indoor time up with frequent walks or rides around the village to "check things out." Adults will often comment that kids in the village are the all-knowing and all-seeing observers; they are always keeping track of what's going on.

The social changes that occurred between the elder, adult and youth generations have substantially altered the indigenous emotional economy of Athabascans. The transition from dog-team to snowgo demonstrates the critical break-up of the human-animal relationship. Survival remains a central aspect of Athabaskan life and culture both on the land and in the village. Survival is conditioned by the relationships individuals establish in their lives. It used to be that good relationships with humans and with animals would determine survival, with good relationships defined by the feeling-states of those involved in them. Surviving remains the basis for a shared "Native" identity today and good relationships are still fundamental to survival. What has changed is the way the emotional landscape has been mapped in the village.

Chapter 2

Chillin in the Vill

SMR: So just tell me just a little bit about what it's like -- what was it like growing up here?

Della: It was fun when we were younger.

Tami: Yeah, like snowball fights and everything.

Della: Yeah. Like no one cared about like how they looked or.....

Tami: Yeah.

Della:what they wore.

Tami: Who they hung out with.....

Della: Yeah.

Tami:and stuff like that.

Della: It's just everybody would just hang out together.

Tami: When we were younger, everything was always fun and exciting. We always had friends to hang out with, so we were never bored.

Everyday life in an Alaska Native village follows a fairly predicable pattern if you are a young person. There is school and then there is playing out, hanging out, riding around, staying in, doing chores and going to the gym. Occasional trips out on the land for hunting, fishing or camping; or to other villages for tournaments, funerals and potlatches; or into town for medical appointments and shopping, break-up the everyday cycle of life in the village.

The patterns of youth culture in the village have remained fairly consistent over the last few decades but we continue to know very little about the lives of young people from their own perspective. Richard Condon's (1987) research with Inuit youth in the central Canadian arctic remains the only contemporary study of the lives of young people in a post-contact indigenous arctic settlement. A youth perspective is greatly needed in Alaska Native research if we ever hope to get closer to understanding how young people survive the village.

While living in *Yookkene* I observed young people engaged in a fairly uniform pattern of activities that varied by season, age and gender. In their interviews with me, young people would describe their childhood around these activities. Youth coming of age in the villages today spent the majority of their earlier childhood (between the ages of

5 and 13) either in school or “playing out.” Youth in their adolescence between the ages of 14 and 18 spend the majority of their time in school or “hanging out” or “riding around.” In between these constants there are also sports (basketball and softball), subsistence (hunting, fishing, camp) and travel. These constitute the basis of everyday “things to do” in the village.

The everyday activities engaged by young people in the village reflect the emotion schemas of younger youth, children between the ages of 5 and 14. Younger youth are motivated to have *fun* and avoid being *bored*. Fun is the most highly valued feeling-state for younger youth in the village. Fun is a social and emotional index for a particular way of being (socially engaged), and a particular way of feeling (happy, desired, useful, powerful, etc.) Fun is produced through social interaction. Whenever young people talked about having fun, or described something as fun, it involved other people engaged in activity together. Having fun creates happiness and good feeling. Fun is an emotional as well as social state.

Being bored is what young people are doing when they are not having fun. *Boredom* is a social and emotional index for a way of being (alone, disengaged) and a way of feeling (lonesome, sad, angry, tired) as well. Being bored feels bad and is typically something that young people experience when they are by themselves or not engaged in a social activity. Sitting home would be described by young people as an example of “being bored.” They may be watching TV, doing homework, cleaning the dishes, watching a younger sibling or surfing the internet, but if they are doing it by themselves, it’s more likely to be boring (feel bad). If they were doing any of the above activities with a friend, it’s more likely to be “fun” (feel good). The more fun that can be produced through social interaction the better everyone involved feels.

Youth are intensely motivated to have fun with a similarly strong avoidance for being bored. In an indigenous emotional economy these would have been highly adaptive behavioral strategies. Fun-seeking behavior, and avoidance of boredom, requires a level of sociality, cooperation, risk-taking and hyper-arousal that works well when out on the land, where subsistence activities require alertness, quick responses to environmental

stimuli and collaboration. The symptoms of boredom among Athabascans are very similar to the symptoms listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (APA 2000: 356) for Major Depressive Episode. Being bored involves feeling “down” or “depressed,” sleeping a lot or staying up all night, not eating or eating a lot, and can even involve thoughts of suicide and preoccupation with thoughts of death or of the recently deceased. Being bored is so unpleasant that most young people will go to great lengths to avoid it.

Youth motivated to have fun and not be bored will often *be mischief*. The term “mischief” is a local idiom describing the behavior and motivations of youth in the village to have fun and avoid being bored. Mischief describes a very particular set of activities that are engaged exclusively by youth in the village. Mischief behavior involves a strategic innovation on indigenous rules, roles and values, and includes the potential for increased power, status, and attractiveness - all things that contribute to survival. At the same time mischief behavior has the potential for harm when young people engage in it too much or for too long. The problem is the apparent lack of controls and productive outlets for fun-seeking and boredom avoidance behaviors in the village. An ethnographic overview of what young people are doing everyday in the village will demonstrate the emotion schema of younger youth to have fun, avoid boredom and get into mischief.

2.1 Playing out

“Playing out” is a local term used to indicate a shared set of understandings and values concerning normal childhood behavior. “Go play out” is a commonly used command by parents in *Yookkene*. When asked where their children are, parents will often simply state, “playing out.” When children come home and their parents ask where they were, they will often answer, “playing out.” Playing out describes a pattern of child behavior and values about child behavior that are locally specific and culturally-based in indigenous socialization practices. It is through playing out that children learn how to live in a village.

On any given day in the village I could walk out of my house and encounter children. I might not see anyone else, but there were almost always a few children out

and about. Children play out all year in *Yookkene*, but the kinds of activities and the intensity and duration of the activities varies by season. In the summer months from May to August when daylight provides long lit spaces children will play out from mid-morning until late in the evening. It is not uncommon to see children playing in small groups outside until 11pm or midnight during the summer months. In the summer children spend long hours playing games, riding bikes, and swimming. Children generally say there are more “things to do” in the summer and most younger children prefer summer to winter.

Children play out together in the villages. Children typically play in groups of three or four, but will often meet up with other small groups and engage in collective games and play for a while before breaking up into smaller groups again. Most often the smaller play groups are gender segregated; girls will more often play in smaller, close knit groups with other girls, and boys will play with other boys. The smaller groups are also closer in age, typically with not more than three years between the members of the play group. It is common practice to combine groups in collective activities where mixed groups of boys and girls between the ages of 5 and 11 or 12 years will engage in activities such as tag, trackdown, hide and seek and ball games.

One sunny afternoon in July, I observed a group of younger children playing a village version of “tag.” There were around 8 children, boys and girls between the ages of 7 and 10, running from one of the girls and yelling out, “She’s *hutlaanee!*” The *hutlaanee* girl was chasing after the other ones trying to tag them and make them *hutlaanee*. She eventually grabbed one of the boys and screamed, “Now you’re *hutlaanee* – Oooo get away he’s *hutlaanee!*” ‘*Hutlaanee*’ is a Koyukon Athabascan term for a forbidden thing or a taboo or broken rule (Jette and Jones 2000: 1030; Nelson 1983: 21). Sometimes the term *hutlaanee* will be used sometimes as an exclamation by adults or elders to point out a rule violation or culturally inappropriate act. I have been at memorial potlatches and heard an elder woman audibly breathe “*hutlaanee*” during a speech when a comment was made about a taboo subject. I have also heard the term *hutlaanee* used as an explanation for an individual’s behavior. For example, when asked why young girls were skipping

around a pile of shoes in the doorway, the woman of the household explained, “because it’s *hutlaanee* to step over a man’s shoes.” The use of this term by children in play is an example of how the younger members of the group experiment together with cultural ideas and practices.

In the fall time, after school has started back up again, children will not play out as long in the evenings and activities become more centered on the school playground, the school gym and outside of the houses. With the coming of the snow, outdoor play again intensifies during the early part of the winter. Children spend lots of time playing out during December. Sliding down is one of the most popular activities. Large groups of children will drag sleds out to one of the hills (or have an older sibling or adult ride them out of town to a popular sliding hill) and slide down for hours. When the snow accumulates and develops a stiff frozen crust, the children will start building snow tunnels and snow forts. Sliding on the frozen lake and river ice is also a popular activity. Tag, hide and seek and other outdoor games are also played during the warmer winter days. Older children and lucky younger ones ride around on snowgos and drag sleds with several friends behind them. Even on the coldest days in *Yookkene*, when I had to constantly thaw my eyelashes with my fingers to keep my eyes from sticking shut while I was walking around, I would invariably see two children standing outside the house. They might be simply poking holes in the snow with a stick but there they would be, all bundled up, playing out.

Talk of playing out factored largely into youth descriptions of childhood experience in *Yookkene*.

Captain (21 years old)

Captain: Growing up in *Yookkene* was fun when I was small as far as I can remember, which was pretty much when I learned how to ride bikes, me and my best friend at the time. Ever since we learned how to ride bikes, summertime, all summer we’d just ride bikes. Ride to the lake go swimming, play Little League and all kind of kids games like kick the can and a game that was called Manhunt where we ran around with spears and club each other. Kind of like tag, but with

spears. And summertime was swimming and fall time was we still had our bikes, but we just dressed a little warmer. Oh, ice. We'd skate on the ice, like when the water drops really low it freezes up I guess and we run around the new channel around *Yookkene* where all the ice is and make what we call rubbery ice.

SMR: How do you do that?

Captain: You just run over a piece of ice, over like a length for instance and when it gets really cracked up it gets rubbery. That used to be fun to us, like running on a wave, sort of.

SMR: You never went through?

Captain: There's a lot of people that went through, but nothing really serious. I mean we don't go in like really deep. Chicken hunting in the fall when we were growing up, walk around the woods looking for chickens with 22's. Wintertime was just school, basketball, skiing. Fall time we used to do running too in school and winters today it's snowmachines.

In the daytime I was out all day until dinnertime, from lunchtime to dinnertime I'd go to school and I wouldn't go home after school. I'd stay out until dinner and they'd say come home once in a while. I was like, "Ah, alright." I was pretty wild until maybe 10 years old. That's when I was young, seven or eight and even after dinner I'd go play out until late. Otherwise if not, then mostly me and just my three friends we would just go and climb on something, jump off.

SMR: So you weren't home much. You didn't spend much time with your family.

Captain: No. We used to run away from the VPSO a lot and we got chased a lot out of here just by being wild and racing around, egging their house.

SMR: The VPSO?

Captain: Yeah. Even one time we egged a VPSO in a dark alley and ran away.

SMR: What about when [your uncle] was VPSO?

Captain: He didn't really care, so it got pretty boring. He didn't really bust people. If he busted 'em, he would say get home right now. He was a pretty mellow dude when he was VPSO. I guess he made it kind of interesting. Nobody

ever tried to race away from him, cause he had one of the fastest sleds around.

SMR: How old were you guys?

Captain: There were a lot of us when we were about 12 and 13, 14. That was a fun thing to do, climb around them buildings make the VPSO chase us. We used to play games or climb on houses, climb on the school and jump off into the powdery snow in the wintertime. That used to be the funnest. It still is if there is enough snow.

Girls described their childhood experiences in ways similar to boys. Girls also talked about playing games such as manhunt, tag and jumping off buildings, sliding down, avoiding curfew, and running from the village police officer (VPSO). In general though, girls tended to include more references to home-based activities such as babysitting, cleaning up and playing dolls and board games with another girlfriend. Daily observations in *Yookkene* revealed that girls tend to play out less than boys. Girls will more often play indoors with one or two other girlfriends their same age. During the summer both girls and boys spend more time playing out but boys still tend to spend more time overall outdoors and away from the home.

It was once typical of entire communities to get involved in games and collective play in open areas in the villages. Adults would often describe how everyone in the community used to get together and go slide down; even the older adults would participate with the younger children. Stickgame was another multigenerational outdoor activity that everyone would play together. It is less common now for adults to be involved in youth-based outdoor play. Even the organized village sports are divided by age with Little League, middle school, high school, adult and 40 and over teams.

Playing out in *Yookkene* involves relatively unrestricted and unsupervised activities engaged exclusively by children. Children are provided a relatively unrestricted and unrestrictive environment in the village where they are encouraged to demonstrate independent action. At no time again in their lives will individuals in *Yookkene* experience this kind of freedom in social interaction, outside of drinking occasions (see *Chapter 3*). In this respect, younger children have a favored social position in the village.

Children are given fairly free reign of the village and their activities are rarely intervened upon by adults. This type of least restrictive socialization for children should not be conflated with neglect of children. Children in *Yookkene* are clearly not neglected. They are quite obviously are doted on, dressed in the warmest and finest clothes the family can provide, and are rarely denied a want. Parents may not always know exactly where their children are, but they know that someone in the village will know, and that they are nearly always only a phone call (or VHF announcement) away. Social behavior becomes much more restricted as children move towards adolescence.

2.2 Hanging out and riding around

When children reach adolescence they begin to play out less and hang out more. Hanging out is a local way of talking about what adolescents and youth do in the village. It communicates a shared understanding of normative youth behavior. Hanging out most often involves pairs or trios of youth (14-24) doing things such as talking, walking around, watching television or DVDs, playing video games and waiting together for something to happen. Hanging out tends to be more limiting and boundaried compared to playing out. Hanging out is typically gender segregated. Girls hang out with other girls and boys hang out with other boys. The only time that boys and girls will hang out together is when drug use or drinking is involved and then it is no longer considered strictly hanging out.

Hanging out most often occurs indoors or in a more restricted area. In the summer in *Yookkene*, youth will hang out at the lake or in front of the store or at the ball field. Hanging out involves sitting around, talking, seeing what is going on around town and waiting for something to happen. In opposition to the norms for playing out, it is more common to see adolescent age females hanging out outdoors. By the time young males reach early adolescence they spend the majority of their time riding around or hanging out indoors by themselves or with a group of male peers playing video games. Playing video games is generally a male youth activity that is engaged in small groups.

Young males will gather at one of the houses that has a video game station with the locally preferred game of the moment and play for hours, taking turns. I have only

rarely observed female youth playing video games and never for the duration that males will play or with the same collective and competitive intensity.

Adolescent age females will spend more time watching their favorite television series such as *Sex and the City* or *Friends* on portable DVD players or laptop computers in their bedrooms. Girls this age also spend more time than their male counterparts on the computer, emailing, instant messaging (IM-ing), MySpacing and Bebo-ing with youth in *Yookkene* and the surrounding villages. Most villages in Alaska are online and many have high speed, wireless connections available to individual residences. MySpace has become popular with youth in the villages and provides an outlet for more unrestricted social interaction and emotional expression than is allowed in everyday life.

Female youth hang out primarily with one or two best friends. These are focal relationships that will be explored in more detail in the next chapter. Female youth pairs will often make regular rounds of the village, walking slowly together from one girl's house to the other or simply in a circle around the village before returning home. Male youth do not walk around the village in this way. They will walk to get somewhere (like adults will) but do not typically walk around as part of hanging out.

Young males will instead spend as much time as they can riding around. It was not uncommon to see high school age girls walking around the village into the late night and early morning hours. I observed female youth sitting together outside the community hall or school late at night as well. Most often, though, if this late, it would be two girls slowly walking along one of the main roads whispering or just walking silently together.

The girls call this "checking it out" and they do this several times a day. It is not culturally appropriate to be aggressive or assertive in terms of actions towards another individual in many Athabascan societies (Fast 2002; VanStone 1974; Osgood 1958). This injunction is particularly strict in relations between males and females. In *Yookkene* male and female interaction in public remains highly controlled. It is generally not appropriate for unmarried or unpartnered men and women to "go around" together in public. Men and women, even those that are married, often do not sit together at public events such as basketball games or memorials. These rules are particularly strict between unrelated

young men and young women. They cannot approach each other purposefully in public or visit each other openly without risking gossip, teasing and sanction by their parents and older relatives. The main way for young people to meet is by “chance” while they are out in the village. Young people maximize their chances for meeting up with certain other people by “checking it out” on a regular basis. In general the gender differences in how these activities are engaged by the youth suggest that female youth dedicate more time and attention to sustaining a few close relationships while male youth are more involved in creating new ones.

Young people would typically describe hanging out as something you did for “fun” or to not be “bored.”

Autumn (20 years old)

SMR: So what are some of your best memories of growing up? Like your favorite time is.

Autumn: I can't remember. No.

SMR: You can't remember?

Autumn: No. I don't know. Probably just hanging out with my friends and stuff, my best friend. She was like two years younger than me. Me and her used to do crazy stuff.

SMR: What kind of stuff?

Autumn: We'd just hang out together, play crazy games, talk crazy.

Minnie (15 years old) and Natalie (17 years old)

SMR: Okay. And, first, I'll just ask you guys to talk a little bit about what you think about growing up here.

Natalie: It's boring. But like if I take off and I come back - or I just like leave for I don't how long, I just really miss it. I can't stay away from it -- here too long.

SMR: What do you miss about it mostly?

Natalie: My friends and like hangouts, places to hang out and stuff.

Yeah.

Minnie: Yeah.

SMR: Where do you guys hang out?

Natalie: Sometimes we drive around like with four-wheeler, we drive around all night.

SMR: Wow, that's good. You're pretty happy with the way things are, huh?

Natalie: Yeah, I like it kind of. Gets boring, though, sometimes. Really boring.

SMR: Then what do you do? Like when you feel really bored?

Natalie: Just hang out with our friends, find stuff to do.

Despite it being located more often indoors and involving less physical activity, hanging out is nonetheless more dangerous than playing out because hanging out has greater potential for boredom and "being bored" motivates young people to engage in any kind of activity to relieve this feeling-state. Some of the activities such as mischief or partying have the potential for negative consequences including injury, arrest or embarrassment.

Riding around is another common activity for adolescents and youth in *Yookkene*. Both girls and boys will ride around the village and on trails outside of the village for fun. It remains more common as a male activity and is certainly more valued by young males, but young females will also ride around for fun. Even children as young as 4 years old will ride around on mini-snowgos (120s) and these have become a high status item indicating the relative wealth and prosperity of the family. Young females will more often ride their mother's or father's snowgo around the village. Young males are more likely to inherit their parents' old snowgo or get one of their own. Getting a snowgo is an important rite of passage for young males in *Yookkene*. It signals the young male's independence and ability to go out on the land. Even though snowgos are used primarily for "fun" by young males, they are also used to go with their older male relatives to get wood, check traps or go hunting.

Youth will also ride around on 4-wheelers and in trucks. Young people will pile onto the front and back racks of a 4-wheeler and cruise around the village and the back

roads. Village trucks are scarcer but there are typically a few that youth can borrow or even fix up and claim that will then be used to ride around and check out the village, the airport and the back roads. None of these other modes of riding around are as highly valued as riding around on a snowgo. Riding snowgos is the most exciting way to get around and check things out. A snowgo can go much faster than a 4-wheeler or a truck in the village and young people will race and hit jumps and watermog (hydroplane across open water on the river) and do all kinds of risky and dangerous feats with their snowgos. Riding as a passenger on a snowgo requires a tight grip on the driver. Young males often admit that the “tight squeeze” they got from a female passenger was one of the most exciting things about riding a snowgo.

The hard riding of a snowgo requires young men to also possess advanced repair skills to work on broken down machines. Working on snowgos is a common everyday activity for young men. It is not uncommon to observe small groups of young men gathered around an overturned snowgo – some actively working to repair a busted track or blown valve, others observing or giving advice or recalling their own experiences with breaking down and fixing snowgos. Snowgo stories were a primary component in most interviews I conducted with young males in *Yookkene*.

Jordan (21 years old)

Jordan: The fall is not really a fun time of the year. Till like maybe in December when the snow machines start coming out and wintertime as kids we used to have little Bravos. Those used to be the funnest I guess, because everybody had ‘em and we would just ride around town and everybody would be doing cat and mouse. That’s the kind of game we played with a little ball, like a Nerf ball. Ride around and club other snowgos or whatever. When I was maybe 15 I got a high performance snowgo and I was pretty much up and down the river since then and like all over the place and going to tournaments to watch basketball. After I turned 15 I was pretty all over the place.

SMR: Did you play sports?

Jordan: Yeah, I was too wild I guess. I didn't really pay attention to school all that much. I was just too anxious to get out of school to race around. I'm just mostly a snow machine person I guess.

SMR: What were some of your best memories

Jordan: Killing my first moose was one of my good memories and a lot of other things. And crashing a snowmachine... and that's actually a best memory. That's when I was 12. I was in the sixth grade and I was going really fast, 80 miles an hour at least on the river and I couldn't see a piece of ice. I just hit it and blacked out and woke up and I was drifting between black outs. Cause I blacked out and opened my eyes and seen the sky and blacked out and came to and I was riding across the river in somebody's snow machine and blacked out and came to in the clinic and just started smiling. My head was hurting, but I was kind of smiling. That was one of my good memories.

Arnie (18 years old)

(Talking about people in *Yookkene* getting their snowgos stuck in overflow and having to be rescued by others "crazy enough" and with high-enough powered snowgos to be able to get across the overflow)

Arnie: I was just naming crazy people that will go through anything. They go through water when it's getting pretty close to springtime and all the snow is melted on the river. They still go out on the river and go hunting for geese and stuff like that. I don't know. Those are the craziest people in *Yookkene*. That's what we say. But the reason why they go through it is because they all got high-powered snow machines, like ProX 600, AJX 600, Firecat 600. Those things go through water easy. That's why I can't wait to get my RMK up here. I want to ride it up. But not go out there or nothing like, though. I'm not that crazy. But I was watermoggling last spring.

SMR: You were what?

Arnie: Watermogging. That's...you know what that is, right? Going through, right over overflow. I was up there at 7 mile and there was like a breakthrough from here to there. I was running out of gas. I thought I was going to run out of gas in the water. I was driving slow over the water. I was holding it wide open. I was going slow. And I'm all "waa-waa." I made it across and right when I reached my house, it just ran out of gas. So I lucked out and got out. It's really fun riding around in the spring because it's like flat ice from here to 4 mile. I just hold it wide open, just having fun, having a blast. Just cruising.

Young men with running snowgos tended to be less involved with the village and spent more time out on the land. They tended to party less than those young men without snowgos and spent more time on their own riding around. These young males were also much more likely to be "hard workers" and early acquisition of a snowgo is an indication of this potential capacity for young men in the village.

2.3 Sports

Collective competitive activity has been important to every generation in *Yookkene*. Elders recall playing soccer and stickgame in the large open spaces behind the houses when they would come into town from camp. Everyone would participate in these sports games. Today, sports represent one of the primary activities engaged by youth in *Yookkene*. The primary sports in the village are softball in the summer and basketball in the winter. It increases social status tremendously to demonstrate a high level of skill in sports, particularly basketball and softball. Volleyball and cross-country skiing are also popular sports but are not as socially valued. Basketball (along with snowgo riding) is an activity that has the potential for great prestige among young males. It is also a prestige activity for females, but to a slightly lesser degree. Men's basketball games have higher attendance than women's games. Men tend to play more intensely and male teams are more selective.

Sports events are well attended by the entire community. Basketball tournaments are universally described as among the most fun times in the villages. School gyms will

be packed with local spectators. People will come from the surrounding villages to play in and watch tournaments. Softball tournaments in the summer are also well attended. Large groups travel by boat to bring teams and watch the games. Tournaments typically last for two and a half days, beginning on a Friday evening and ending on Sunday afternoon. The host village will bring in a local band from Fairbanks to play at the dance.

Children are raised in the villages playing basketball and softball. They often display great skill at both sports by the time they are adolescents. Those with the most demonstrable skill are known by everyone in the village. This becomes an important part of belonging. Skilled male basketball players are more desirable to the opposite sex. If these skilled players are less successful in other areas of life, such as doing poorly in school or drinking too heavily, they will be forgiven these failings during basketball season. If they play well, they nearly become village heroes. Some young men who drink and party all summer and fall may restrict or limit drinking during basketball season to get in shape and attend practice and games.

The importance of basketball for Native male youth has been well documented elsewhere (e.g. Alexie 1993; Colton 2001; Condon 1995; O'Neil 1985). Most recently Michael D'Orso (2006) chronicled an entire season of high school basketball from the perspective of a Gwich'in Athabascan team in Fort Yukon. His account demonstrates the life and death importance of basketball in young Native lives. The young men he followed quite literally live for basketball during basketball season in the village. This is a critical point in a culture where suicide has become pervasive among youth. D'Orso points out that many of these young men come from drinking homes and going to the gym provides a break from the difficulties of home life. Basketball also provides a motivation for youth to restrict their drinking. Youth will drink after a game but will sober up or not drink before practice or a game.

I observed this same phenomenon in *Yookkene*. The school gym begins opening for basketball practice with "men's night" and "women's night" in October. Games will begin between local teams in November and tournaments will begin in December. High school basketball and community basketball are generally separate. *Yookkene* did not

have enough high school students for a regular high school basketball team and the community teams are generally restricted to players age 18 and older. These rules were often amended at game time to allow high school age players to join the men's and women's community teams.

Men and women play on separate teams and do not practice together. The women's teams will compete against each other and against the 40 and over men's team. Men's night is twice a week and women's night is twice a week. Sometimes the school principal will allow the gym to open for an extra night for practice or for community games. When I was in *Yookkene*, Men's nights were on Monday and Wednesday and women's nights were on Tuesday and Thursday. Community games would always be on Friday or Saturday night. Men's night was generally better attended. Often nearly every male in *Yookkene* between the ages of 18 and 35 would turn out for men's night. Fewer females attend women's night, and sometimes women's night would be cancelled for lack of attendance.

There are three regular men's teams, a 40 and over men's team, and one women's team in *Yookkene*. Young men who would spend the weekend partying would often purposefully sober up by Monday evening for men's night and stay sober until after Wednesday's men's night. There did not appear to be a similar motivation among females. Drinking at tournaments is similarly controlled with purposeful restriction or quitting at an earlier hour to be ready to play the next day. The teams that control their drinking typically do better in tournament play. This is particularly true of basketball, but is less important for softball.

Softball is played in most villages in the Interior but is not as common in other regions in Alaska. Men play fast pitch and women play slow pitch softball. Softball practice begins in May and is not restricted by gender or age in the same way that basketball is. Most villages have a Little League for children between the ages of 7-14. Softball teams are composed of players between the ages of 15 and 60. In *Yookkene* there was an active player who was in his late 50s, and a female pitcher that was approaching her 60th birthday. Generally players are younger, between their late teens and late 20s.

Men's fast pitch games are typically more exciting, and male pitchers have the most prestige of all of the other players. Softball season lasts until August with regional tournaments occurring weekly from late June to early August. Softball tournaments are not as highly attended because boat travel and plane travel is more cost prohibitive than winter travel to basketball tournaments by snowgo. Typically only the softball team members and a few adult chaperones will be able to make the trips to other communities for summer tournament play.

Every young person I talked to in *Yookkene* said that basketball and baseball tournaments were by far the most fun and exciting times in the village. Sports also came up in every interview with youth when I would ask about good memories about growing up or good times in the village.

Jay (19 years old)

SMR: What are your best memories of growing up, your happiest times that you can remember when you were growing up?

Jay: Playing baseball. Little League or running around with my friends, like going out hunting. Probably camping was the most fun.

SMR: Where would you guys camp?

Jay: Wherever we can go. Wherever we can reach with four-wheeler sometimes, but when we want to go by boat, we just ask our uncle. Take us out camping. Take us out camping.

Jordan (21 years old)

Jordan: In high school got into partying basically. I kind of tried to coming out last year, but like two years, within like three years ago I was partying pretty hard. For maybe like two years hard. I don't know. Traveling from town to town and just get all partied out and play baseball the next day. We would win all the time though on baseball our fast pitching anyways.

SMR: Did you guys play while you were drinking?

Jordan: No I would never play while I was drinking. I would only party one night and then I would just sit around and play baseball, go up there

and bat and whatever. I don't know. Seemed like the thing to do I guess. Nothing else going on in the summertime besides, working and playing fast pitch I guess.

Jacinda (23 years old)

SMR: What was it like growing up around here?

Jacinda: When I was in school there was everyone was here. I think a few years after I left they started doing the boarding schools and stuff, but it was big, sports were big here, high school sports and stuff. The whole community was into it. Then that year I graduated everything just died down it seemed like.

But I was always involved in skiing ever since I can remember. I was always into skiing and sports and stuff, so that was my way of getting by everything, just you know being involved with the sports and stuff. But I always had my close friends, so it wasn't too bad otherwise. Even I remember when I was little I wouldn't want to live, because I was hated so much. But it was just fun otherwise, you know being in sports and always traveling and stuff. I think I was the youngest person at school who got to travel for skiing. I traveled in the fourth grade and they usually didn't let the elementary students travel at that age.

My parents always encouraged me to do sports and stuff. It was like I didn't even have a choice. I remember when I first started smoking I was in the eighth grade and after that you know you can't breathe and stuff, so I kind of lost interest in skiing. And my dad I remember he was so mad. He was like well he didn't know I smoked, but he was like wondered why I quit skiing, and he was like you know if you are not going to be skiing then you come straight home and you clean up. I went straight from skiing to basketball.

Young people in *Yookkene* in many ways live for sports and most said that if they could change things in the village it would be to have the gym open more hours or have a

bigger outdoor basketball court or “more sports” options available. Playing sports was also a key reason for going to school, and was commonly stated as the best thing about school in general.

2.4 School

In *Yookkene* school plays a central role in a young person’s life but is not a direct measure of an individual child’s health and success. In *Yookkene* mental health and well-being is more commonly measured by social (external) factors. For example, the relationship between school and health in the villages is measured not by individual achievement in academics, but by relative participation in social activities such as sports and the ability of the young person to establish meaningful relationships with peers and with teachers. These are considered more indicative of academic achievement than good grades or high test scores. Low academic achievement is typically explained in terms of relationship problems, typically with peers or between the student and teacher. Low achievement in this area in the village can be balanced in terms of relative success in other areas, such as hunting or sports. Young males in particular will follow a statement about not doing well in school or dropping out with a statement about their high achievement in traditional activities and hunting.

Over the past few generations it has become standard practice to send high school age youth out to one of the regional boarding schools. The decision to go to school in the village or to go to one of the boarding schools is typically made by the young person. Sometimes a teacher will encourage a particular young person to go to boarding school, or a parent may send a young person that is starting to get into trouble in the village to boarding school, but most youth will make the decision to go on their own. Nearly all of the young people I talked to in the village said they either wanted to go to boarding school or had gone to boarding school for a while. The only exceptions to this were a few of the adolescent age boys who said they would not want to go to boarding school and give up riding their snowgos all winter.

The boarding school experience in *Yookkene* has not had the same kind of traumatic association with genocidal policy and practice that it has elsewhere in Native

North American (e.g. Adams 1997). Elders in *Yookkene* recalled being sent downriver to the mission school by their parents. This was described as something their own parents felt was necessary for their continued survival in the rapidly changing environment. They remembered feeling scared and lonesome at first, but also reported that it was a necessary experience and talked about good times associated with mission school, particularly meeting new people from all over and developing lasting friendships. Many of these elders did not continue in school past the eighth grade and some elected to stay with their family and go out to winter trapping camps. There was no strict enforcement of mission and boarding school attendance in these remote areas. A plane would come into some of the settlements and take children out to the schools, but there were no stories of forcible removal told to me by the elders, although they remember hearing some of these stories told by members of their parents' generation.

The elder generation today places a high value on Western education. Elders would often say to me that they feel that it is of crucial importance for young people to get the best education they can so they might be able to get a good paying job. The children of the contemporary elders were largely sent out to boarding school for their high school years. This tradition continued even after the establishment of a high school in *Yookkene* in 1978, although the number of young people going out to boarding schools decreased and there is always a number of youth that stay in the village through high school. The number of young people going out of the village for high school has increased over the last five years. Nearly three-quarters of the high school age youth in *Yookkene* attended one of the two regional boarding schools, leaving only 6 students in grades 9-12 in the village school.

Boarding school experience is associated with positive outcomes for young people in the villages today. Boarding schools provide a place where young people can explore new surroundings, increase and expand their social networks, and experience new relationships. Boarding schools allow young people to increase their participation in peer-based activities, but in a more controlled environment. At boarding school young people receive closer supervision than they would normally receive in the village. This

more restricted environment was often cited as one of the drawbacks to going to boarding school. Young people would often say that the school was harder but they were less “bored” by it because there were more activities and things to do on a daily basis. In some cases, going to boarding school was described as a life saving experience. Some of the older youth talked about how the decision to go to boarding school saved them from getting into serious trouble or self-harm in the village.

A larger proportion of young females attend boarding schools today than young men. Young males at boarding school have a higher drop-out rate, and many will spend their last year finishing up school in the village. Young males who have their own snowgo and are particularly active hunters and travelers, are those who most often stay in the village for school. Those without a snowgo or who are more into sports activities are more likely to attend boarding schools.

The boarding school experience is also consistent with the most prevalent work pattern found in the villages. Young people often have to leave the village to find wage employment. The most desirable jobs are those with a seasonal or flexible shift where the individual works for an extended period and is off for an extended period. The most common forms of employment include firefighting; roustabout; construction; journeymen; fishermen; housekeeping; and pipeline jobs. Most of these jobs are seasonal. They typically provide 1-3 months of intense, high-wage work. The time in-between these jobs or time off from permanent work is spent back in the village.

In general, school does not appear to be a large factor in young people’s self evaluations in *Yookkene*, and school was rarely mentioned when I asked youth to talk about their experiences growing up in the village. Most young people report positive school experiences. Going to school is “something to do” and is sometimes “fun” and sometimes “boring.” More young males reported negative school experiences while growing up than females. Several young men in *Yookkene* said they struggled through school, especially high school, and frequently got into trouble. Liking school seemed to be largely dependent on the quality of relationships young people formed with the

teachers at the school. Talk of school in interviews with youth would invariably turn to a favorite teacher.

Jordan (21 years old)

SMR: Did you like school growing up here?

Jordan: Here. Not really. I liked to hang out, that's basically it. And then when I went to [boarding school] is when I started taking it serious.

SMR: Was it harder or more challenging?

Jordan: Yeah they push you to the limit I guess. Or they made you want to learn and all that kind of stuff I guess. Because they had good teachers there too. It made it interesting to go there you know and go to class. Learn about different things every day and whatnot. Yeah that's what I liked about [boarding school]. It made me understand what college was going to be like and everything. Yeah that's what they prepare you for anyways.

SMR: And that's where you graduated from?

Jordan: Yeah. Graduated with 3.8. That was only one semester. That was my last semester, but I mean I should have did that throughout the whole high school.

Mona (30 years old)

SMR: Do you want your kids to go to school here all the way up?

Mona: I think I would like my child to go away. Even they say they want to go away for a better education. I just filled out an application for [boarding school]. Yeah, and so [my daughter], she wrote out her, why she wanted to go and I wrote out why she should go. And in hers she wrote, "I would like to go away and get a better, higher education. I'd like to learn more things and I don't really get to do that here. It's limited." So I'm like, "Oh, okay, well, she feels that way then, she knows what she wants." But I don't think my boys would.

SMR: No? You think they would stay around?

Mona: I told [my son] ... I said, "Son, you're going to be in ninth grade next year and you're going to [boarding school]." "What? No way, not me." So, he was, he would never be one to take out of the village. Yeah.

SMR: Do you notice that? Do you notice more girls going out and boys staying here?

Mona: Yes, yes, I really have. Yep.

SMR: What do you think's going on with that?

Mona: I don't know. They're, the girls have less things to do and the boys have like hunting and, you know, all that stuff to do. And girls, I think they just want to go out and fly into the world like I wanted to. Find out what's out there, I guess. Yeah.

Adele (42 years old)

Adele: My son was in boarding school. I sent my son off ... because he was drinking and I got ticked off and I sent him as far away as I can.

SMR: Drinking here?

Adele: Here. I sent him as far away as I can from me.

SMR: Did that help?

Adele: Yeah ... he knew I meant business. But the minute I sent him away I regretted it, but it did a lot of good for him educationally. ...And emotionally, because he had to deal with a lot of his own issues first before he could sit down and talk to me and learn how to manage his money and stuff, because he was so far away.

Jacinda (23 years old)

Jacinda: But like when we were younger the school was so much more productive. You know the teachers were all into, they totally got us into school. It was like we were excited about you know all kinds of intramurals. And we had stuff to look forward to, you know. We had good grades, because we couldn't go on ski trips or we couldn't go on basketball trips if we didn't have good grades. We would have lock-ins

and all kinds of fun things. I think that's why a lot of the kids aren't interested now days I see but back then it was a big thing. You had to get good grades too and just be involved in all the fun stuff that they had to offer.

SMR: Did you go to school all the way here, or did you go to boarding school in high school?

Jacinda: I graduated here.

Jay (19 years old)

SMR: So how'd you like school? What was your school experience like?

Jay: I was always the trouble child. I couldn't stand school. I got expelled actually when I was 16. Yeah. Got in -- it just, I don't know. The teachers here didn't like me, and I didn't like them, and it just -- well, like I did good all the way from preschool to middle, like junior high, and then when I got into high school is where everything went all bad.

SMR: What happened?

Jay: I just, I don't know, couldn't pay attention to my schoolwork no more, just being interruptive and stuff like that and just couldn't get into the school anymore. And then when I turned 16, I moved to [another village], and I tried to go to school down there to see if it was any different, and that's where I actually got expelled from school. Yeah, I don't know, one day boys asked me to go for a walk, and I went, like, yeah, and we walked to maybe about 20, 30 feet away from the school, and we were all standing there smoking, and we all got caught by the trooper and the principal. I got expelled right on the spot, so I just moved right back here like a few days later.

Jay's experiences in school in the village were representative of young men his age and younger. When I talked to him, Jay was finishing school in *Yookkene* by working independently from home to get his high school diploma. Jay's lower school achievement was off-set by his hunting skills and involvement in the community. I had observed Jay

on several occasions helping out his relatives at potlatches and memorials. I had also observed him following rules for respect to a higher degree than his peers. Jay will often give rides on his 4-wheeler to elders or anyone walking that needs one, and he will slow down when he is driving past people walking or in a common area. Jay is often pointed out by other community members as a respectful and “traditional” youth. His school performance does not appear to factor into his overall evaluation in the community, or is balanced locally with his skill and involvement in other activities in the village. Girls generally do better in school than boys in the village and at the boarding schools. School performance appears to factor more largely into the evaluation of girls than boys. If boys are not doing well in school, they can still achieve out on the land. If girls are not doing well in school, there is more negative association placed on their behavior, because if a girl is not doing well in school there are fewer other productive things she could be doing in the village. Sometimes lower school achievement for a girl can mean too much household responsibility is being placed on her. Girls with drinking parents are assumed to have sibling caretaking responsibilities in the household and these can disrupt their achievement in school. Often though, if a girl is having problems in school or is choosing to attend the village school rather than boarding school, local people will assume the girl is “wild” and into things such as drinking, smoking pot and “messaging around.”

2.5 Hunting, Fishing and Berry-picking

Subsistence activities remain an essential component of growing up Native in the village. Native foods may no longer be as critical for sustenance but they remain necessary for survival. This part of aboriginal life has seen some of the most profound changes in the past few decades. Elders can recall subsisting on a diet made up almost exclusively of Native foods such as moose, beaver, birds, berries and fish supplemented by Sailor Boy Pilot crackers, tea, bread, rice and macaroni noodles. Adults recall the decreasing use of fish for subsistence with its increasing utilization as a commodity in the commercial fishery on the Yukon. Families stopped going to fish camp and instead focused on commercially harvesting fish, and they shifted to maintaining smaller smokehouses located in the village for subsistence. The commercial fishery on the Yukon

significantly decreased king and red salmon stocks and families started to put away less and less fish for the winter months. Restrictions placed on land mammal harvesting reduced the number of animals a hunter could take and limited the harvest of these animals to certain times of the year. Restrictions on trapping fur bearing land mammals and the steep drop in the price for furs caused many adult males to abandon the practice and seek wage labor outside the village. All of these changes have produced a local condition where hunting and fishing are only a part of life in the village.

Subsistence is a highly symbolic activity in the village. Subsistence is still necessary for surviving the village. Going hunting is one of the things that young men live for in *Yookkene*. The fall moose hunting season is by far the most important activity of the year for men of all ages. The other open seasons for moose are typically in the winter and only the young men with running, high powered snowgos can go on these hunts. Moose is arguably the most important and commonly consumed Native food today in the village. It is critical to every village household that enough moose is put away during the fall season to make it to the next opener or season. Sometimes a hunter will not have luck during the season and will have to subsist on parts of a moose given to his family by another relative. In some cases, I have heard that if someone did not get lucky during the season but came upon luck (i.e. encountered a moose) at another time of year they might take the animal. State regulations cannot account for luck and families do still depend on both moose meat and luck to survive.

In the interviews, young men all talked about hunting as among the most fun times they experienced growing up. Where youth describe hunting as fun and good times, elders and older adults described hunting as work. Nearly every young male I talked to had caught their first moose by their early and middle adolescence. It was still common to give away all the parts of this first moose kill to elders and other family members. It was most common for younger boys to go hunting with their older male uncles, those on their mother's side. This contemporary trend continues aboriginal socialization practices in which the mother's brothers take on primary responsibilities to teach their nephews how to survive (Osgood 1958; VanStone 1974). The fall moose hunt is done by boat with

several related men traveling the river hunting in small related cooperatives. Most young men do not have their own boats and must either go along with an older male relative or borrow a boat from another relative who may not be hunting. Some of the men will go out for days at a time, camping out on the banks while they hunt. Drinking is uncommon practice while out hunting nowadays, just as it was long ago. It used to be more common to drink out at fall moose camps twenty years ago when adults were youth, but this has decreased considerably and is less common among the youth of the current generation.

The spring and summer hunts for “big animal” (bear) are less common among youth and adults today. When I was in *Yookkene* only one big animal was taken during the season. The meat from big animals is a highly valued potlatch food item. Some Native foods that were once more common fare such as bear, beaver, muskrat and porcupine are now more commonly served at “special occasions” such as potlatches. Spring hunting for birds (ducks and geese), and fall “chicken” hunting for spruce and willow grouse and ptarmigan remain common activities for young males and adults, both male and female.

Young males in *Yookkene* especially preferred hunting geese by snowgo in the spring. The excitement of racing across the loosening ice and overflow combined with the catch of a sack full of geese was beyond thrilling. Bird hunting is an activity that females in *Yookkene* also like to do. I observed three adolescent age females chicken hunting with their mothers and aunts during the fall season in *Yookkene*. Younger females are also beginning to go moose hunting with their mothers or both parents. More often today than in previous generations, adult females will go out with their husband/boyfriend or brothers during moose hunting season. More women today are taking pride in their first moose catch, as well. Females still will not go out for “big animal” (which is *hutlaanee*) and typically do less hunting for land mammals than the males in the community.

Instead, females remain the primary processors of the meat once it is brought back to the village. During moose hunting season in *Yookkene* I observed nearly every adult female that was able and available cutting meat to freeze and hang to dry. Adult women

and older female youth (typically 18 and older) will gather together into small work cooperatives, of typically no more than four to five women, to sit around a large dining room table or to fill a smokehouse cutting area. There they will sit and work on an entire moose or two, cutting and sorting pieces for freezing and drying. Nearly every part of the moose is put away for use. The head is typically saved until the end and cut up with special care to remove the parts that will be used for moose head and moose nose soup or pickled moose nose. Young girls will hang around the meat cutting stations playing, watching and talking to the adult women. When one of the adult women leaves her seat a younger girl will often be asked to sit down and try cutting. Adolescent age girls in a household will often be expected to cut up a share of the meat. Families in the village with fewer adult women will rely more heavily on the younger women and girls to help out with meat during hunting season. Two seventeen year-old girls that wanted to do an interview with me in *Yookkene* during the fall time had to schedule around working in the smokehouse with their mother.

Fishing is another activity that involves intensive community participation over a relatively short period of time. The primary time for fishing in *Yookkene* is from mid-June to early July. Three primary salmon runs are fished for subsistence: king, red and chum. There is always a late chum run in August, as well, but this is not fished as intensively. Fewer male youth participate in fishing than in moose hunting and bird hunting. The older youth (+20) remember when there used to be a commercial fishery on the middle Yukon and collective local participation in fishing was much higher. Not every male head of household owns a boat in *Yookkene* but many do. It is typically older and fully employed adult males that own boats and these will take other male relatives, mainly nephews, out with them to help set and pull nets for fishing. Women will also go out fishing with their husbands or boyfriends and assist with the net. More often, though, women will stay in the village to tend and work at the smokehouse. Women are the primary fish processors, as well. It is more common to see a woman participating in traditionally male activities than it is to see a man participating in traditionally female activities. I have never observed a man cutting fish in a smokehouse with women, but I

have seen a woman get her first moose in the fall and butcher it up with a small group of men.

I have observed more male youth involved with fishing than female youth. Sometimes adolescent age females will hang out around the smokehouses and some older female youth will occasionally pitch in and help clean and hang fish, but the precision fish cutting is nearly always done by the experienced older adult females and elder females. It has been explained to me that king salmon are too few and too valuable for younger girls to work on. Younger girls are given chum salmon to learn on if they are around and express an interest, but in general they are not expected to participate in cutting fish for the smokehouse. Young females almost never mentioned fishing or hunting when they talked about growing up in the village. They would remember playing around the smokehouse when their mothers and aunts were cutting fish but none talked about being trained themselves to participate in the annual fishing or hunting and putting away of fish or meat. This was consistent with what I observed around the smokehouse in the summer and fall. Young girls would be playing around the periphery, and many of the older youth were completely absent from the scene. When I would ask about the older, teenage girls, the women in the smokehouse would roll their eyes or shrug and say something like, they don't want to get smelly and dirty, or there are too many bugs, or they have no patience.

Fishing does not appear to preclude drinking in the village like moose hunting does. With no commercial fishery and the majority of the labor for the subsistence fishery being female driven, male subsistence involvement during the summer is relatively limited. Summer is more female labor intensive with fish processing and berry picking as the primary subsistence activities.

Berry picking begins in mid-August and goes until mid-September. The primary berries that are put away in *Yookkene* are blueberries, blackberries, cranberries and salmonberries. The berries are used almost exclusively today for Indian ice cream. Indian ice cream is made with flaked whitefish and Wesson oil (or Crisco), sugar and berries. The ingredients are whipped together by hand producing a fluffy cream dotted with

frozen berries.

Adult women will often go out berry picking in pairs or in groups of three. Families will also go out berry picking together. When I went out berry picking in *Yookkene*, I would often see a family riding out of town together in a truck to pick berries, or a father riding with two young sons, or a mother with two of her younger daughters. I did not observe any of the older female youth picking berries, although once a 4-wheeler with three 17 year old girls drove out to a berry patch where we were picking to check things out. Even though I did not observe female youth out berry picking, talk of berry picking with their mothers came out more frequently in interviews with these older female youth than any other subsistence activity. Leisy Wyman, who studied youth culture in a Yup'ik village in southwest Alaska, found a similar pattern in the talk of boys and girls in the village.

Among adolescent boys, participation in local subsistence activities, basketball, and snowmobile riding were consistently described as the best parts of rural Alaskan living. While girls also mentioned subsistence activities, especially the ones involving “going out” to the tundra, such as going to camping or traveling by boat, as one of the best parts of growing up in Piniq, they were less likely in interviews to generally base assessments of rural life on subsistence. When asked the general question, for instance, of “how is it growing up in Piniq?” almost all boys would start by answering “good” then mention something like “you get to go out,” and go on to describing hunting on the ocean. Girls were more likely to answer, “good, but a little boring,” or just “boring,” though they, too would mention subsistence. (Wyman 2004: 236)

In general, in *Yookkene*, young males talked about subsistence activities much more often than females did. For young males, growing up was about getting your first moose. Hunting was almost always among the best memories about childhood for young men.

Jordan (21 years old)

SMR: How come you didn't go hunting when you were younger?

Jordan: Because I would always want to be with my friends I guess and hang out with them. Hunting seems like something to do... wait let me think about it. Hunting is... Just every time it comes fall time I decide I

want to go out now and I don't go out with my uncle or anything. I just go out by myself, with my friends and everything now that we're older, and get a couple moose and stay out there for days.

SMR: Do you guys always go moose hunting together?

Jordan: Oh me and my cousin went out last year with Flip and Buddy. Went out with actually a lot of people. I used to go out with my Uncle a lot, but I don't know. Never really went out for a couple of years.

Zeke & Thomas (both 16 years old)

SMR: So, but you didn't go to fish camp when you were growing up?

Zeke: No, I was too loud. Said me and my sister were too loud when they go out hunting, so, they'd just leave us home.

SMR: Do you guys go out hunting now?

Zeke: Yeah, I just caught a moose couple days ago, I think.

SMR: How cool. Who'd you go out with?

Zeke: My uncle.

M: Wow. How about -- did you go out hunting this year?

Thomas: Not this year. Caught a moose last year, though.

SMR: Who'd you go out with?

Thomas: Me and my brother.

Captain (20 years old)

SMR: Do you remember when you were growing did your dad ever take you out to do things like hunting, getting wood and such?

Captain: Yeah. That was my favorite time of the year in the fall when I was that age, when I was from eight maybe until now. We would go out and go hunting in the fall. Since I was fourteen I've been going with anybody, whoever asks me. That's when I killed my first moose and it was pretty exhilarating. I shot it right in the head.

SMR: What happens when you get your first moose? Does something happen?

Captain: People just pass out the meat I guess, or my parents. I didn't really mind though. I just wanted to get that over and done with, so I could go get more, but ever since then I have been going out with people with their boats. Sometimes with my uncles or my friends, any one of my friends who can use their parent's boat.

Jay (19 years old)

Jay: When we were kids growing up, like every fall, kids around here would go chicken hunting. And growing up, like far as I remember, we'd walk down that -- all the way to that swimming hole. I don't know, and everybody goes walks down there every year and goes chicken hunting and stuff. Just about every year. Actually, I went chicken hunting the other day, and we caught four.

SMR: And who do you go with?

Jay: Me, Tern boys.

SMR: So it's like friends and.....

Jay: Yeah. I just take the friends out, or if friends want to go out, then we'll go out of there.

SMR: Right on. How young were you guys when you started doing that on your own?

Jay: Well, I started with my grandfather and, like I said, like they used to take me out, and then I was about my brother's age, about 10, when I first started going out chicken hunting, and my grandma and them would wake me up like maybe 5:00 in the morning before school, and then we'd go out and go chicken hunting, and then I'd come home and go back -- or then I'd go to school, so that's what I used to do every day before school. My grandma and my aunt, they used to wake me up at the crack of dawn and go out and go hunting.

Minnie (15 years old) and Natalie (17 years old)

SMR: Who like did you feel close to in your family?

Minnie: My dad.

SMR: What kinds of things would he used to do with you?

Minnie: Take me hunting.

SMR: For what?

Minnie: For moose. Me and my mom.

SMR: And would she ever go like berry picking or.....

Minnie: Yeah, she did.

SMR: Would you ever go with her?

Minnie: No.

SMR: How come?

Minnie: Because I don't want to get stuck there.

SMR: Oh, okay. And did you ever go berry picking?

Natalie: Not with my mom, but when I went to a camp with my cousins picked berries, high bush berries.

SMR: When you were younger or this year?

Natalie: No, that was just like a couple weeks ago.

SMR: Oh, okay.

Natalie: That was my first time picking berries in like three years.

Subsistence activities today are measured in terms of their social and emotional value; how much they contribute to fun, good times and relationships. Hunting, and particularly moose hunting, appears to be the most highly valued subsistence activity among both male and female youth in *Yookkene*. It was clear that young people were not as motivated to participate in other subsistence activities as they were to participate in other types of village activities. Adults, though, were similarly unmotivated to include young people in subsistence activities, sometimes even despite their interest or desire to participate. The one activity specific to village life that appears to cross generational boundaries and unite elders, adults, children and youth into collective action is camp.

2.6 Camp

“Camp” is the term used by local people in *Yookkene* to talk about traditional land and resource use locations that were or are part of the annual subsistence round. Going to camp and spending time (sometimes months at a time) in camp for Athabascans is not the same experience as “going camping” in a Western, urban sense. Going to camp involves a long boat ride or snowgo ride out to a place on the land that the family has used or frequented over many generations. Most families have plots of land that were allotted to lineal ancestors during the ANCSA settlement and several families have constructed small cabins on these lands. Other families have maintained ties to lineage lands – lands that an extended family “owned” by right of use – and will go out to these places once or twice a year with their families to set up camp and get away from the village.

Summer is the main time to go out to camp. A few families will go out to camp in the winter by snowgo to spend a few days around Christmastime away from the village. Today, most families will spend only days or week out at camp. When a family goes out to camp they will do some fishing with rod and reel and set net, and will cook out and tell stories and go out for boat rides. They will live close to the land as a family for a short while and children will receive direct instruction on land-based survival skills such as making fire the old way or locating edible foods. It is the one time of year that children, adults and elders will all hang out together. Every young person I talked to in *Yookkene* said that going to camp was among the best times they remembered about growing up.

Belinda (24 years old)

SMR: And you remember all that. So what are some of your happiest and best memories? What are your happiest times?

Belinda: Most happiest was when we were on our picnics at camp. That was the most fun. Cause we would just wander around the woods and find cool sticks, or sometimes walking sticks. Just cook marshmallows, cooking over the fire. And just any time we traveled or went somewhere as a family was the most memorable. Mostly on picnics and when I was in camp that was the most fun too. We always had stuff to do.

Jacinda (23 years old)

SMR: What were some of your best memories of growing up?

Jacinda: It makes me sad... I don't want to talk about it. I don't know, being away at camp. I used to have a blast at camp, because fishing was really big when I was little, so it would just be fun I mean like to go and check the fish wheel at 6:00 in the morning and come back with a boat load of fish. We would just be going crazy gutting the fish and cutting the fish. I remember I was one time some news people came and I don't know why. They were just checking out camps I guess and my grandma was there cutting fish and I was standing beside her and she was cutting fish for dogs and she had just showed me how and so I was all excited. I said I'm on TV and then they made it into a commercial, so I got to see myself and I was all excited. But that was fun, because I always enjoyed our family being together and all our whole family, all her kids and our family.

Jay (19 years old)

SMR: Who do you think that -- who would you say you spent the most time with when you were younger?

Jay: Probably my grandfather. Yeah. I was -- I was pretty much next to him, because we'd every year -- although like every summer, we'd go to camp just about every weekend and go fishing and hunting and things like that, and I enjoyed being out there, because I always had a chain saw or little kicker or something to work on all the time, so that's pretty much what I did up there. Yeah.

Erin (24 years old)

SMR: So first, I always start with if you can tell me a little bit about what it was like for you to grow up here.

Erin: Really boring.

SMR: Really boring?

Erin: No. I don't know. It was fun. We had lots of friends, and all we did was just visit them. We had kind of like summer youth jobs through the tribe. And we'd just hang out with friends all summer. I went to fish camp once, I think, when I was 12.

SMR: That was the only time you went to fish camp when you were younger?

Erin: Uh-huh.

SMR: Did your parents ever go? I mean, did they just leave you?

Erin: No. They went. We stayed in camp for one summer and came back like every three days for a night or something. And it was fun.

Going to camp has always been a matter of survival. Today the terms of survival have changed but the benefits of camp remain relatively stable over time. Children who spent time out at remote subsistence camps with their families tend to have more positive recollections of childhood and growing up. Youth that went out to camp at least once a year with their family appear to have more local knowledge, stronger identification with their families and peers, and a greater demonstrated ability to deal with hard times.

2.7 Travel

Travel is talked about by members of all generations as an important part of growing up in the village. Elders recall traveling to seasonal camps by boat and dog team and then traveling back to the village for the fall and winter. Very few elders went to the city when they were children, unless they were seriously ill. Instead, traveling to the villages were the most exciting times that elders recall about their childhood. There they would be able to attend school and see friends and relatives and have free time to play and run around.

Today, travel outside of the village is among the most exciting activities for youth. Travel anywhere, as long as it is away from the village, is actively sought by young people. Youth will ride far outside of the village to travel around on the land. Travel by boat and snowgo, no matter the destination, is considered "fun." Travel to other villages remains exciting and fun for youth as well. Travel to other villages today occurs

mainly for sports activities, tournaments, and community events such as funerals, Memorial Potlatches and Spring Carnival. Travel to the regional hub city for regular medical appointments is greatly anticipated by children and youth. Some families will also make quarterly trips into Fairbanks for shopping and recreations such as going to the movies and eating out at restaurants. Families will also plan trips into Fairbanks to attend annual regional events such as the Tanana Valley State Fair, the Fiddler's Festival, the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) conference, and the North American and Top of the World basketball tournaments.

Young people in *Yookkene* are highly motivated to travel outside the village. It fulfils an important cultural value, increasing social networks and maintaining kin relationships. Travel also typically involves intergenerational interaction with parents and children and/or uncles, aunts and children traveling together. Travel on the land teaches children valuable cultural knowledge about the environment and navigation. Travel to the regional hub cities exposes young people to things they do not have access to in the rural villages, such as movie theatres, shopping malls and restaurants. This controlled exposure to urban life appears to greatly influence young people's perspectives of life in the village. Young people would often talk about travel out of the village as one of the primary things to do for fun.

Rebecca (19 years old)

Rebecca: There was fun stuff to do like snowmachining, basketball, going back and forth from [that other village] to here and Stick Dance too like every other year we'll do that. Just to dance. Ski trips. I don't know. It was good. It was kind of like everybody knows everybody and all this stuff. It's fun though.

SMR: How often would you go to [that other village] when you were in high school and stuff?

Rebecca: Every two weekends. Well this summer me and [my friend] went to [that other village] like every weekend on boat and stuff, maybe charter or [my other friend] would bring us up. Every week and then in the

winter time it's different though. It's like once every two or three weeks we would go up. But when there's basketball we go up. Little tiny tournaments, play against each other.

Adam (24 years old)

SMR: So what do you do for fun?

Adam: Now?

SMR: Yeah. What's the most fun thing to do?

Adam: Travel to town.

SMR: How often do you go to town?

Adam: Not too often. Well, recently we've been going, like, almost once a month.

SMR: Oh, really?

Adam: I went up in January just for the heck of it. Just to go up there. I got my paycheck, and I had enough money. So I just went up there for a heck of it. Have fun I guess.

Tami (17 years old) & Della (18 years old)

SMR: So what were like some of the like best times that you can remember having when you guys were growing up, when you were like the happiest?

Della: Mostly now.

SMR: Now?

Tami: Yeah.

Della: Oh, like traveling when we were younger for like Little League or else junior high basketball, just mostly when I was like an older kid or whatever, like junior high and Little League. It was fun like traveling to like Galena and all the places.

SMR: What was fun about that?

Della: Just seeing old friends that you never saw in the longest time, and then you just go there and you see everybody, like all your friends. Like

the villages around here, everybody knows everybody, so it was fun seeing my friends after a long time.

Youth leave the village to increase their chances to have fun, meet new people and take a break from life in the *vill*. While nearly every young person I talked to said they wanted to leave the village at some point, few actually did. Of the youth that did leave to try out boarding school or live with relatives in Fairbanks, many returned or have since returned to *Yookkene*. Older youth in *Yookkene* that have tried living in Fairbanks or another city will admit they got lonesome for the village.

Traveling is a way to get out of the village, and getting out of the village is a necessary part of being able to survive in the village. Traveling has always been a part of Athabascan life and culture. When people and groups would travel, they would distance themselves, physically and emotionally, from some things and get closer to others. When people travel out of the village they tend to change the way they think and feel about things in the village. Many young people who travel out of the village for school will get lonesome for the village and will anticipate their return to the village. Once back in the village, though they will begin to get tired of the village life and will want to travel out again. This pattern is not so different than aboriginal ones where groups would congregate and disperse at various times throughout the year on the seasonal round. Travel is much more restricted today than it was aboriginally, particularly for young people with fewer means of getting out of the village. Because getting out is a necessary part of surviving life in the village, increasing the means of and opportunities for travel is clearly needed in contemporary Native communities.

2.8 Fun, Boredom and Mischief

Chillin' in the vill involves waiting for something to happen. Life in *Yookkene* alternates between two primary feeling-states: *fun* and *boredom*. Every time I asked a young person in *Yookkene* to describe what it was like to grow up in the village they would invariably answer with some variation on "fun but boring."

Arnie (18 years old)

SMR: Okay, to start off, just tell me what it was like here for you growing up.

Arnie: Pretty good. Well, actually, it's a little, kind of slow, boring, because this town is really quiet. Living in villages is hard to explain. It's kind of hard to explain.

SMR: When you said it was boring, how would you describe what's boring?

Arnie: What do I think is boring?

SMR: Yeah.

Arnie: This town.

SMR: This town in general?

Arnie: Well, there's nothing going on around here. You just have to wait until there's, like, men's night just to have fun. Playing basketball. I don't know. It's just walking around. That's no fun. You just be walking in circles. Pretty much just, I don't know, it's just boring.

SMR: So walking around is kind of boring? Well, what's an exciting fun time?

Arnie: Basketball.

Young people are motivated on a daily basis to have fun and avoid boredom in the village. Young people in *Yookkene* are motivated to do things like play sports, hunt, travel, ride around and play out because these things produce fun. Fun describes both a social behavior as well as an internal feeling-state. Fun produces good times, good times produce good social relations and good social relations produce good feelings. Any action that gets people together doing something collectively has the potential to produce fun. Any activity that gets people out of their homes or the village also has the potential for fun. When the relatively limited set of everyday things to do in the village is exhausted or unavailable, young people will seek out alternatives and create things to do that have the potential for fun.

Young people will seek out fun to avoid boredom. Boredom in the village derives from the perceived lack of things to do. Youth would also say that they felt bored doing the same things all the time (such as chores), or having to do things that are “not fun” for them (such as school). The concept of boredom has clear generational meanings in *Yookkene*. Elders would often say to me that they never had to worry about being bored when they were growing up because they had things to do every day. Even with the repetition of having to do the same types of things every day, aboriginal activities were always “interesting” (Chapter 1, Hazel’s narrative). Today there is less opportunity for young people to engage in activities that contribute substantially to the family or community. Instead, youth spend the great majority of their time engaged in peer-centered activities such as playing out and hanging out, as described earlier in this chapter. Peer activity in the villages is often about avoiding boredom.

Researchers have long overlooked boredom as a salient emotion or social condition and it is often dismissed or subsumed as a symptom of modernity not worthy of study in its own right (Goodstein 2005). Recent studies focusing on the role of boredom in aboriginal communities have contributed important insights into the force and meaning of boredom for indigenous youth (e.g. Jervis, Spicer and Manson 2003; Musharbash 2007). Jervis et al.’s (2003) research with American Indian reservation youth was the first to seriously examine the indigenous meanings and attributes of boredom and the relationship between boredom and “trouble” including criminality and substance use. Jervis argues that young people who say they are “bored” are communicating their social condition as well as emotional state. Boredom is often attributed to the limiting conditions characteristic of reservation life, and these conditions in turn are the product of a much larger post-colonial process. Jervis concludes her analysis by positioning boredom as an outcome of the marginalization of indigenous youth on the reservation from emotionally, physically and spiritually satisfying and meaningful activities. She shows how engaging in “trouble” functions as a substitute for traditionally stimulating, exciting or transformative action, but with less effectiveness and greater risk.

Where Jervis looked at boredom among indigenous youth as arising entirely in response to Westernization, Musharbash (2007: 308) argues for an “indigenous boredom” among Australian aboriginal youth. Among youth at Yuendumu, boredom arises within “locally distinct forms of modernity.” She holds that the experience of boredom for youth at Yuendumu is fundamentally different from the experience of boredom among Western youth in the urban centers: “Boredom... is a different beast when understandings of personhood crucially depend on relatedness” (Musharbash 2007: 311).

Musharbash also made the important qualification that for youth in Yuendumu it was not things or people or places that were inherently boring, it was a thing, a person or a place at a particular *time* that was labeled boring. To understand what was considered boring for the youth, Musharbash (2007: 311) identified something in the local context that was never considered boring: ritual. No Warlpiri person would ever call ritual boring because participation in ritual guaranteed social interaction and emotional engagement by everyone involved, every time. Youth in *Yookkene* are not as actively engaged in rituals like funerals or potlatches but a similar argument could be made for sports and camp in *Yookkene*. No person in *Yookkene* ever described basketball or baseball tournaments or going to camp as boring, because these activities guaranteed good times, every time. Just like ritual in Yuendumu, sports and going to camp in *Yookkene* do not happen all the time, and in both places strategies for “killing time” between major community events are actively engaged by the youth.

Most other researchers working with Native youth make the direct association between social change (Westernization), the rise of boredom, and the increase of social misconduct and delinquency among youth in particular (Dole and Csordas 2003; Henderson, Kunitz and Levy 1999; Jervis et al. 2003). Henderson, et al. discuss the origins of Navajo youth gangs on the reservation as a response to changes in traditional socialization practices that caused the intensification of peer-group identification combined with the continuation of traditional values concerning male sociality. They argue that in the traditional Navajo pastoral economy there were highly valued ceremonial occasions where men would get together, hang out, joke, drink, challenge

each other and flirt with women. Once the economy changed and Navajo families (men in particular) no longer spent long periods out with the herds, there was more time to engage in social activities. Youth gangs and delinquency on the Navajo reservation arose out of a context where there were increasing amounts of “free time,” decreasing amounts of adult supervision, and fewer emotionally engaging activities.

Jervis et al. (2003) argued that Native youth on reservations make “trouble” to relieve their boredom. Musharbash (2007), unlike Jervis, argues that most youth are not out to make trouble, but instead engage in certain activities to kill time. They do this not “because they are bored, but as a reaction to the circumstances that also generate boredom.” Musharbash’s concept of killing time fits well with what I observed in *Yookkene* among youth there. Some young people that I talked to even used the term “killing time” when I would ask them why people liked to party. But my follow-up question, “Kill time for what?” always seemed to cause confusion to these same young people. One young man once simply said, “you kill time to kill time.” That did not seem to make much sense until I realized that killing time in *Yookkene* is not about waiting for something to happen; it is about making something happen. Chillin’ in the vill is an active process. Youth that are killing time or chillin’ are those in a state of hyper-vigilance. They are acutely attuned to anything going on around that might provide opportunities for fun. The activities engaged in *Yookkene* to “kill time” often literally have the effect of suspending time for the duration of the experience. Youth will ride around for hours and hours until they run their snowgos or 4-wheelers out of gas. They will stay out all night walking around. They will play out until they are half frozen or have to be dragged in by an adult. They will watch every episode of a television series on DVD in a sitting and then start over and watch it all again. This behavior bears a striking similarity to what Musharbash (2007) found among aboriginal youth in Australia and suggests areas of generalization across cultures.

In *Yookkene* there are different ways to kill time that are both positively and negatively associated. It is more common among Athabascan youth to talk about “having fun” instead of “killing time,” but both concepts describe a similar process. The first part

of this chapter described things to do in the village that are generally positively associated. Playing out, hanging out, riding around, sports, school, subsistence and travel are all things that have the potential to be fun and “not boring” that are locally considered “good” for young people to be doing. Only a few of these activities are fun all the time, such as sports, camp and hunting (for boys), and these are not available all the time. Most of the everyday activities are fun only some of the time; and this creates a local condition where youth must actively avoid boring times by making up things to do that are fun. The higher the predictability that an activity will consistently be “fun,” the more likely it is that it will be repeated. In *Yookkene*, “mischief” and substance use (see *Chapter 3*), are activities engaged by youth to have fun and not be bored. These actions, and in particular substance use, typically have more negative value in the local culture, and both contribute to the “problems of youth” that are most commonly represented in the media and literature (i.e., delinquency, misconduct, alcohol abuse, drug use, alcohol related injuries, suicide, etc.). Because mischief and substance use have negative social and physical consequences, their positive social value is often minimized or overlooked. In emotional terms, these potentially “bad” activities do essentially the same thing for young people as the good ones. Hunting, playing out and mischief all are part of the emotion schemas of youth in the village that begin with young peoples’ motivations to have fun.

Mischief is a term used in the villages to describe certain activities engaged exclusively by children and youth. These include: staying out late; running from local police; “acting smart” or talking back; not listening; joyriding on snowgos or 4-wheelers; racing around; driving recklessly; breaking into public buildings (school, churches); vandalism; skipping school; petty thievery; smoking cigarettes; and among older youth (>15), sneaking alcohol and sexual promiscuity. Mischief was a common theme in interviews with youth in *Yookkene*. Sometimes the young person would bring up mischief on their own and sometimes I would ask them if they were ever mischief growing up. In both cases, those interviewed demonstrated a local knowledge of what mischief means and what mischief does.

Jay (18 years old)

Jay: When I was younger I used to get in lots of mischief.

SMR: Like what kind of mischief?

Jay: Stealing, vandalism, lots. There was probably much -- pretty much just stealing and vandalism.

SMR: What kinds of things would you guys steal?

Jay: Money, stuff from other people like gas and someone's snowgo.

SMR: Did you ever get caught?

Jay: Couple times.

SMR: What would happen when you got caught?

Jay: Nothing.

Jordan (21 years old)

SMR: Were you mischief when you were growing up?

Jordan: Yeah I used to be. I used to always want to do crazy stuff, basically get into trouble at home. Never did get caught though. No, it was a freshman year or what, but we would run around and tease the VPSO (village public safety officer) and egg his house and whatever. Do all that kind of junk. Steal snow machines. I never really used to steal snow machines. I just wanted to try out a snow machine and everything. Because we always had nothing to do at night time, so we would go and get in trouble. Like break into places or some shit, or something like that. I never broke into nobody else's house, but just like I don't know, go into the school or something. Run around and be wild.

Trips (23 years old)

SMR: Are you mischief?

Trips: Yeah. What kind of mischief?

SMR: You tell me.

Trips: Yeah.

SMR: Were you a mischief kid?

Trips: Yeah.

SMR: What kind of mischief did you get into as a kid?

Trips: I used to steal my dad's cigarettes all the time. Climb into places we're not supposed to climb. Get onto stuff we're not supposed to be on, like the school, we're not supposed to be up there. Messed around with the VPSO all the time. It was funny, man. We had fun times with the VPSO especially when we got in fights, we'd fight VPSOs in this town and just drive them crazy. Really crazy.

SMR: How?

Trips: Just go and go by their place and knock on the door and spin our snow machines wide open and have them come chase us around that little Bravo and they couldn't catch us. It was fun.

Mischief in villages differs from "trouble" on reservations, as described by Jervis et al. (2003). Mischief does not always lead to trouble. Some types of mischief are generally considered harmless "fun" while other types are considered more of a local nuisance. Still others are considered disruptive and these are most likely to get the label of misconduct or "criminal" mischief. Young boys are more likely to engage in mischief activities that result in negative consequences such as suspension from school, disciplinary actions at home or outside intervention from social services or police. The individual consequences for being mischief do not always outweigh the positive social values attributed to the activities.

Even early observers on the Arctic scene noted strategies used by parents to deal with mischief kids. Boas found that among the Copper Eskimo:

Young children are always carried in their mother's hoods, but when about a year and a half old they are allowed to play on the bed, and are only carried by their mothers when they get too *mischievous*. (Boas 1888:157-158) [italics added]

The use of the term "mischievous" most likely has local meanings associated with it indicating a child whose normal propensity for exploration and discovery has taken on

more disruptive action for others. Nelson Graburn (1969: 182) also observed mischief in an Inuit settlement in the central Arctic.

Life for the Eskimos is not as hard as it used to be, and there had been a reduction in the number and urgency of essential tasks to be performed by family members. Also there are far more children together in one community than ever before and this allows the more idle ones to get together without supervision and encourages antisocial activities. These peer groups comprise children in the eight to fourteen age group, and the greater proportion of them are girls. With no housework to do and very few recreational outlets outside school hours, they roam around the settlement finding *mischievous activities* with which to pass the time, often carrying on late into the night. [italics added]

Graburn's description of the mischievous activities of children and youth in this Inuit settlement almost a half century ago look strikingly similar to mischief activities in *Yookkene* today.

More evidence for mischief as a central category of youth culture in Northern indigenous communities comes from Richard Condon's monograph on Inuit youth in the central arctic.

Occasionally some vandalism occurs in the early morning, but it is almost always directed at public buildings such as the co-op, school, and Bay store rather than private homes. Such cases of vandalism and breaking and entering, while rare, appear to be limited to the spring when teenagers are beginning to stay up all night outdoors. Since there are no organized games or dances at the community hall, such as at Christmastime, many young people end up *getting into mischief*. (Condon 1987:86) [italics added]

Both Graburn and Condon dismissed mischief as a new trait arising directly out of the assimilative processes at work in modern Inuit life and entirely unrelated to traditional values and practices. Youth misconduct and the increase of mischief activities was cited as evidence of the negative consequences associated with social change and colonization in the North. The relationship between the rise of mischief and the formation of Northern settlements explains, in part, its cross-cultural prevalence, but does not explain its cultural persistence over several generations in these communities.

I first observed mischief while I was living in the Yup'ik communities and working as a mental health clinician. Adults would invariably describe the “troubled” youth in the community as “just too much mischief.” Sometimes parents of youth that were referred to me for assessment by the school or juvenile detention center would argue that their child was just “being mischief” – something they felt was undeserving of punishment or intervention. In the interviews I did with Yup'ik youth at the University of Alaska Fairbanks I was given what remains one of the best definitions of mischief from a local Native youth perspective.

Simeon (21 years old) & Vernon (22 years old)

SMR: What's mischief?

Simeon: Mischief is like the general word for not doing good things – not being good. Not listening to your elders and... Well you can listen to your elders, but it's like, he's being mischief *right now*. Well, it comes out to a funny term when peers talk about it to each other. It's like, “What's on your neck? Sooooo mischief.” That's the other mischief for the younger group, for peers. Or if they're drinking and they know it – it's like “soooo mischief.” It's like they're saying, man I wish I was you too.

Vernon: They're just doing something that – like if they're telling you and you're telling them “soooo mischief” – you wanted to be there to do that too.

SMR: Do adults say it too?

Simeon: Well I don't know if adults use it in front of themselves, but when they talk about it to younger kids it's like... it's not as the same way we would say it – like I'd say it to Vernon. Like my mom, or somebody else would say, “being mischief!” They're like, “Man we got to straighten him out.” And if it's between us it's like, “Sooo mischief man!” In other words like, “*Lucky*.”

Athabascan youth in *Yookkene* describe themselves and others as mischief in the same ways that Yup'ik youth do. Every young male would answer affirmatively when I

asked if he was mischief. Many, but not all, of the young females also said they were mischief growing up as well. Females who said they were mischief also talked about running from the VPSO, talking back, not listening, stealing small things, being “wild” and staying out late. Females would not brag about it in the same way that younger males would. Instead it was more common for females to admit to being mischief with a small grimace or sigh while males would almost all smile immediately after I asked and then eagerly recount their most mischief moments.

Through mischief young people explore their physical, social, emotional and sexual worlds. Mischief is fun because it involves risk taking behavior, something that is commonly valued and necessary in the Northern indigenous communities. Mischief is a social activity that allows young people to demonstrate their skills and knowledge of the village. When young people talk about running from the village police officer they always stress that they do not often get caught. The ability to hide and run away effectively demonstrates a type of “village streets smarts” that includes an advanced knowledge of the local environment, as well as self-control and independence. The village-wise youth seem to be more popular among their peers. Mischief boys are exciting, interesting, fun and “not boring.” Mischief also provides ways for young females to have fun and prove themselves as “not boring,” but girls who are too much mischief run the risk of being labeled as *wild* and this comes with greater social costs for females than it does for males in *Yookkene* (see *Chapter 3*).

Not getting caught is a key feature of normative (socially acceptable) mischief. An individual who gets into mischief and gets caught, especially a repeat offender, will more often be labeled wild or no good by the rest of the community. These young people may in reality be no more mischief than other young people their age, but they are less skilled at hiding their behavior. In *Yookkene* it is crucial to cultivate a public persona that fits with the collective cultural ideals. Young people being mischief are testing the boundaries between private desire and public action. Getting caught being mischief reveals the motivations that everyone else may have, but are more skilled at controlling. This results in a kind of public shame around the individual who reveals these collective

desires. It is normal or right for young people to want to be mischief, but it is expected they will learn how to control their desires or at least hide them from public view and not bother other people with them. This local practice fits with the MySpace pattern among youth of revealing a mischief persona among peers in a medium that they think is hidden from adults.

Mischief is the primary problem of preadolescent youth in *Yookkene*. Mischief kids are only a problem when their behavior gets noticed by adults, elders or outsiders such as law enforcement and social services personnel. Some types of mischief behavior including vandalism, petty theft, or breaking and entering into public spaces can lead to juvenile charges of “criminal mischief” and a mental health diagnosis of “conduct disorder” (APA 2000: 98-99). Younger youth who are “too much mischief” early on, are typically those who will be at a much higher risk for getting arrested or going into treatment when they are older.

The problems that some of the younger youth in the villages experience cannot be fully understood using terms and constructs such as “delinquency” or “conduct disorder.” These do not “explain” behavior, they simply classify it. Constructing emotion schemas of youth in the village helps explain what is going on with the youth engaging in the behaviors. Emotion schemas describe the decision-making processes and motivations of youth towards certain actions. As a relative cluster, fun, boredom and mischief is an emotion schema of child misbehavior in the village. This schema reveals that the more appropriate level for intervention is with regard to the emotional decision-making of youth that revolves around fun-seeking and boredom avoidance. Intervening on mischief will not effectively change the motivations of youth towards these behaviors, and as a consequence many of these youth, motivated by increasingly intense emotions, will move from mischief to partying as they progress from childhood into older adolescence and youth.

Chapter 3

Partying

Trips: No partying is good, right?

SMR: You tell me. I thought you said all partying was good.

Trips: Parties are right, not good.

SMR: Did you just say parties are right not good?

Trips: For the record.

SMR: Really?

Trips: Yeah.

3.1 Culture and Drink

Trips is 23 years old and has lived in *Yookkene* all his life. He was raised mostly by his grandparents and went to school all the way through high school in the village. Trips does not really work except for occasionally going firefighting for a few weeks in the summer. Trips currently does not have a snowgo, but uses his grandmother's to ride around and travel for basketball. Trips is locally considered one of the best basketball players and softball players in the village, but is also generally considered "too wild" or "crazy." Trips is frequently mentioned in the village gossip, and I heard about him long before I ever met him while living in *Yookkene*. Trips is a partier, and by the gossip, and by his own admission, he is one of the "worst" ones. Towards the end of my stay in *Yookkene* he approached me about doing an interview for the project. My interview with Trips ended up being one of the better youth interviews I did during the research. He was real with me from the beginning and eager to show me village life from his perspective.

Trips did not try and hide that he likes to drink and party. His perspective was particularly important because in his case there were clear consequences to his drinking and partying that were doing little to alter his behavior. He was an ideal person to help get at the emotion schemas of young people in the village in relation to drinking and partying. I interviewed him formally on two separate occasions, and also observed and talked informally with him and his friends.

Although I was hesitant to attend parties in the villages, I did accept a few invitations to gatherings where I expected the participants to be of legal age, and where

much of the activity was outdoors and more public. What follows is a composite description of more or less “typical” village partying.

Fieldnote (223: Partying after the ball games)

It's Friday night and everyone in town is excited about the basketball games going on this weekend. The neighboring village is sending teams down to play against the *Yookkene* men's and women's teams. The games are scheduled to start around 7pm and I go have dinner over at Willa's before the games begin. Willa and I head over to the gym a little after 7 p.m. to get a good seat. When we go in I see that one of the *Yookkene* men's teams is already warming up on the court. Trips is on this team and when he sees me he smiles and lifts his chin slightly in greeting. When I am in public in the village, I always sit next to my female friends and minimize interactions with males. I've started to notice though that as Trips and I began to hang out more there started to be more slips in this gendered behavior in public. At the basketball game tonight for example, Trips sat a few bleacher seats down from mine and at one point turned around and introduced me to his uncle as “that one from the university that's been living here.” Willa looked utterly horrified and immediately commented on how “crazy” he was to do that in public.

The men's teams played first tonight and *Yookkene* ended up losing by a small margin to the neighboring men's team. There was small break between the men's and women's games and I went with Willa to the Native store. Outside we ran into Trips and some of his friends. They were headed back over to Trips' house and Trips invited Willa and I to come over but Willa had her own plans for after the games. Trips asked me a few more times if I was going to stop by to “check it out” but I remained noncommittal.

Yookkene women's team won their game and after it was over, Willa invited me over to sit around and have a few with her and a couple of her friends. We sipped on mixes of R&R and Dr. Pepper and talked about what had been going on around town. When it started to get late, after midnight, I left and began the

long walk backtown to my house. There are two roads that go back town from my friend's house. One went straight back and then cut over and the other cut over past Trips' house and then went straight back. I took the road that cut over and went back. I could see all the lights on and several snowgos outside of Trips' house. The curtains were all closed and it was still pretty quiet. When I walked past I heard the door open and two younger men walked out. They nodded and then lit up cigarettes. I kept walking and then heard Trips call out my name. He kept yelling for me to come in and so, motivated also by my desire to have him stop yelling for me, I hurried back to the house and went in.

There were probably 12 or more people in the house. Five people sat around the dining room table playing dice. There were several bottles (750 ml) sitting on the table and I could see a couple more being passed around in the living room. It looked like mostly Monarch vodka (the village drink of choice) but Trips pointed out that there was also a bottle of Crown Royale and Grey Goose that Jordan brought back after having been at training in Fairbanks for the past two weeks. I was immediately offered one of the bottles of Monarch, but Trips grabbed the bottle and explained that I don't like to do straight shots. Trips took one of the Gatorade chasers off the table and poured a healthy shot of Monarch into it shook it and handed me the mix. I found it much easier to moderate my drinking and not offend people by holding onto a mix – so if I was offered a shot I could hold up my mix to demonstrate that I had drink of my own. I still got teased for drinking like a White girl and whenever things got going enough there was always someone that would attempt to test me by demanding I take straight shots to prove that I could handle it like a real Native. When this would happen it was typically my cue to get going home.

The house party was already going strong when I stopped by. There were mostly Trips' teammates and the ball players from the neighboring village team in the house. There were about 10 younger men and 2 young women. The females were both from the neighboring village and were girlfriends of two of

the ball players. Everyone in the house was in their early to mid-20s. Most of the people from the other village left within the hour to drive back up the river before they got too intoxicated. One or two stayed in *Yookkene* and continued partying. More local people began to stop by Trips' house. Most brought their own bottles and would sit around for an hour or so and pass a bottle around and talk. Talk was mostly about the basketball game and who was out and what was happening at another party in town. As it got later there would be more rumors of fights just about to break out here or there around the village. The talk in the house would get louder and eventually someone would start shouting. The shouter would either be told to stop yelling or would get yelled back at and then there might be an argument. People came and went; and as the night progressed the group became more gender mixed as males and females began coming in and going out together.

From midnight until about 2am, six bottles were consumed by a shifting group of about 15 to 20 people – mostly young men in their 20s. I did not see any of the younger youth under 21 out but some of the people stopping by Trips' house said that two of the female youth were out at another house. Someone jumped on the phone about this time to track them down and invite them over to Trips'. The phone rang nearly constantly when someone was not talking on it with someone else in the village. I left around 2am and heard that the party went on until about 6am, and then all the remaining partiers in town consolidated the action into another house. When I went out to make my first rounds of the village the next day around 11am, I ran into Trips leaving one of the houses by the river. I could tell he was still going because when he saw me he came right up and brazenly greeted me in public and asked how I liked his party. Sober, he never would have talked to me out in the open like that. Trips quit drinking by Monday morning, and was at the gym later that day for men's night.

Trips would generally drink whenever there was drink in town and he was invited or had money of his own. Trips was not entirely representative of young people his age in

the village although he certainly was not aberrant either. The main distinction often made about Trips by his own peers was that he was a “bad” drinker. He tended to drink too often, too much and was too wild when he did. It was also clear that he was too open about his drinking, and would go around in public while he was drinking. It was when I interviewed Trips a second time, after we had known each other for a while, that he came forth with the quote about drinking that opened this chapter. We were talking about what motivated people to party in the village and I asked him again to talk about the good things about partying. This question did not work well in the first interview with him either. He answered in the first interview, “Nothing. Drinking is the devil.” When I pressed him further to explain why he did it, he would only say, to “have fun” and “kill time.” In this interview, he again balked at the idea that there was anything “good” about drinking. But this time, with more comfortable exasperation he shot out at me that, “parties are right, not good.” In the taped interview you will hear a long pause after he says this, as I’m writing down what he just said. I repeat it to him and he confirms the statement. I try and get him to explain what he means but he cannot (or will not) and the interview goes in a different direction.

I remember being kind of shocked after this interview. I had written down his statement on a piece of paper and it sat on my kitchen table for a week glaring up me with such smug obviousness. I felt like he had summed up what I have been struggling nearly all my life to understand: if drinking is so bad why do Natives do it and have so much fun doing it? I had been told all of my life by family members, health professionals and alcohol counselors that drinking is bad for Native people. Every event I went to on the reservation started with someone giving a speech about not drinking or recovering from alcoholism. In public everyone is against alcohol on the reservation, as I also found it to be in the village. In private, though, many of these same people will enjoy having a few. The explanations for this behavior always went something like: well Natives cannot help but drink even though it is so bad for them because they are addicted or genetically predisposed, or traumatized and self-medicating, or angry and dispossessed. These were pretty much the only “accepted” explanations for why Natives drank the way they did. I

always wondered if the people who came up with these theories had ever partied with Native people. My guess is that they probably had not. Because if they had, they would have seen some of the “rightness” that Trips was referring to in the interview. Drinking has become part of ritual and ritual life in many Native cultures. Ritual is where many anthropologists look to understand the social rules that govern life in the group (Bell 1997). In *Yookkene* drinking is the primary activity in *partying*, and partying is ritualized social behavior in the village. Drinking is also a part of “aboriginal” rituals among Athabascans, most particularly seen in the practice of Stickdance (see below). The Stickdance is a memorial ceremony for the dead that is practiced by some Koyukon and Deg Hit’an Athabaskan groups. Alcohol has been incorporated into the ritual feasting and dancing that are part of the practice. One of the youth that I interviewed was from a village that practiced Stickdance and he described going to the Stickdance they made for his parents who had been killed when their snowgo went through the ice.

SMR: So you did go to the Stickdance and everything for them (his parents)?

Thomas: Yeah.

SMR: What was that like?

Thomas: It was, you know, it was fun. I mean, I learned a lot of things. You know, it was my first Stickdance that I went to.

SMR: Really?

Thomas: Yeah. I probably went when I was younger, but I don’t really remember it.

SMR: Oh so what went on at this one?

Thomas: Well, the first one, I didn’t know what to expect about it. Everybody was telling me stories. Well, you know how I told you how I drank a lot... I drank?

SMR: Yes.

Thomas: People were just telling me, you know, “You’re going to be drinking there a lot.” You know, I guess during Stickdance a lot of people drink. I mean, I don’t think it’s traditional or anything. But, you know? Well, I guess it is,

because when we're dancing around the pole, they have bottles around the pole and people just pick up the bottles and pass them around and put them back down.

I realize that this discussion raises all kinds of issues concerning racism and racial stereotyping. Today even a mention of Native alcohol use by researchers threatens to contribute to the perpetuation of the "alcoholic Indian" stereotype (Mihesuah 1997). Spicer (1997) and Room (1984) have added to this the accusation of academic "problem deflation" particularly by anthropologists who appear at times to ignore the negative consequences of drinking for individuals and communities. These well meaning, anti-stereotyping agendas in academia result in another kind of distortion, however. They have in this way managed to reduce Native culture to all that is *good* so that anything potentially negative or maladaptive cannot by this principle be part of Native culture. This just perpetuates other stereotypes about Native people (e.g. Noble Savage) and gets us no closer to understanding what is really going on in these groups.

An entirely strengths-based perspective is as one-sided as a purely deficits-based one. Somehow over the past two decades there has been a shift in Native North American research and scholarship from talking about how badly off Natives are to talking about how good they are. In the introduction I presented a brief overview of the research on indigenous youth in the North and pointed out how by the late 1980s ethnographic work essentially stopped being done with these groups. In Alaska ethnographic scholarship seemed to terminate in the 1960s; no one was writing about what was going on in the Native communities anymore. Instead, anthropologists busily undertook writing their love letters to the past, an occupation that continues today (e.g. Burch 1998, 2005; Fienup-Riordan 2000, 2007; Mishler and Simeone 2004; Simeone 1995). There are a few notable exceptions to this rule (Fast 2002; Hensel 1994; Jolles 2002); but in general these tend to focus on the maintenance of traditional culture (mainly subsistence practices) despite social change and increasing globalization. Phyllis Fast's (2002) monograph is perhaps the most "real" and contemporary ethnographic study of an Alaska Native community to have come out in a few decades. It will be discussed in more detail below,

but it must be stated here that it was not without its critics as her somewhat dysphoric take on community life raises concerns about the negative stereotyping of an entire community. A balanced ethnography of any community, indigenous or otherwise, will invariably reveal complexities that resist simple reduction to the “good” or the “bad” and should stimulate discussion around both the adaptive and maladaptive aspects of cultures everywhere.

Native people are the first to admit (in private at least) that not everything about Native culture is inherently very good or very adaptive, but that this does not mean that Native people are not these things. Sherman Alexie (1992; 1996; 2001), Velma Wallis (1993; 2002), and Michael Dorris (1989) are all Native writers that talk about the realities of growing up on a reservation or in a village. Their work often stands in direct contrast to non-Native representations of Native life. It is like comparing *Dances with Wolves* to *The Business of Fancydancing*; both films are “about” Natives but portray very different realities. Academic scholarship about Native Americans more often comes out looking like a glossy Hollywood production, ala *Dances with Wolves*. Then there are the Native writers who sometimes appear to be locked in a competition to see who had the most messed up experiences growing up. So, for example, one can read Richard Nelson’s (1986) *Hunters of the Northern Forest* and then read Velma Wallis’ (2002) *Raising Ourselves* and come away with the idea that Gwich’in life and culture has been entirely profaned by social change and contact; or one could also begin to question how “pristine” it ever really was. It is almost as if Native people were not real people before they came into contact with European-Americans. They were “hunters” or “warriors” or “tribesmen” but not individuals who loved, laughed, lusted and enjoyed a good party.

The academic “it’s all good” agenda arose in response to the negative representations of Native cultures that flooded the literature as outsiders began to take notice of the ways that Native life had changed (e.g. Dozier 1966; Heath 1983; Klausner and Foulks 1982; Leland 1976). The goal of this type of research was to draw attention to the plight of Native people in a contemporary context and gain support and, ideally, resources for Native communities to reclaim and maintain connections to their aboriginal

pasts. Drinking became the primary indicator used by outside researchers to demonstrate the level of disorder and disruption to “traditional” Native culture. Alcohol was often cited as the reason that Natives were not practicing their culture anymore. Natives were no longer hunting, fishing, dancing, weaving, sewing, and praying because they were drinking instead. Alcohol became the symbol of everything non-aboriginal: liquid imperialism. Quintero (2002) makes this same point working among Navajos. He found that:

...some Navajo people use alcohol and drinking as a way of commenting on and evaluating present circumstances and states of being in Navajo society. (...) Drinking represents a rift between an idealized cultural past and a harsh contemporary existence. (...) ...drinking encapsulates in one potent symbol the degeneration of Navajo culture. (Quintero 2002: 7-8)

It is not really about degeneration, though, as much as it is about *hard times*. Alcohol symbolizes hard times. Hard times are part of Native culture, both aboriginal and post-colonial. Surviving hard times is fundamentally what makes you Native. Drinking creates hard times in families and communities. Surviving drinking (both their own and other people’s) is something that most Native people must do if they grow up in a village or on a reservation. At the same time though, Native people also have to survive non-drinking, their’s and others’, on the reservation or in the village. This other social condition is not represented in the public discourse about alcohol and Natives. To not drink in a village or on a reservation requires even more complex emotional decision-making as the risk for boredom and lonesomeness is much greater for non-drinkers.

Alcohol does not exclusively symbolize hard times, though, either. Alcohol, much like intoxicants everywhere, symbolizes fun times and excitement as well. Trips parties because it is fun. Every young person I talked to said that they partied, even though they knew that drinking was ultimately “bad,” because it could be fun too. Drinking in the village is not good nor bad, it just *is*. I think that is what Trips may have meant when he said that drinking was right, not good. The good or bad question about drinking is not the right question, because there is no real answer to it. The right questions have to do with

drinking as a social fact of Native life. So why can't we as researchers get to the right questions?

Perhaps more than any other group, Native people are constantly forced to define their status in relation to alcohol. This persistent bias impedes the progress of our understanding concerning Native people and alcohol. What happens is that each Native person is forced into an immediate dichotomy, drinker or non-drinker, and this leads directly into the good/bad, right/wrong, cultural/not cultural debate. This questioning around whether drinking is any of these things – good or bad, right or wrong, cultural or not – ignores the more fundamental aspect that drinking just *is*. Drinking is part of life in Native communities, as drinking is part of human life around the world. The more important questions are those that ask *how* drinking is part of Native life and what role alcohol plays in the experience of growing up in a village.

Another important, and often overlooked point, is that while drinking alcohol may be a recent innovation among Alaska Natives, *partying* is not new to aboriginal cultures in Alaska. Partying is essentially the gathering together of people to eat, drink, talk, dance, have fun and hook-up. Partying was an escape from the hard times of aboriginal existence. Parties in *Yookkene* are still based on the same fundamental drives and motivations that they once were. People party to have fun, maintain or establish social relationships, find mates, share wealth, resources and information, and release emotions. Partying has always come with certain risks, as well. Sometimes arguments and fights would break out at potlatches and social events; and infidelity and jealousy were more common in these contexts as well (Osgood 1958, 1959; Savishinsky 1991). The risks for partying today are more severe and include serious injury, arrest and death; but the productive value of partying in village life continues to motivate people to engage in the behavior.

This chapter presents an emotion schema of youth substance use and abuse in *Yookkene*. Partying is a common social activity in the villages among older youth (over the age of 18). Partying involves the use of alcohol and sometimes other drugs (if available) in a social setting. Partying is a primary means through which one can

establish, maintain and terminate relationships in a village. The relationship rules (see *Chapter 4*) that govern and control everyday interaction between individuals in the village can be suspended or intensified through partying. Partying is a primary form of village *excitement* both for partiers and non-partiers. Excitement is an intense type of fun. There are few every day options available for “excitement” in the village. New Year’s, tournaments (basketball and baseball), potlatches and Stickdance are the most “exciting times” of the year. These times are exciting because they bring people together from all over and involve people in collective activities. When people gather and interact there is bound to be *drama*. Drama is the basis of gossip or “news” in the village. Drama is a local term used to describe intense interactions between people in the context of excitement. Drama can indicate arguments, accusations, ignoring or ostracizing, crying and hollering, threats of suicide, jealousy and fighting. Everyone in the village depends on the local drama for fun and for vital information about what is going on. *Partying* is a way to create excitement that often produces drama on a more consistent and everyday basis. Where other types of exciting times occur only a few times a year, partying is everyday excitement.

3.2 “False Spirits”: Natives and Alcohol

The emotion schema of youth substance use/abuse presented in this chapter is based on the descriptions of partying, drama, fun and excitement provided by the young people themselves. Several other researchers have attempted to describe Native alcohol use and drinking behavior and a review of this literature will demonstrate the various attempts to understand the meanings that drinking has for people in Native communities. From the very beginning Native drinking has captivated the interest of Europeans and Euro-Americans with its apparent excess and intensity. So much has been written about Native Americans and alcohol over the past century as to make the subject nearly a scholarly cliché. So prevalent were these early depictions of Native “drink-all” parties, whiskey parties and brew-parties by outsiders coming into contact with Native groups that the “drunken Indian” stereotype was quickly and irrevocably rooted into the greater American consciousness (Leland 1976; Mancall 1997). Ethnographers likewise took

notice of Native drinking for its “exotic” qualities. The “exotic” qualities reported nearly always involved the amount of alcohol consumed, the duration of the drinking event, the social nature of the drinking and the intensity (in terms of violence, emotional expression and sexuality) of the drunken behavior. Rarely mentioned was that at this time the occasions were relatively infrequent and were often interspersed with extended periods of non-drinking (Blackman 1982; Cruikshank 1986; Jackson 1998; Wallis 2002).

Alcohol came into the Subarctic by the early 19th century arriving with the first European and Russian fur traders (Brody 1982; Helm 2000; Hallowell 1955). Fur trade posts would often have barrels of whiskey or rum sent in to use as a commodity for purchasing furs from Native trappers (Goulet 1998). The fur traders themselves were drinkers and the alcohol supply was also for the European and Russian settlers in the region. Some have argued that Natives learned how to drink from these first settlers – miners, fur traders and whalers in the North (Brody 1982) – but other researchers argue for an early indigenization of alcohol into Native cultures. Dorothy Ray points out that:

Liquor, like tobacco before it, was used not only as a stimulant but as a palliative for the numerous cultural restrictions imposed on their behavior, and then, in a never-ending circle, as justification for the feelings and actions thereby released. A point that must not be overlooked is that the Eskimo drank excessively from the first sip of liquor, which was at a time in history when he felt no stress from “clash” of cultures. He drank because he liked what it did to him. From the time liquor was first obtained- at Kotzebue Sound and at the Bering Strait- there would be no white man living permanently in the area for forty years, and no permanent “white settlement” would be established for almost fifty. (Ray 1975: 252)

Even if Native people did learn initially how to drink from the European and Russian settlers, it is clear that they also quickly innovated on these traditions, instituting their own drinking ways that were often consistent (rather than at odds) with aboriginal beliefs and practices.

Drinking is a way to alter consciousness, and the achievement of altered states of consciousness is a human universal. Native North Americans mainly used more non-substance induced means to achieve an altered state, such as fasting, rigorous

dancing/rhythmic music and sleep deprivation. A Coast Salish informant once told Edwin Lemert (1954: 352) that, “You get crazy when you sing. You don’t want to eat anything just drink water. You get crazy just like when you drink liquor.” Native groups that had access to chemical means of altering consciousness used them. Native groups in the southeast made a tea of holly leaves that induced dizziness and vomiting from the caffeine intoxication (Hudson 1979). Groups in the Great Basin area used datura in their spiritual complex and Apachean groups in the southwest used mescaline for similar social purposes (Aberle 1991). Native groups in the central and southern Northwest Coast used hallucinogenic mushrooms and may have fermented salmonberries (Deur and Turner 2005). Native groups in the North recognized the properties of Labrador tea and spruce punk ash to cause caffeine high-like effects. The main point here is that the meaning of “getting high” was not unknown aboriginally. Moreover individuals were motivated to achieve altered states of consciousness to fulfill certain social obligations, gain status and acquire power (Berreman 1956; Everett 1980; Goulet 1998; Mohatt 1972). Altering consciousness typically meant the individual would be more open to receiving things such as songs, visions and/or dreams. Altering consciousness also typically allowed an individual to be more openly expressive through song, dance or speech.

A review of early ethnographic descriptions of Native North American drinking provides important information on the meaning of alcohol in Native cultures. Irving Hallowell (1955) was among the first anthropologists to study the emotional lives of the Native people he worked with, and is often heralded as one of the forefathers of psychological anthropology (O’Neil 1996). Much of his work focused on understanding how anxiety and aggression worked as primary motivations for individual behavior within a social group. Hallowell (1955: 267) argued that “anxiety-preparedness in the face of danger (both real and imagined) is a very adaptive reaction.” *Anxiety* calls up particular feelings that may or may not find social outlets for their expression. Among the Ojibwa peoples he worked with, aggression is an emotional response linked to anxiety that is not allowed direct expression in the culture, but is institutionalized through two covert channels for aggressive impulse, sorcery and magic (Hallowell 1955: 281). By the

time Hallowell was living among these groups, significant social changes had occurred that disrupted these aboriginal “outlets” for emotional expression. Acculturation stress, mainly through missionaries and boarding school, had worked to suppress traditional beliefs in sorcery and magic. Hallowell theorized that the despondency that necessarily follows from experiencing this “moral void” led these Native people to drink (Hallowell 1955: 364-365). Hallowell’s work was important and innovative because of his attention to indigenous psychology and emotional force of everyday life. He did not, however, make an important connection between the decline in sorcery and magic as outlets for aggressive motivations and the rise of drinking as an alternative outlet driven by these same psychological processes in social life.

External pressures such as those resulting from contact and social change can induce or magnify feelings seldom encountered in pre-contact living. Concurrent with the increase of aboriginal emotion during periods of contact and social change was the disruption of traditional methods of emotional expression and social solidarity by missionaries, military force and boarding schools. What results is a situation of unmitigated intensification of feelings and experiences with the mutually co-occurring suppression of socially prescribed outlets for their expression and reconciliation.

Donald Horton (1943) followed up on Hallowell’s theory of aboriginal anxiety by making a more universal connection between indigenous alcohol use and indigenous anxiety. His study compiled descriptions of drinking from the Human Relations Area Files from indigenous groups worldwide. He concluded that, “the primary function of alcoholic beverages in all societies is the reduction of anxieties” (Horton 1943: 223). Horton argued that anxiety is an innate response to pain, and is a learned response in certain culturally prescribed contexts as well (Horton 1943: 228).

Relieving anxiety was one of the local meanings of alcohol use described by researchers; *sociality* was another. Researchers often cite sociability as another central element common to the Native drinking experience (Berreman 1956; Dozier 1966; Du Toit 1964; Leland 1976; Lemert 1954, 1958; Robbins 1969). Du Toit (1964: 18-19) argues that while the anxiety-relief and emotional expression component has important

meanings for many Native groups, having circumscribed settings for getting together and socializing may have even more forceful meanings with respect to drinking. Du Toit points out that during the colonial process, Native people were sometimes forcibly prevented from gathering together. Lemert (1954) similarly points out how the potlatch laws prohibited Native people from Northwest Coast groups to gather in large numbers for celebratory purposes; rather they could only do so for funerals. Due to this disruption, Du Toit (1964) argues that the “tavern,” for the Plateau peoples he worked with, may have served as a replacement for the traditional social gatherings and ritual institutions suppressed among the Plateau peoples.

These two key meanings, emotional expression and social solidarity, are recurrent themes in early ethnographic depictions of Native drinking behavior. Two of the earliest studies of drinking patterns among Native North Americans were conducted by Edwin Lemert (1954, 1958) among Northwest Coast cultures and Gerald Berreman (1956) among Aleut peoples. Lemert conducted his research primarily among Coast Salish groups in British Columbia, but he also draws from personal experience and literature from other Northwest Coast groups such as the Nuu-cha-nulth (Nootka), Kwakwaka’wakw (Kwakiutl), Haida and Tsimshian. Drinking was common practice by the time Lemert conducted his field research in the 1940s-1950s. Among the more northern Northwest Coast groups, the “whiskey feast” was a formal occasion for drinking, socializing and singing. Lemert (1954: 331-332) argued that both the whiskey feast and the drinking party provided informal contexts where certain forms of “intimatization” could occur within the framework “of the more formal roles and organization of native society.” He also noted that the whiskey feast and the drinking party allowed individuals to “give vent to idiosyncratic feelings, impulses, and strivings” without incurring personal penalty, something that was also allowed within the context of potlatch speech-making.

Song making and the singing of satirical and emotionally charged songs were also key features of drinking parties on the Northwest Coast (Lemert 1954: 328). For

example, Lemert (1954: 329) collected this drinking song from a Kwakwaka'wakw woman from Kingcome Inlet:

Kwasika'antlakwala (I am crying for my loved one)
 I was drinking last night
 with whiskey in my system over night,
 just for my loved one.
 I was crying last night
 with tears on my cheek,
 Just for my loved one.

This song illustrates the level of intense feeling experienced while drinking. Through drinking, the woman is able to express her grief and loneliness, and her tremendous love for another person. She sings not only for her own expression, but for those others who may also be experiencing these same feelings in their own lives. These are costly and sometimes dangerous emotions that are generally repressed in everyday life.

Velma Wallis observed a similar phenomenon with the older Gwich'in people in Fort Yukon while she was growing up.

Years later, grandpa would visit my mother and they would drink home-brew together. Mae would cry, asking him over and over why he didn't keep them together, why he kicked her out of the house. My grandfather would not know how to answer except to beg her forgiveness. They could display deep emotion only when they were drunk. When they sobered, it was as if they had never said such things to one another, until the next time they drank. Then they would go over the subject again. (Wallis 2002: p. 60-61)

For the older generation who still held firmly to the aboriginal rules guiding relationships and interpersonal interaction, but who were also on the frontlines of rapid social change and reorganization, drinking together provided an essential outlet for not just expressing but for *feeling* things.

Gerald Berreman (1956), working among the Nikolski Aleut people, observed frequent drinking by almost all the members of the community. He found that, in their sober life, Aleuts display their feelings very little and are tactful and circumspect in referring to others. Drinking together loosens individual inhibitions within a social

context. At parties, people “weep, laugh, express their affections and resentments, praise and criticize others and generally indulge in behavior and language that would otherwise be considered reprehensible” (Berreman 1956: 507).

Berreman argued that Nikolski people drank because of their strong feelings. A female informant at Nikolski gave these reasons for why she drank.

When I was 13 one of my brothers died and I had my first drink then – that’s when my mother drank and I took a drink. Then when I was 18 my older brother died and I went and drank. I thought it might make him come back to me, but it didn’t do any good. Then my father died [a year later] and my uncle made me drink for him and I kept drinking. I drank to forget it. I thought it would make things better. I wanted to be happy but it didn’t do any good...it was just the same afterward (Berreman 1956: 509).

It is evident in the young woman’s statement that drinking had been incorporated as a socially expected response to death in the community. She states that her uncle “made” her drink after her father died. It appears that drinking had become a socially obligatory response to certain events or crises in the community. Another informant at Nikolski told Berreman (1956: 509) that:

I’ve got to drink sometimes or I’d go crazy in this place. I’ve got to, I guess, to forget it for a while. There’s no other way to get away in a little place like this and after a while I just can’t stand it any more and I have to drink. It’s the people I guess.

This statement demonstrates how drinking also has meaning as a response to internal social pressures, such as those among peers and within families, and these internal social pressures were exacerbated by the external pressures placed on these groups during the period of Russian and American contact.

These patterns and meanings of alcohol use have been established across cultures in the North, although with some variation in terms of intensity, frequency and duration. Writing about Vunta Gwich’in of Old Crow, Balikci (1968: 191) observed that, “Home brew, drunk in company, eliminated restraints and stimulated the expression of intense feelings of hatred and jealousy directed towards others.” He found that:

Under the growing influence of the brew, conversation almost inevitably concerns aspects of interpersonal relations such as marital tensions, fears of maltreatment by

others, cases of extramarital relations, and the like. Often one individual dominates the party, monotonously repeating certain complaints he has against another person. (Balicki 1968: 196)

Brelsford (1977: 14) found that drinking allows Athabascans to “expose tensions that grow slowly between individuals who live in close and constant contact. It also provides an occasion around which to establish, affirm, or break off social relationships.” Brelsford (1977: 18) describes the changing nature of relationship rules during a drinking party. He begins with a broad generalization of sober behavior where “the person is circumspect,” and “he or she is quiet, reserved and contained.” In the initial stages of intoxication, the person’s composure “relaxes” and he or she may become “warm, jovial, generous, affectionate, talkative, and expressive.” More advanced stages of intoxication are marked by “violent, destructive, hostile, aggressive and belligerent behavior.” He notes that once the process of drinking has begun it is invariably pursued to its full completion.

In contrast, Jean-Guy Goulet (1998: 117) finds that among the Dene Tha, an Athabaskan speaking group in Northern Canada, alcohol use does not always lead to violence. Instead, the “Dene Tha choose the appropriate moment to retaliate against what they see as legitimate targets for violence.” Drinking, argues Goulet, is used as a tool of “interpretation and persuasion,” and is part of the overt system of power available to Dene Tha individuals (1998: 115). Goulet (1998: 118) observes that Dene Tha people recognize drunkenness as providing “a socially legitimate context within which to pursue objectives they cannot seek when sober.” Goulet’s descriptions force the reader to reconsider the idea of agency in relation to alcohol use among Native people. He provides many ethnographic examples that illustrate how Dene Tha individuals use alcohol to engage in socially and personally meaningful action that invokes knowledge and power in culturally circumscribed ways. One of the many inherent problems with using alcohol in this way is that drinking transforms hurt and fear into anger and courage, but falsely. The feelings are not “real” outside of the context of drinking.

Aboriginal ecstatic practice and social ritual incorporated modes of resolution and legitimization of the experience (Foulks and Klausner 1981; Hill 1990; Jilek-Aall 1981; Slagle and Weibel-Orlando 1986). These meanings seem not to have transferred into the practice of drinking. In aboriginal social rituals others in attendance not only shared vicariously in the expression of intense emotion, but also were responsible for providing the meanings for the experience. These people were usually the ones who were in a non-ecstatic or sober state. The individual was then ritually reintegrated from a disassociated state back into the social group. In the context of drinking, individuals are not returned from a state of drunkenness through the agency of others in their social group. Their return to sobriety is unmarked, and as such, typically remains unresolved.

Many of the researchers discussed above observed that drinking created a “time-out” (MacAndrew and Edgerton 1969) situation that Foulks and Klausner (1981) compared to ritualized soul loss. Many different observers have pointed out that the actions committed while drinking among most Native peoples are neither condemned nor condoned by the social group (O’Neill and Mitchell 1996; Savishinsky 1991); instead ambivalence appears to characterize people’s beliefs about alcohol and drinking (Spicer 1997). This may actually be in contrast to traditional practices where there is evidence for a positive association with the ecstatic or emotionally uncontrolled behavior experienced during song, dance or ritual (Hamer 1969; Jilek 1994). Uncontrolled behavior in controlled settings can be healing (Aberle 1991; Csordes 1997, 2002; Jilek 1978, 1982; Wallace 1956, 1959). Uncontrolled behavior in an uncontrolled setting can be harmful.

The social context of a drinking party in a Native village or reservation provides a “safe” environment where individuals in groups can “raise some hell” (Hill 1990), form and disband relationships, seek, gain and lose power (Mohatt 1972), and talk about normally “tabooed” subjects without responsibility or retribution (Lithman 1979). This type of institutionalized “tolerance” can act as a method of social control consistent with traditional ideas of non-interference and shaming, while also allowing individuals to return from drinking with the knowledge that they will be loved and forgiven. Drinking changes behavior but does not change the real person.

A less discussed aspect of the “time-out” meaning of drinking was pointed out by Brody (1980: 257) who said that this meaning “assumes a society where drinking is occasioned or at least intermittent [where] such indulgence takes on social importance.” The time-out aspect of drinking necessitates that there be clearly established *time-outs from drinking* as well. Sobriety is a precondition for drinking in Native groups living around these aboriginal ways. Recall that Hazel Kingfisher, an elder in *Yookkene*, talked about how her father used to drink, but that drinking was not like it is nowadays in the village. All of these early descriptions of Native drinking make reference to the prolonged periods of non-drinking that would occur throughout the year.

There is another aspect to the institutionalized tolerance that is less often discussed in the literature, but is perhaps no less a motivating force. Savishinsky (1991: 83) described drinking in a northern Athabaskan Hare community as a form of “staged deviance,” in which alcohol was seen as a vehicle for public morality and *entertainment*. The idea of drinking as a form of public entertainment is consistent with what Velma Wallis (2002) experienced growing up in Fort Yukon, a Gwich’in Athabaskan village. She described how everyone, drinkers and non-drinkers alike, came to depend on the excitement that drinking would cause in the village.

Often a neighbor would come running wild-eyed to tell us about someone being killed or maimed uptown. We all seemed addicted to bad news. If someone didn’t get killed, raped, or stabbed Friday or Saturday night, then on Sunday night people would suffer from withdrawals (Wallis 2002: 148).

Savishinsky describes how the “actors” (drinkers) and audience (drinkers and non-drinkers) both participate in the local *drama* created by a drinking party.

The deviance of the public drama was twofold. There was the uncharacteristic display of intense emotionality by the drinkers and the explicit manipulation of them by their normally reticent neighbors. Both of these departures from proper conduct were not only tolerable, they were enjoyable: the suppressed was made public without incurring responsibility and the public was both informed and entertained. The experience for spectators was vicarious and cathartic. (Savishinsky 1994: 88)

The local drama caused by drinking instructs as well as entertains. How this knowledge is transmitted and acquired is not thoroughly elaborated by Savishinsky, but other researchers, such as Lithman (1979), examine how “drunken talk” serves as the primary medium for expressive action in the context of a Native party.

He recalled an instance during his fieldwork in a reserve community where he was in attendance during a drinking occasion. Lithman describes how the tenor of the discussions changed with the level of drunkenness assumed by a tribal member he calls “Bob” and his guests. A selection from Lithman’s observance of this occasion demonstrates.

Bob had recently been caught in an act which was highly discrediting to his involvement in the Indian political movement, and the possible implications of this, as well as what to think of the Indian political movement itself, were discussed with a frankness which I had never heard before. Although the participants’ comportment revealed drunkenness..., the discussion was perfectly coherent. (Lithman 1979: 124)

Lithman later tried to engage Bob in a discussion of some of the issues brought out during the drinking party, but to no avail. Instead, Bob claimed no memory of the incidents that Lithman spoke of and when reminded said, “Did I say that? That’s just drunken talk. You talk too damn much when you’re drinking” (Lithman 1979: 124-125). It is through drunken talk that feelings are expressed and that thoughts about normally sensitive subjects such as politics, marital relations and traumatic experiences are shared with others. It is one of the more immediate windows into “what is really going on” in a community. Drunken talk is not intended to transfer into everyday contexts, as Lithman’s example illustrates, although the assumption is that transference is inevitable through the community “private speak” or gossip. Gossip is another way that everyone in the community (drinkers and non-drinkers) learns from drinking behavior.

In the 1980s there was a sharp decline in these types of descriptive studies of Native alcohol use, and an increase in action-oriented studies that were intended to do something about the problem, rather than just describe it (Beauvais 1992, 1998; Brems 1996; Dinges and Duong-Tran 1992; Frank, Moore and Ames 2000; Guyette 1982; Kraus and Buffler 1979; Leung, Kinzie, Boehnlein and Shore 1993; Longclaws, Barnes, Grieve

and Dumoff 1980; Manson, Tatum and Dinges, 1982; Mattaini 1991; May 1982, 1989; May and Moran 1995; Moncher, Holden and Trimble, 1990; Segal 1998; Whittaker 1982, 1982; Wolf 1980, 1984). These studies typically employ a “distress model” to explain Native alcohol use and abuse (O’Neill and Mitchell 1996), and look inward at causation in terms of genetics, neurology and psychology. The distress model of substance use looks at social conditions only as they interact with internal preconditions.

A few current researchers such as O’Neill and Mitchell (1996), who have studied the role of culture in adolescent drinking on a Northern Plains reservation, have argued for a return to some of the earlier work describing the meaning of alcohol use for Native people. O’Neill and Mitchell (1996: 565) argue that the contemporary “lack of attention to the cultural context of teen drinking has crippled the field.” They argue that the distress model approaches to alcohol abuse among Native youth are particularly ill-fitting.

There is a similarly clear and urgent need to know more about the contemporary social and cultural context of substance use for Alaska Native youth. This information is essential for service providers and program developers aiming to intervene with these youth. It is even more basic than this though. As O’Neill and Mitchell also pointed out, there is not only a need to know about Native youth substance use, there is also the more basic need to know about Native youth in general. And this information needs to come from the youth themselves. Adult or elder perspectives of youth have dominated the research from Native communities, and, ironically, these have been overwhelmingly “deficits-based” descriptions (e.g. Brody 1975; Fienup-Riordan 2003; Jolles 2002). The voice of Native youth is not often heard in the communities, and there are cultural reasons for this that must also be respected

When I went out to the village to do research on the lives of children and youth, I was immediately pointed to the elders. Our research had built in an intergenerational component to understand how the childhood experience in *Yookkene* had changed, so this initial time spent exclusively with the elders was the ideal way to begin the data collection that was also culturally consistent. What our research did not account for in its planning was the local resistance to spending equal time immersed with the youth in the

village. The first time I asked to interview a young person who was at the time 19 years-old, I remember getting a funny look and an immediate response of “why would you want to talk to [so and so] he’s too young to know much about things here.” Young people too would at first be surprised when I asked them for an interview. They would usually make a comment like, “Well if you want to know about [such and such] you should talk to my uncle (or grandparent, or respected elder).” When I would assure the young people they would be able to answer the kinds of questions I would ask they would remain skeptical until after the interview when they would often admit they were surprised and happy with the outcome of the interview. After word got around about how “easy” the interview was I soon had many more youth than adults asking to be interviewed. But the more time I spent with youth in the village, the more critical the older people became of the project.

The criticisms would not come to me directly, rather I would be told by a friend or by the VRA that they had “heard” from someone that someone had mentioned that I was spending too much time around the young people, particularly around “partiers.” A few local people would ask me how I can be “for wellness” and also be around people who party. Such comments presume the good/bad, functional/dysfunctional, right/wrong dichotomy that I described at the start of this chapter. In tribal council meetings I would make sure to emphasize the importance of knowing what is going on with youth in the village. Drinking is part of life in the village. It is not the only part, and is not the primary part, but it is part of life in the *vill*. An ethnographic description of the everyday life and emotion schemas of youth in the village would be incomplete and less meaningful without a description of partying and the motivations of youth to party.

3.3 *Partying in Yookkene*

SMR: You already said there was a difference between drinking and party?

Jordan (21 years old): Yeah I think there is. Cause there’s people that drink just to drink just cause they’re addicted to alcohol. But partying you’re drinking to have fun, to socialize and be social. So I think there is a big difference. When it’s not fun anymore that’s when I’ll quit.

Youth in their late teens and early 20s often distinguish between drinking and partying. Drinking is more characteristic of “adult” patterns and behaviors. Drinking is more serious; it is partying without the “fun,” from a youth perspective. People who are described as having a problem with alcohol in the village are always identified as “drinkers.” People who are identified as “partiers” may drink as often or as much; but they generally are those that have fun when they drink, cause less drama and tend to get less crazy. Partying is the primary social context of youth drinking behavior in the village. Partying involves drinking, but drinking is not the primary motivation to party for youth. Youth are motivated to party because of the “excitement” that is typically involved when people get together and drink. Excitement is the more intense experience of fun that was described in Chapter 2.

Alcohol is regulated in *Yookkene* through local option laws (Lonner and Duff 1983). The Alaska state legislature enacted these laws to provide a method for a community to control and impose certain limits on the availability of alcohol in a community. Local option allows villages to choose one of the following four options on alcohol availability in their communities: (1) the sale of alcoholic beverages is prohibited unless sold under a community liquor license; (2) the sale of alcoholic beverages is limited to one of several types of retail licenses such as a restaurant wine license; (3) the sale of alcoholic beverages is prohibited; and (4) the sale and importation of alcoholic beverages is prohibited (Lonner and Duff, 1983). The community of *Yookkene* voted for the 3rd option, to ban the sale of alcohol in the community, but allow the importation of a limited amount of alcohol for personal use. The efficacy of local options laws has yet to be empirically established, but most local people believe these to be the most effective way to limit the amount of alcohol abuse and alcohol-related problems in the community. *Yookkene* currently allows 6 bottles (750ml) of liquor and 2 cases of beer per person traveling into the village.

Local option laws have proven difficult to enforce in some areas. Some village tribal councils will institute regular baggage checks at the airstrip of people returning from the cities to the villages. Most communities do not enforce local option at this level.

In *Yookkene* if there is word that a known bootlegger is coming back on a certain flight and the VPSO is alerted, he might take a tribal council member out to meet the flight and search the bags of the suspected bootlegger. These checks are infrequent, and much of the bootlegged alcohol comes in as freight sent in from Fairbanks. During the summer and mid-winter months some people also bring in cases of alcohol (20 bottles per case) by boat or snowgo from a liquor store located in a wet village about 40 miles upriver. There is almost no way of regulating this type of importation of alcohol, and the mid-winter months and mid-summer months are typically the craziest times in the village.

The restriction of alcohol into *Yookkene* has in some ways made drinking a form of resistance (Lurie 1971). Some of the young men in particular would often tell me that it was their "right" to drink like anyone else, and that it was racist to try and tell Natives that they can not control their own drinking. The local option laws cause conflicts between families and family members in the villages as lines are drawn over the issue between drinkers and non-drinkers. The limited supply of alcohol, coupled with the great demand and illegality of selling alcohol in the village also may contribute to the binge-style "drink all" partying that continues to characterize "Native" drinking ways.

In *Yookkene* youth generally party with other youth. Young people under the age of 19 in particular will party almost exclusively with other underage youth because of local prohibitions against under-age drinking. I have observed adults strictly enforce this rule at parties. During the summer in *Yookkene* there were several outdoor parties that went on late into the night. Younger youth (under 18) would sometimes hang around the periphery, and would get scolded or sent home if it was suspected they were "sipping." The relatively low observed rate of teenage drinking among those 15 to 18 years of age in *Yookkene* was striking in comparison to the relatively high observed rate of older youth drinking (19-30). I attended three different tournaments with dances, and did not observe younger youth drinking in public. I did hear about some of the high schoolers drinking at these events later, but I did not see them doing it in public and generally observed and interacted with these younger youth as sober. The older youth (19+) would party more openly at dances in *Yookkene*. In their interviews with me, all of the underage youth said

they would eagerly anticipate turning 18 to be able to party more openly (and also looked forward to turning 21 to be able to go to bars when in town).

From descriptions in the interviews I conducted with younger youth, teenager partying occurs infrequently (when one of their peers may be coming back from Fairbanks) and on special occasions such as New Year's and at tournaments. Teenage partying is smaller scale and more secretive than youth and adult partying. Teenage partying is typically gender specific, where youth partying is more gender mixed. Teenagers who can sneak a bottle or find a buyer to get a bottle for them will drink in small groups of two or three. They will take a bottle of R&R or Monarch and ride or walk outside of town on the back roads and drink it together in private. After getting a little high and a little "brave" from the alcohol they might come back into town and go seek out other people, very often of the opposite sex, to hang out with. Young females in general are more secretive about their drinking than young males. Teenage males, if they can get a bottle or two, will more often drink in someone's house, typically an older brother or other male relative's house. If someone has a truck or access to a truck they will sometimes drive around the village, three or four in a truck cab, and drink a bottle together. This is how underage youth get charges of MCA (minor consuming alcohol) and DUI (driving under the influence) in the village. In *Yookkene* there is a local village police officer (VPSO) that occasionally patrols the village at night looking for underage drinkers who might be cruising the back roads outside of town.

Sometimes teenage youth will be invited to party with the older youth. High school age girls will occasionally get invited to drink with the older male youth in town. Some of the high school girls regularly "go around" with local guys in their 20s. When the parents or adult relatives of these girls hear about them partying, they will most often get after the older youth for inviting the younger ones to party. I have observed the parents of high school age girls in the village directly confront young men they suspect are giving their daughter alcohol. Young men in their interviews with me would talk about being afraid of this type of public shaming and would try and avoid partying with

underage girls because of it. These relationships are often kept secret for this reason until the girl is out of high school.

Certain high school age male youth party more regularly with the older youth than others. If the teen is a strong basketball player or is taller and bigger and acts older than his age-mates he may hang out more with the older youth. The strong local sanctions on teenage drinking diminish considerably once the young person is out of high school.

All of the 27 youth I interviewed between the ages of 15 and 26 (out of about 36-40 in total between these ages) said they partied on occasion, or whenever alcohol was available. I knew of about 6 more young people between the ages of 17 and 25 that did not drink or party at all. Most of these non-drinking youth would still go “check it out” and would often stay at parties to monitor the action, help take care of the drunk ones and break-up fights and arguments. The majority of youth in *Yookkene* drank on a semi-regular basis. Some of these youth drank much more frequently than others, and some would party one or two times out of the year. Also some of the youth that drank occasionally would “maintain,” meaning they would moderate their drinking and not “get crazy” or “wild” or out of control. Then there were the youth that were already getting the label of “drinker” from others in the community. These youth were the ones that were most “wild” or “crazy” and would most often be the cause of drama at a party.

There are different types of drinking that go on in the village. There is “sipping,” “sitting around,” or “having a few” and then there is partying. “Sipping” typically involves taking small sips off of someone else’s bottle. This can happen in many different social contexts around the village. Most often it is pairs of teenage girls or solo male youth that will cruise around the village looking for drinking people and hanging around until they are offered a sip from the bottle or a mix. Sitting around is when a few people share a more limited amount of alcohol. Typically groups of 2-3 young males or females or sometimes a mixed group of 3-4 males and females will sit around. Youth will sit around mainly with their best friends or “best bros.” When young people sit around in *Yookkene* they will often play cards (cribbage or poker) or play dice (10,000), listen to music and talk.

Partying occurs when there is a lot of alcohol around town, enough to sustain a large number of people drinking over a longer period of time, sometimes days. Partying is still more common over the weekends in *Yookkene*, except for in the summer when there is no school and work is seasonal and nights are warm and long; then partying tends to be even more spontaneous and unrestricted. Typically what happens is that someone will get in a case of alcohol or there will be a number of people all coming back into the village from Fairbanks, so there will be a lot of alcohol available in town all at once. When there is a lot of alcohol around there is a higher likelihood that youth will be able to acquire some of the alcohol or will be invited to party. Parties typically start off with a smaller group of people but quickly expand as more people hear about the party and drop by to check it out. Drop-ins when people are just sitting around will most likely be turned away or not offered any drink. At a party the bottles are shared vigorously and generously with whoever stops by.

Partying typically goes on in one or several houses. People will often “party around” meaning they will go from one party to another; this typically happens later on in the night after everyone has been drinking for a while. At this stage in the partying people are generally having the most fun. A fun party is when people are all talking and *being happy* or “chill.” Talk at this stage will typically be about sports or snowgos or plans for the future (playing sports or getting a new snowgo). The atmosphere at this time is playful and excited. Young men and women will flirt more openly or cast long looks at each other from across the room. It’s at this time when people will open up about their *good feelings*. They will maybe admit they are in love with someone or want to be with someone. They will talk about how much they love another family member, most often a sibling, and want the best for them. It’s at this time when young people would often open up to me and tell me “how cool” or “chill” I was to be in the village, checking it out. Younger men that would never make eye contact with me in public would come over and shake my hand and say they wanted to do an interview.

As the party progresses, the type of “opening up” will often change. People will begin to talk more about the loves they lost (rather than the ones they had or wanted) and

the family members they missed. They will begin to go over things that happened in the past, sometimes repeating the same story to different people over and over again with generally the same response (“that’s messed-up man”). Then there will be the apologizing, where a person would own up to something they did in the past to someone else. I would observe this in *Yookkene* when someone would come up to me at a party and apologize for not talking to me or talking about me in a certain way and basically distrusting me.

Sometimes talk will go back and forth between reminiscing about the “good times” and “bad times” for most of the night. Other times the opening up that occurs in the context of partying will involve accusations and direct confrontations. At this stage the accusations are most often based on relationship rule violations, such as not sharing (alcohol), stealing or owing (money), and infidelity (real or suspected). At this stage arguments will often break out over whose alcohol it was and how much someone was drinking. Sometimes people will also use this time to confront another person about something they owed or something they did that caused problems for the other person. But more often than not accusations were about jealousy; and arguments would happen suddenly if one person was accused of sitting too close to another or talking too much to someone else or looking at another person. In *Yookkene* I would hear more about these confrontations than see them or experience them myself. There were a few occasions when I was confronted in this way at a party and a few times when I was confronted by a drinking person who was coming back from a party and saw me on the street. Once at a party I was confronted about being “FBI” – eventually the confrontation dissolved into a joke about being “full blooded Indian” but only after the person had opened up about their fears and distrust of me and my work in the community.

In the interviews with youth, most would describe instances when confrontations at parties would lead to arguments and fighting. Young men would fight more often than young women. Nearly all of the young men I talked to had been involved in a fight at a party at some time in the past. All of the youth, males and females, had witnessed fighting at a party. Fighting is the primary component of “drama.” Drama is a local term

that people use to describe the “bad things” that can go down at parties. Drama also includes crying, arguing, jealousy and suicidal behavior (threats and gesturing). Drama can be scary and crazy and sometimes even life threatening, but it is also always exciting.

Drama can be caused by certain people and certain situations. Certain people are locally known to cause more drama than others at a party. Situations where more people are drinking in town at once and there is more alcohol around will cause more drama. In general young people say they try to avoid drama, particularly certain kinds of drama like fighting and going crazy, but they will also typically admit that drama at a party is inevitable.

The research and the interviews I did with youth were about growing up in the village, and drinking and partying ended up being primary themes in most of these interviews. Youth would talk about partying when I asked about good times or exciting times in the village. I would also ask direct questions about drinking experiences to get at the local norms and attitudes towards alcohol and substance use. Sections from the interviews demonstrate the general ways that young people would describe drinking and partying in the village.

Jordan (21 years old)

SMR: Then what are some of the good things about drinking and partying?

Jordan: Socializing. Talking about this and that. I don't know. Being crazy. Having fun anyways. I don't know. It depends on who you hang out with.

SMR: Is there a difference like in the way how people?

Jordan: Yeah how people act when they are drunk and when they're not. I don't know just people like I said earlier people just talk about different things and there's a whole different, and there's a different person. Like a totally different person some people are.

SMR: They change?

Jordan: Yeah. Like they just get serious on you and you're like what the

hell? I guess it brings up topics that are real serious, like I don't know man. That's why I quit drinking too, because I'll probably end up fighting with my friends for no odd reason. Because I don't know; some people are like that I guess. They get all hyped up about something that's not really hype.

Paula and Nadine (both 17 years old)

SMR: So how often would you guys party?

Nadine: Just on special occasion, because.....

Paula: Yeah.

Nadine: If you drink like every two weeks or every week or something, it's too much drama, and.....

Paula: Yeah.

Nadine:it's not fun. Because like there's a whole bunch of drama and there's lots of drama.

SMR: So describe that.

Paula: Especially with the boys. The boys always fight every -- every time we.....

Nadine: I know.

SMR: Really?

Nadine: It's funny sometimes, yeah. Last weekend they did. Like four guys took off their shirts and stuff. They're funny. Crunch the window in and.....It's funny.

M: Does that happen every time they drink or just.....

Nadine: No.

Paula: Usually.

Nadine: Well, not those guys, but sometimes, yeah.

Paula: Yeah.

Nadine: Or like when there's drama is like when someone starts crying.

Paula: Oh, yeah. People will start crying. Feel sorry for themselves.

Nadine: Yeah.

Paula: Get all suicidal, like.....

SMR: And then you guys have to like talk to the person out of.....

Nadine: Yeah, calm them down.

Paula: Yeah, and go home. Go home and like what a waste.

Della (18 years old) and Tami (17 years old)

SMR: So what's good about drinking and partying then?

Della: We always have fun it seems like.

Tami: Yeah.

Della: Well *I* always have fun at least. A couple people always start crying.

Tami: Oh, yeah.

Della: We haven't done that in a long while.

Tami: Well... There's like this one point where like one of us would get really wasted, then we'd start crying.

Della: Yeah. About anything, too.

Tami: Yeah.

Della: Sometimes nothing. We decided that we started crying. I did that a couple times too.

Tami: Yeah like me and Paula just started crying the other night over our guys, because she was mad at her fling dude and I was mad at my boyfriend and.....

Della: That's funny.

Tami: Yeah. And, well, I was mad at him and then I tried telling him it was over and then... Or wait or I told Natalie to tell him it was over. And then I walked in and realized and I was like, don't tell him, and then after -- she's like, I already told him, and I was like, oh, no. It's over? And then I just started crying, and it wasn't even over. It was just like -- it was like, man, this sucks, and I just walked out, and I started crying. Then I walked up to Paula and she was crying and she said he's still with me and everything. I was like, oh thank God and so we're crying.

Della: I wish I was there.

Tami: You were there.

Della: Was I? No. I wasn't even here.

Tami: Oh yeah you weren't here. That was crazy, though. That was so fun. That night was fun.

Soldier (19 years old)

Soldier: But, yeah, ever since I've known growing up, alcohol has been one of the biggest problems here. Suicides and fighting and that just all around a bunch of problems, I guess. I don't know, it seems like a lot of the times when the guys here party they like to get really smart and test their skill -- I mean, not their skills, but test their might I guess I would say. Yeah.

SMR: And so they fight a lot?

Soldier: Yeah. They'd fight a lot. It's not so bad now, but the last few years, it's gotten pretty bad. There was fights to where people would end up being medivaced out and stuff like that. Yeah.

SMR: Over what kind of things?

Soldier: Just over generally drinking, I guess. Just over whose booze it is or just, I guess, it depends on when somebody gets a little too drunk and it's just mostly all about the alcohol. Yeah.

SMR: What do you think are some of the good things about drinking?

Soldier: I don't know, I can't really say there's anything good about drinking, but.....

SMR: So what makes you keep wanting to.....

Soldier: Well, it just seems like when I party, it's just we go out and we have a lot of fun. And sometimes when there's no weed around or something and everybody's out having fun, I'll go out and I'll have a few with them and get started and then, I don't know. It seems like then when we party, it's pretty fun. I mean, everybody has fun and everybody's

happy. Yeah. But, yeah, then there's those times where everybody gets rowdy and mean and stuff like that.

3.3.1 Drug use in Yookkene

SMR: What were some of the things that -- besides not drinking, what were things you were told never to do when you were growing up?

Jay: Drugs.

SMR: Drugs.

Jay: Or bother other peoples' stuff.

Drugs are sometimes part of partying in *Yookkene* but are less common and in many ways less *meaningful* than alcohol is in general. This in contrast to the situation on many Lower-48 Native reservations where opiates, such as OxyContin and methamphetamines are increasingly common (Novins, Beals, Shore and Manson 1996; Ross 2005). The only drugs I ever saw or heard about being around in *Yookkene* were marijuana and cocaine. Prescription pain medication was also reported as a problem, but primarily among the older adults (35+). Marijuana was by far the most commonly reported drug used by youth in *Yookkene*. Marijuana use in the rural villages has become increasingly prevalent over the past 30 years (Goldsmith et al. 2004) but has been nearly entirely ignored by researchers. Marijuana is cheaper to buy in the village than alcohol and is more available on an everyday basis. Most of the youth I interviewed had tried marijuana, and a significant number of the male youth, and a few of the female youth, smoked out on nearly a daily basis.

“Smoking out” or just “smoking” is the local way of talking about smoking marijuana. When young people are talking about smoking tobacco they will specify this by saying smoking cigarettes. When I first began interviewing youth and I asked them about “smoking” they would give me a funny look and always ask a clarifying question like, “smoke what?” or “you mean cigarettes?” Smoking out differs from drinking and partying in significant ways. Smoking out, like drinking, is a social activity. Rarely will youth smoke alone, although it does sometimes occur, while I never observed or heard about a young person (or adult for that matter) drinking alone.

Youth will smoke out with one or two other friends. Sometimes a small group of

4-5 males will sit around and smoke out and play video games. Girls do not really play video games and will instead smoke out together and walk around or listen to music and talk. Sometimes males and females will smoke out together but typically this is a gender-based activity. Most local people said they thought marijuana was more common among the young males in the village, but many of the females I talked to said they would smoke if it was around (although still admittedly less than their male counterparts).

A lot of the young people would say they thought that marijuana was a bigger problem for young people than alcohol because it was more available and used on a more frequent basis. Several of the young males I talked with had attempted to quit smoking marijuana at one point in their lives, and a few of these felt they were currently “addicted” to it. Significantly fewer of these same youth thought their alcohol use was a problem.

Most youth say that they smoke out for something to do or to relax and chill. They say smoking out can sometimes be fun because people tend to laugh more, but it appears that smoking out is something that young people do to not be bored. Smoking out does not cause drama, but also does not involve excitement. All of the youth said that drinking was much more “fun” than smoking, and many said they would choose drinking over smoking if drink was more available.

Cocaine is the only other illegal drug that sometimes comes into *Yookkene*. Only a small number of the young people I interviewed had even seen cocaine around. Typically it was the older male youth that had seen it or tried it out, and in general this would occur more often in the larger neighboring community. The limited availability and nominal use of controlled substances, other than marijuana, by youth in *Yookkene* is striking compared to the use of illegal drugs by youth in urban centers (Alaska DHSS 2002). Other types of drugs, particularly methamphetamines, have started to become more of a problem in some of the rural hub communities (Goldsmith et al 2004). The State Trooper out of Galena came out to *Yookkene* while I was living there and gave a presentation to the community on meth-awareness. The State Trooper said that they anticipate methamphetamines to be a major problem in the rural communities within the next

decade. Right now, though, one of the benefits to living in the village that many youth cited in their interviews was that there were hardly any drugs around, not like in the city.

In general drugs were considered much more dangerous and “worse” than drinking. Parents were often more upset with adolescent marijuana use than occasional drinking by teenagers. I never observed anyone, young or old smoke marijuana in public. Sometimes though when I was at a basketball game and a youth appeared to be stoned people would comment negatively about it – sometimes directly to the person. Youth in their interviews were generally more reluctant and careful about talking about their marijuana use, yet they were quite open about their underage alcohol use, even though both are “illegal.” Most though talked openly about the prevalence of marijuana and the pressures they experienced to try it when they were adolescents.

Captain (20 years old)

SMR: Did you use to spend a lot time with your friends?

Captain: Yeah. Our friends used to think our house was the coolest. I mean just because we couldn't really do whatever we wanted, but then we'd just stay up late and go to school. School was actually fun before high school. Marijuana used to be such an influence. So many people did it here. There was nothing anybody could even do to not go anywhere and not expect peer pressure.

SMR: With marijuana particularly?

Captain: Yeah.

SMR: Did you try that before you tried drinking?

Captain: Yeah. (112Y)

Tami (17 years) and Della (18 years)

SMR: Do you guys ever see other drugs around like marijuana or cocaine or anything like that?

Della: Marijuana is all around here. Like just something that's always in the village. Everyone -- a lot of people do it and stuff, yeah.

SMR: More than alcohol?

Della: Yeah.

Tami: Oh, yeah.

Della: I think it's because you have easier access to it and stuff maybe. And it's cheaper than the bottle. I like smoking weed better anyway. I'd rather smoke than drink.....

SMR: How come?

Della: Well okay yeah I'd rather drink, but I like smoking way better.

SMR: What's better about it?

Della: It's just -- I don't know, I just like being around me and her all the time and we just laugh and laugh. We just make each other laugh. It's just funny.

Tami: Yeah.

Della: It's just like you can't stop laughing.....

Tami: Yeah.

Della:you know what I mean? You just keep laughing and laughing.

SMR: Is it easier to get than alcohol?

Della: Heck yeah.

Trips (23 years)

SMR: Describe a party from the time it starts til...

Trips: Whenever they open the bottle to whenever they got no more alcohol.

SMR: Alcohol is all they do?

Trips: If they got drugs, they're drugging too and drugs is marijuana and cocaine, nothing else.

SMR: And when did you first try marijuana?

Trips: About 12.

SMR: So before you really even started drinking?

Trips: Yep.

SMR: And how often do you do that?

Trips: Now or back then?

SMR: Back then and then now.

Trips: Every time it was available, and now, every time it's available.

SMR: And how often is it usually available?

Trips: Pretty much all the time. Pretty much all the time.

SMR: So anytime you can?

Trips: Yeah. It's fun, it's cool I guess. It's something I do every day. It keeps my mind going straight pretty much I'd say.

SMR: How many -- like how many grams do you smoke a day do you think?

Trips: I don't know. I'd say maybe four depending on how the day goes. That'd be -- that'd be me and a few other friends. We'd all go pitch in or one of us would buy it and one of us would owe each other and stuff like that.

SMR: Do you think weed is more accessible than -- is it easier to get than alcohol?

Trips: Yeah. It is a lot easier to get than alcohol, and my personal opinion about smoking weed is it's way better than drinking, because you don't, you know, you don't go out and act crazy. You still know what you're doing. That's the way I see. I mean, if I could quit, I would, but it's pretty hard to quit. I mean, it's just like cigarettes.

Even though most young people acknowledge that marijuana use comes with fewer social consequences they attribute greater risk to it in terms of dependence. The benefits and risks of marijuana and other drugs are most often described in terms of what they do physically to the body. In contrast, the benefits and risks of alcohol and drinking are described by what they do socially. The higher value in *Yookkene*, as in many indigenous societies, is on the social self (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987). This makes drug use a non-integral – and at times – even opposing force to partying. Several youth claimed that mixing drugs

such as marijuana or cocaine with alcohol is what causes people to lose control and blackout and then do really crazy things like try and kill themselves or beat other people up.

3.4 Excitement, Drama and Partying

SMR: What were some of your like happiest memories?

Paula: Hanging around, having fun, laughing. Yeah.

Nadine: When there's no drama.

Paula: When there's no drama. Definitely when there's no drama. Just laugh and have fun.

Youth are motivated to party for similar reasons that they are motivated to do other things that are “fun” in the village. When young people reach their late adolescence and early adulthood the things that used to be fun like playing out are no longer socially appropriate. There are fewer social contexts for older youth to get together and do things in larger or mixed gender groups. There remain relatively strict rules about everyday interaction between younger males and females in particular in *Yookkene* (see *Chapter 4*). Partying provides a social context for fun and excitement (intense fun) where relationship rules are relaxed enough to allow people to “open up” and talk about things and do things they normally would not in everyday life. These social contexts are exciting because they guarantee that something new will be shared and something different will happen. Within the “limits” of the village, new people, things and experiences have the highest social and emotional currency.

Partying is exciting because people get to “be wild.” Being wild is basically mischief intensified. In daily life people in the village are expected to be restrained and avoid confrontations and arguments. People are expected to avoid certain subjects in conversation. Males are expected to be “hard workers” and females are expected to be modest and shy. Being wild is when these rules are broken. People do not even have to be drinking to be wild. Young men who will openly talk to girls in the gym or in public will be labeled “wild.” Being wild involves breaking the implicit cultural rules for right conduct. In an interview, Trips (23 years old) explained being wild to me in this way.

SMR: Are there things that you remember your grandparents talking to

you about, like is there things that girls shouldn't do, things that boys shouldn't do?

Trips: Yeah, always. It's always like that all over, ain't it? Guys get away with everything. Girls are supposed to be on top of their game, that's what I think at all times. Make sure they're not acting wild.

SMR: What do you mean exactly when you say like being wild? What does that include?

Trips: I don't know.

SMR: You do.

Trips: Wild is wild.

SMR: But what things come to your mind like when you think about someone's being wild, what are they doing?

Trips: Doing what adults do.

SMR: Okay. Now you have to be more specific.

Trips: I can't.

SMR: You can.

Trips: Okay, well, just like...

SMR: Well, tell me a story about a wild time. Like what's, "Like we were being wild." Like, well, what exactly were you doing?

Trips: Wild, I don't know. Just macking on all the girls. Hardly don't care what we do; just straight up boys being boys, girls being girls, party being a party. I mean when you think about it, what do we all do at a party? Sit down and talk, drink, listen to music. Some people smoke cigarettes, some people smoke marijuana. Some people drink, some people laugh, some people cry. Some people don't want to hear the sad stories. Sometimes people, couples take off and come back. That's being wild.

Being wild is not always a bad thing. Wild boys in the village typically get more girls and have more fun, much like the mischief boys. At the same time, wild boys attract

wild girls and relationship problems are more common between these couples. Relationship problems that come from being wild are among the most common sources of *drama*. Drama has the potential to bring people together and break them apart. Drama can lead to emotional as well as physical violence. Drama can cause people to go against each other and this can lead to loneliness and exclusion (see *Chapter 5*). Drama often leads to fighting, especially among young males. The wilder males are those that get into the most fights when they are drinking.

Fighting, or aggression, in the social context of partying is something that has been part of the culture of drink among many different Native groups over several generations now. Lemert (1954) had a Kwakwaka'waka informant tell him that his people would "become warlike" when they were drinking. Similarly, the youth above described the way that young men would often "test their skills" or "test their might" when they were drinking in *Yookkene*. In contemporary Athabascan culture there are fewer opportunities for males to demonstrate their "power" and their "skill." There are also more limited contexts for dealing with interpersonal conflicts. Taking it out on the basketball court is one way that males can express anger or aggression, but even here these feelings must be kept in check. Most of the time grievances and grudges will be held in until the right time which most often comes while partying.

It is not just males that will fight more when they are partying. Males and females will also argue and fight more often when one or both are partying. Jealousies and resentments will come out when couples are partying together and then "open up" to each other or confront each other with their feelings. Domestic violence is reported as much higher among Alaska Natives (Alaska BVS 2006; Goldsmith et al. 2004), but the vast majority of these incidents occur strictly within the social context of drinking and partying. Interpersonal violence when people are sober is a very rare occurrence, probably more rare than among non-Natives. Fighting is what happens in the social context of drinking, and it appears to have less to do with gender than it does with the nature of the relationship (as will be discussed in *Chapter 4*).

Violence, to the self and to others, is what happens when people “go crazy” (see *Chapter 5*), and being wild can make someone go crazy. Trips described how his girlfriend being wild made him go crazy from jealousy, and then get arrested for assaulting someone else in the community. Sometimes being too wild leads to exclusion from the peer group. When I interviewed Jay he said he was currently taking a break from drinking because he had been getting too wild and fighting every time he drank to a point where no one wanted to hang out with him anymore, and would try and fight with him if he came around. Being excluded or shunned can cause a young person to go crazy and attempt self-harm (see *Chapter 5*). Fighting and going crazy almost never occur outside of the social context of youth partying.

Youth that do not party or drink will often still go out to check out the drama if there is any going on. The pressure to party comes from the desire to share in the excitement. Peer pressure is immense in the village. It is not always direct but the indirect pressure that comes from being left out of the action is hard for many young people to take. Youth that seldom or never party will more often describe the village as boring. These youth also tend to spend more time alone and risk feeling lonesome (see *Chapter 5*). Velma Wallis describes this same experience growing up in Fort Yukon.

Living in Fort Yukon and not drinking or doing drugs meant deciding to be alone... The more I rejected friendly offers to drink or smoke, the more out of place I felt among my friends. I became more and more withdrawn until I felt like an outcast and could no longer bear the taunts of my former friends, who felt I could be saved if only I would accept a drink or a cigarette. (Wallis 2002: 179)

One of the youths I interviewed talked about how she handled the local pressures to party.

Stormy (15 years old)

Stormy: I don't know, when my friends would ask me to drink, I'd -- I'd say no, but then they'd be like, oh, what happened, I thought you were -- I thought you wanted to drink. You drank during tournament. And just all this stuff. But ever since I went to treatment, I have more courage to tell them that it was just a one-time thing, but..... I don't want do it anymore.

SMR: Do you get a lot of pressure from people?

Stormy: Yeah. Every time my friends, I want -- just want to leave. It's like they always have to have me there, and I turn it down. I like to sit outside, and there's a couple times that I couldn't turn it down, because they kept just asking me and asking me until I said yes, and the first couple times they'd say, well, we're not going to smoke until you smoke, or we're not going to do this until you do that. And you know, like in a way, I didn't want my friends to be mad at me, so I'd do it, but then after all, I realized that if that's what they want me to do and if I don't do it, they get mad, then they're not really my true friends.

The emotion schema of youth substance use in the village reflects the *intensification* of emotional decision-making during later adolescence and early youth. Excitement, drama and partying reflect this intensification of emotional action among youth in the village. Excitement is like “extreme fun” in the village. Partying and being wild is like a more advanced stage of mischief. Likewise, the lonesomeness that comes from being left out of the drama in the village is like a more intense version of boredom. The emotion schemas described so far are essentially about the achievement of increasing intense feeling-states in social interaction. The intensification of the emotional decision-making of youth in the village as they move from one life stage to another becomes particularly clear in the context of the relationships that produce the social conditions for love and for being loved during childhood and youth in the village.

Chapter 4

Relationships

My brothers and sister are always there for me, and everybody else. This town is full of love and if you go other places, there's not as much love and everything. You know, they'll just stick to their families and stuff like that, but around here, it's different. Like everybody looks out for one another, and probably because it's so small, not very big. I know if I went anywhere else, I probably wouldn't even be alive right now. This was like the best place for me. Like I can't even be away from here for a week without even getting homesick for everybody.

Autumn is 21 years old and has lived in *Yookkene* all her life. She lost both her parents when she was young and was raised by her older brothers, aunts and grandmother. The village is very literally her family; and the relationships she has there are very literally her reason for living in the vill. Autumn described *Yookkene* as “full of love,” and love is what motivates people to live in the village. This may seem an obvious statement, but *love* in the village is a cultural feeling-state monitored through jealousy, and motivating intense action responses such as fighting and hooking-up. Love in the village is a distinct emotion or feeling-state although it is one with deceptively universal meanings across human societies. Relationships everywhere are most fundamentally based on the concepts of “love” (Jankowiak 1995; Overing and Passes 2000). Love in the village, though, is distinct for its intensity and emotional “currency” in everyday life. The relationships that allow an individual to be loved in the village are more finite than they would be in larger, non-kinship based, urban communities. The limitations on who can love whom create intense and lasting bonds between potential relationship partners in the village. Losing a relationship, real or potential, can be devastating to an individual with few options for replacing the relationship. To be loved is the motivating force to live. To not be loved enough or to lose a relationship in which one is loved can be a motivation to not want to live anymore for someone in the village.

In *Yookkene* survival is still fundamentally based on the productive capacity of relationships. In an indigenous emotional economy relationships were managed on the land and conditioned through social interaction between humans and between humans and

animals. The productivity of human relationships was often measured by the productivity of the human-animal relationship. Good hunters were good because they demonstrated better relationships with the animals and thus would experience more “luck” (Brody 2001). These good relationships could be taken as evidence of their ability to be loved, and good hunters tended to have more wives or closer relationships with their parents or other kin and their dependents (McKenna 1959; Osgood 1958).

In *Yookkene* survival depends on the types of relationships that individuals have as they come of age in the village. The kinds of relationships that most assure everyday survival are the ones in which the individual is loved. When you love someone or are loved by someone in *Yookkene* you *take on* that person in an essential way that is consistent with aboriginal concepts of group interdependence. Your own survival depends on the survival of others in your social group. To be loved by someone in return ensures your own survival with theirs. To love someone is more risky because you take on the other person as part of your own existence without the assurance of being loved. The primary motivation among youth in relationships is to be loved. There is always the danger of loving too much (Briggs 1970). Loving too much can make people “go crazy” for each other. Catherine Ales (2000) made this similar connection between anger and love among Yanomami in Venezuela. In *Yookkene* jealousy is the main indicator that someone is “crazy” for another person. Jealousy is a response to loving someone too much or not being loved enough. To love too much is particularly dangerous when living in closer proximity to loss in the village (see *Chapter 5*). Love means not only being with the other person, but *being* that person. Losing someone that is loved means losing your “self” in a non-abstract sense. In small communities where opportunities to be loved are more limited, loss can be particularly devastating.

The emotional landscape of youth in the village centers around the production and maintenance of love relationships, and the emotion schemas of youth motivated to love and be loved involve *jealousy and drama* as emotional indexes and *fighting and hooking-up* as emotional action. The relationships that are most critical to youth survival in the village are those that let a person be loved. These are relatively limited in type and number, but

are elaborated in terms of closeness and intensity. Briggs (1975: 186), found that Inuit youth in the Eastern Canadian Arctic, “tend to be highly dependent emotionally on a few selected others, usually close relatives...” The same is true of the Athabaskan youth in *Yookkene*. This chapter is about those relationships upon which these young people are the most emotionally dependent. It was clear that youth were selective about their relationships, and placed great importance on peer and sibling relationships for everyday survival. Relationships with parents, grandparents and relatives were important but from adolescence on in a more seasonal way, and the closeness of these relationships across the youth cohort was less consistent. Not all youth had close relationships with their parents or grandparents. The ones that did though tended to report being happier overall and talked about having more good times when they were growing up. More often young people would talk about being close with one or two older relatives (parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents) with many being very close with one relative in particular (loved too much). In later youth and young adulthood, the primary motivation is to be loved by friends and by *girlfriends* (for both boys and girls) especially.

4.1 Relatives

Central to childhood experience in every society are the relationships between children and their caretakers. In *Yookkene* these relationships are based on the socialization practices common to the culture. Socialization is the process through which children and youth are instructed in ways of *living right*. Socialization is what parents do with their children when they tell them stories, show them a new skill, go out on the land with them and in general model behavior and modify behavior when rules are not followed or expectations are not met.

In *Yookkene* children grow up with most of their extended family in close proximity. *Yookkene* is an Athabaskan village, and in the aboriginal times people maintained a matrilineal social organization. What this meant was that traditionally a marriage pair would tend to live with the mother’s side of the family (Osgood 1937, 1958; VanStone 1974). The mother’s brothers would have a status similar to father and these men together (father and maternal uncles) would have the primary responsibility of

instructing their sons/nephews. Young men and adolescent boys today in *Yookkene* would often talk about going out on the land with their fathers and uncles. These uncles were most often (although not always) maternal uncles. The kinship rules have changed to accommodate a sedentary village existence becoming more bilaterally-based with increased interactions between both parents' sides of the family, but the relationship between young men and their maternal uncles remains central.

Several young men also had close relationships with their grandfathers. A significant portion of the youth in *Yookkene* had been raised by their grandparents. These youth had either lost one or both of their parents at an early age, or they had been adopted by their grandparents. Grandparents play an important role in child caretaking in the village. Parents will often have to work for extended periods outside of the village, and grandparents will often take the children for these times. Young people whose parents drink will often use their grandparent's house as a safe house. Not all of the young people I talked to had close relationships with a grandparent or grandparents. By the time children reach adolescence and early youth, the time they spend with their grandparents decreases. Even those young men who would spend large amounts of time with their grandfathers going out on the land when they were younger, would say that they preferred to go out alone or with cousins or friends now that they were older. I would often observe younger children riding around with a grandparent, and when I would go visit elders there would often be a younger grandchild in the house, but I would rarely see an older youth or adolescent hanging out with a grandparent.

Mother and daughter dyads appear to be the main basis for female socialization; maternal aunts do not have the same kind of critical role for girls as maternal uncles do for boys. Female youth would tend to have one or two very close relationships with older relatives growing up. Most often these would be between mother and daughter, but sometimes the closest relationship would be between a grandmother and grandchild or an aunt and a niece or a father and daughter. Young females would talk more about being spoiled by a relative, particularly their fathers, than male youth. Girls that had lost their

mothers or had single mothers that worked outside the home often formed close relationships with another female relative such as their mother's sister or a grandmother.

Relationships with relatives are most productively associated with the household or private domain. When young people talk about spending time with their parents or older relatives it is usually when they are sitting around at home. Younger children will nearly always occupy the open common spaces in the home with the older adults and visiting relatives. Adolescents and older youth will more often stay on the peripheries of the common areas or remain in one of the back bedrooms. During the dinner hour in *Yookkene*, families will typically all gather in the kitchen area of the house to eat before going off to engage in evening activities. The normal dinner hour in *Yookkene* occurs between 5-6 p.m., and usually commences right at 5 p.m. An early and uniform dinner time in the village allows for implicit rules regarding visiting and activity. People will generally know not to visit at the dinner hour, unless they are hoping to get invited to eat, as it would be the obligation of the host to invite anyone who comes into the home when food is being served. Evening activities in the village nearly always begin at 7 p.m., and the collective early dinner hour leaves time to prepare. School functions, weekday church, evening tribal council or city council meetings, fundraisers, open gym and basketball games will start around 7 p.m. On evenings when there are no community-wide activities, families will still commonly disperse after the dinner hour to do their own thing until the later evening. Children will continue playing together in someone's house or outside. Adolescents and youth will go back to their rooms to go online or watch DVDs or they will go out and walk around, ride around or gather together to play a pick-up game or shoot around. Adult women will clean up and go watch television or go visit a sister or friend. Adult men may stay in and watch television or go ride around or work on things outside of the house; such as wood, broken down snowgos, or animals they recently caught.

By 9 p.m. or 10 p.m. the evening activities have generally ended and family members begin to gather back at the house. If it is a weekday, younger school age children will be put to bed around this time, and older youth, who often have to share

bedrooms with younger siblings for sleeping, will come out into the common area and sit around and watch television. This is the time when I was able to observe the most direct interaction between youth and their parents or other adult relatives. Parents will often make popcorn or put together a “late lunch” and share it with the older children and youth. These are often intimate family times when parents will talk more openly and joke and laugh with their older children. These relaxing evening times do not occur all the time, especially in drinking families when a parent or both parents may spend many evenings away from the house or have the children sent out to another relative’s house.

The other primary time when youth are actively engaged in relationships with relatives is when they are out on the land. Young men spend much more time in this type of kinship-based activity than females in *Yookkene*. This may at first appear to be consistent with aboriginal socialization practices, but in fact signals one of the primary areas of significant social change. Female elders, when they were children, would go out on the land to fish camp, fall moose camps, winter trapping camps and spring bird camps with their entire family. Today females go out on the land much less often than males, particularly during the winter months. Going out on the land by snowgo continues to be primarily a male-gender based activity. Male children are much more likely to have their own snowgo, handed down from a father or uncle, than their sisters. Most parents would explain to me that male youth need a snowgo because they are the ones that have to go help get wood for the family and go hunting. They are also the ones that will go spring bird hunting by snowgo, and will possibly go hunt wolf, wolverine or moose during the winter. One of my close friends in *Yookkene* had an adolescent age son (12 years old) that had recently received his first snowgo. That winter he shot his first wolf with his father and uncles. His mother put on a wolf party for him with all his male relatives. His older sister had to use one of the family snowgos to ride around, typically her mother’s.

Summer time is more typically when families can go out on the land together. Most families own a boat, either a smaller 16-18 ft. John boat with a mid-range outboard motor, or some families have large 20-22 ft. aluminum skiffs, with high-powered outboard motors. The large boats can carry an entire baseball team and the owners of

these boats will often volunteer to take teams to other villages during the baseball tournament season. Every young person I talked to remembered going out to camp during the summer as the best parts of growing up in the village. Several youth only recall going out to camp a few times during their childhood but these experiences are always brought up when I ask about their happiest memories.

Examples of the kind of relationships young people have with relatives were most often described in the context of the types of activities that young people and adults do together. Time spent with older relatives is nearly always positively valued. None of the youth I talked to ever complained about having to spend time with their parents. Anytime youth talked about *doing things* with parents or family it was “good times.” This was something that surprised me about the young people in the village. All of the youth said that going out to camp was the best and most fun part of growing up in the village. They all said they especially liked getting away from the village and being able to spend time with their parents doing things together. In the village young people spend more time with their peers than they do with their parents and older relatives, but it is also true that adults spend more time engaged in activities with other adults in the village. Passages from the interviews with youth in the village demonstrate these aspects of relative relationship rules.

Jordan (21 years old)

SMR: So your dad was the one who taught you how to go shooting and things?

R: Yeah. I would go out with my dad and my grandpa and my uncle and my brothers. I never really used to like to go hunting when I was younger, but now that I got older I start enjoy it more and being outdoors and everything. Just enjoying the peacefulness out there I guess. I would rather sit out somewhere in the woods than sit around, because it's so quiet. You can just sit there and relax and not worry about anything.

Stormy (15 years old)

SMR: So you said the best thing was like that you all live together in one

house and...

Stormy: Yeah. Like just when we're all in the same place at the same time. I don't know what it is about it I like. It's just being surrounded by my family. I love that. And when everyone's in a good mood and we're in the same house at the same time, the kids are running around and like the older people are sitting at the table just talking, and you look around and it's just like this is what I wanted. I always try to get that to happen. Like when my mom wanted to go out, I'd say, no, wait a little while, and my dad would come home. Then like I'd gather all my brothers and I'd just bring them home and we just like -- I don't know. I don't know what it is I like about having everyone in the same place. I just enjoy it. (...)

My grandma is like a really big part of my life right now. I don't know. She sees the right and the wrong for me. Like right now both my parents are in town, and she's been helping me out a lot around the house, because I go to work in the morning and then go to school at 9:00 and then as soon as I'm off school, I go to work and then I go home, and I'm tired and she'd let me sleep while she'd watch the kids. And I don't know, it's just nice of her. Even though she's old, she'll still help me in a way. She gives me advice, and I just don't know what I'd do without her. Like I don't know, she's just a real big help to my family because she baby-sits, she helps with the meat, she helps clean up. When she can barely move, she'll be sitting there folding clothes, she'll be washing dishes, watching the kids. I don't know, it's just she's a strong woman. I like her for that.

Jay (19 years old)

SMR: Okay, so first, just to start off, just tell me a little bit about what it was like for you to grow up here.

Jay: It was pretty fun. It was rough, though. It was -- got to do a lot of work, help out the families, you know. I'd get a lot of stuff done, you know, cutting wood and everything, but you had fun, though. Learn a lot.

SMR: Learn a lot, like what kind of stuff?

Jay: The stuff you need to grow up. That stuff you need to know to grow up with. How to use equipment, how to skin moose or bear and things, how to hunt, how to take care of your families.

SMR: Who did you learn that from?

Jay: All my uncles and my grandpa.

SMR: That's really good. They took you out a lot?

Jay: Yeah. A whole bunch, you know, lots. Learn a lot of stuff.

SMR: You were close with your uncles?

Jay: Yeah, they would really discipline me. Like when I would be drinking I had to stay in for awhile, and my uncles always teased me and told me don't do it no more. The teasing part was really bad, though. They really tease. Tease you where you wouldn't do it again.

SMR: Do you spend much time around like your grandparents?

Jay: Well, when I was growing up. And they live in a camp, winter camp. I went a few times. Taught me a lot. How to hunt bear and everything. Right now I'm older and just hunt by myself, so yeah. And now he taught me -- he wants me to go out, get job, make money, you know.

Benjamin (22 years old)

SMR: What are some of like your happiest memories of growing up, being a kid?

Benjamin: Probably catching, like, animals with my grandpa. I used to go out -- I always used to go out with him just everywhere he went and stuff when he'd trap and stuff. And like going out hunting with him is pretty much always the funnest thing for me with him. I was always real excited about that. And, I don't know, it's always pretty fun when you're younger, it seems like. Because when you're young everything is just fun, I guess.

Rebecca (19 years old)

SMR: Who did you spend the most time with when you were growing up?

R: My grandpa. He spoiled me lots then. That didn't go well with my mom and cause she had to spoil me too. I was like okay. Then I got older and I started smoking cigarettes and getting into stuff I shouldn't have. My grandpa stopped spoiling me. No more \$20 on the table! But my mom still spoils me so...

Trips (23 years old)

SMR: So first, what was it like growing up here?

Trips: It was fun. I was pretty much spoiled by my dad, the one who raised me. He raised me like a white person, just like the food, I wouldn't eat nothing but microwave or cook top stuff. So he was basically spoiling me, but then took me out trapping and hunting and fishing, that kind of stuff. We used to go on picnics and all that.

SMR: With your dad?

Trips: Yeah, with my mom and dad, yeah, we used to go out all over, just the three of us.

SMR: What were like the best things about your family that you can think of?

Trips: They're always nice. They always give me what I want. Usually. And it's a pretty big family. We get along. Say like my uncle, he's like quite a character. If you sit down and hang out with him, he'll crack you up the whole day. But then he's got his girlfriend who is really, really jealous, we can't get him to ourselves, you know? Where we could just sit down and laugh and he talks crazy too sometimes, you know, especially if it was like me, my mom and him. Then my [grandma], she'd try to get in there too and she's laughing away. It's cool. We have a good time.

There are several ways that youth in *Yookkene* talked about being loved by relatives. Being taken out on the land was the primary example given by young males, along with being spoiled and receiving discipline. Female youth would give as examples being talked to, being let out of household chores, being spoiled and receiving discipline.

Discipline in *Yookkene* involves shaming, ignoring and talking to the child. Physical discipline, including spanking or hitting, was reported as very rare. Elders will often recall limited need for overt disciplinary action from their parents or other adults. If the work did not get done or was done improperly the child would suffer along with the other family members. Shaming often involves teasing and ridicule. Children and youth who make a mistake or break a rule will be teased about their violation by older relatives, sometimes quite ruthlessly. I've seen this type of discipline go on between uncles and nephews and aunts and nieces in public places. At a basketball game, the woman I was sitting next to turned around at one of the breaks and began teasing her niece about the hickeys on her neck. "Who burned your neck all up?" "What you got some kind of rash or what?" The girl, who was about 16 years old, ducked her chin lower in her fleece collar and modestly lowered her head, never saying anything to her aunt, who continued to tease her until the game resumed. The woman leaned over to me and said something about how some of the young girls were getting boy crazy and should not be walking around in public with hickeys showing.

Ignoring was the most common form of discipline I observed in the village. Ignoring misbehavior means not giving it or the individual any attention. Young people in the village already receive more limited amounts of attention from adults, and a further reduction in direct interaction and attention through ignoring can have a significant impact on young people. I would see this happen to youth when they would come home or come out of their room after being out the previous night partying. The adult I was visiting would not acknowledge the youth and would often not respond if the young person attempted to get their attention. The young person, realizing they were being ignored, would then go back to their bedroom or leave the house. The adult I was visiting or interviewing would then almost always make a comment like, "That damn kid was out all night," or "He's gonna get himself in trouble if he keeps that up." Usually the second time the young person came around the adult relative would make some kind of response or acknowledgement of their presence and things would go on.

The primary way that young people would describe being loved by an older relative would be to say that they were “spoiled” by the person. Spoiling seems to involve being given things like cash, clothes, or snowgos, and being allowed greater freedom from rules. It was not that they received less discipline; instead the essential quality of being spoiled meant that they got in trouble less. Being spoiled was often an indicator of being loved *too much*. Loving someone too much comes with risks for both people in the relationship. Spoiling can be bad for young people because it makes them more prone to getting into trouble outside of the home where rules are not waived. Children can get used to being spoiled and will suffer hard if they lose the relationship, or will be unhappier in other relationships or contexts where they are not given the same treatment. In general, though, being spoiled by a relative indicates the intensity of love in the relationship.

Yookkene social organization today is more intensely age-graded and less intensely gender-based than it was aboriginally, but certain patterns have persisted such as the importance of the maternal uncle/nephew relationship and the mother/daughter dyad. Relationships with relatives are most critical in childhood when young people spend greater amounts of time with adults including parents, grandparents and uncles/aunts. The other critical relationship during childhood is with siblings.

4.2 Siblings

In *Yookkene* relationships between siblings have critical importance for survival in childhood and early adolescence. Sibling relationships in *Yookkene* need to be understood in the context of Athabascan *relationship rules* in family and community life. Athabascan culture was one based on strict rules for behavior that guided everyday interaction and social activity (Goulet 1998; Helm 1994; Nelson 1983; Savishinsky 1994). These rules for behavior extended from public places such as the community hall to the family home. People were expected to conduct themselves in certain ways around others based on factors including age, sex, marriage status, kinship and community status. In families, the older siblings very often took on the caretaking of the young siblings (Hongimann 1949, Wallis 2002). Sibling caretaking is a common practice in small scale,

hunting and gathering groups (Henry, Morelli and Tronick 2004; Weisner 1987), and has endured in many of these societies even as other aspects of aboriginal existence have changed.

In *Yookkene*, female children often begin to take on some of the caretaking responsibilities of their younger siblings or cousins by the time they are nine or ten years old. When I was in *Yookkene* and had my 18 month old son with me I could always count on these younger girls to babysit. There was one instance that demonstrated clearly the advanced knowledge of these younger girls. There was a baseball tournament going on in the community and two girls, 10 and 11 years old, offered to babysit for me so I could go to the games and the dance that night. My house was right near the ballfield, and I checked in on the girls a few times throughout the night. There were a lot of out-of-towners in *Yookkene* for the tournament and I was a little worried about some of them showing up at the house so I told the girls if that happened they should come get me right away. The 10-year-old nodded seriously and said, "Oh we already know what to do. My mom told me that if any drinking person tries to come in the house we should just go get the baby and take him to our house." That was actually a safer plan that I had suggested to the girls, which, in their leaving the house to find me, would leave my son alone or would leave one of the girls alone with an intruder. These girls both had younger siblings they regularly watched and were already skilled caretakers.

Older sibling caretakers are particularly important in a drinking family. If one or both parents drink regularly the older siblings take on the responsibility of watching out for the younger ones (Wallis 2002). This is not inconsistent with aboriginal norms where older siblings would assume caretaking responsibilities when a parent or parents were out on the trapline or out at camp when both parents were involved with work. In this case the older boys and older girls would both assume caretaking roles by watching over the younger children, cleaning up and getting wood and water. In the event of the loss of a parent, the older sibling of the same gender (if there was one old enough) would very often take on the parental role. Early death from disease and accidents was common in

Yookkene, and a substantial number of participants in our project were raised (in whole or in part) by an older sibling.

Youth in a caretaking role let their brothers and sisters be loved. There was little reported antagonism, jealousy or competition between siblings, even for those more “spoiled” siblings in the family. Instead, youth caretakers would often brag about how much they would also spoil certain ones in the family. Young people, both male and female, reported that their love for their siblings motivated them to live. Velma Wallis had a similar experience in her youth.

The years being around drunks got me so down that once I contemplated suicide. I held a gun to my head, thinking it would be better to just end it all. Then, in a moment of hesitation I thought of my younger sister Becky and my four younger brothers... A suicide was the last thing they needed. There was too much shame as it was. So I put the gun down. (Wallis 2002: 177-178)

Jay, a 19 year old in *Yookkene*, said something very similar to this when he was talking to me about growing up in the village.

Jay (19 years old)

SMR: Where was your dad?

Jay: He passed away when I was like 13.

SMR: Oh, that's hard.

Jay: Yeah. It's pretty tough. And ever since then, I take care of my family. Yeah. Because my older brother was out of town mostly, so I had to take care of them. And that's how I learned a lot, was my uncles taught me all the stuff, how to cut wood, haul fuel, get wood, like logs and everything. I'd do all that and, you know, keep the family warm. I learned lots, though. I still take care of them.

SMR: What were some of the harder times that you remember having to go through when you were growing up?

Jay: Probably when my mom was drinking, and I had to take care of those kids. That and the coldness of the winter, because I had to haul a lot of wood and keep the house warm.

SMR: And that was up to you?

Jay: Yeah, for about four years.

(...)

SMR: Have you ever lost a friend or a family member to suicide?

Jay: Lots. Lost a few of my cousins, my uncle to suicide. Yeah. A lot of them.

SMR: Do you remember getting -- like anyone ever talking to you about that kind of stuff, like when it happened, with you?

Jay: No. No. I really don't think so. Talk about suicide?

SMR: Yeah.

Jay: No. Nobody talked to me about it. I don't know. I don't really think about it, though. I mean, I've got a big family, so I've got to take care of them, you know. That's only thing I look forward to, taking care of my family. I still take care of my siblings. You know, my sister and younger brother. I've got a little nephew now too so.... Yeah, I've got to take care of him. I raise him and Eli, my little brother.

SMR: Okay, so when you were dealing with like really difficult, intense stuff you just kept your family in mind?

Jay: Yep. It's hard. I talk to my older sister sometimes. My oldest sister, she helped me out lots. Yeah.

These youth take on the survival of their siblings as their own and they recognize the emotional dependency of these younger ones on them to be loved. Sibling caretaking often comes with added responsibility, but also with added esteem. Caretaker siblings tended to have special relationships with their parent or parents. Siblings close in age tend to have highly bonded friendship-like relationships that come out of the shared experience of keeping each other safe and entertained. Most people I talked to in the village would name a sibling when I asked whom they were closest to while growing up. Passages from interviews with youth in *Yookkene* demonstrate the critical importance of sibling relationships in childhood, and rules for older and younger sibling behavior.

Autumn (21 years old)

Autumn: My parents died when I was kind of -- when I was young.

SMR: Oh, sorry. Who raised you?

Autumn: My brothers and my sister. They're all older than me, so -- years and years older than I am.

SMR: When you were growing up who taught you things like, what would happen when you got your first period and dating and things like that?

Autumn: My sister.

SMR: Your sister did?

Autumn: My sister was here. Even when she was in Edgecumbe, I would call her and she would tell me, you know. She basically taught me all of that stuff.

Natalie (17 years old) and Minnie (15 years old)

SMR: Okay. And, first, I'll just ask you guys to talk a little bit about what you think about growing up here.

Natalie: It's boring. But if I take off and I come back -- or I just like leave for a while, I don't know, I just really miss it. I can't stay away from it -- here too long.

SMR: What do you miss about it mostly?

Natalie: My friends and like hangouts, places to hang out and stuff.

SMR: Your friends mostly?

Natalie: Yeah. My family. I have too many of those, sisters and brothers, and I can't be away from them too long.

(...)

SMR: So what do you guys do for birth control here?

Natalie: Call the clinic and order. My mom usually does it, though.

SMR: Is she the one that said hey, it's time for you to just like.....

Natalie: Well that was my sister. She was just like, when I was like 13, I

was like kind of on a bum road and then she just like started controlling me. It was like to stop me from doing some stuff, and she put me on birth control and stuff like that.

SMR: Wow. So she took notice of that right away?

Natalie: Yeah.

SMR: Did your mom know what was going on with you or.....

Natalie: Yeah, I just didn't listen to her, though. My sister is a little bit more scarier.

SMR: Is that who you turn to for support when you need it?

Natalie: And my other sister, Julie. She's like really good to talk to. Gives good advice.

SMR: How many years older is she?

Natalie: She's the oldest. She doesn't -- she tried drinking once, but she didn't like it, so she never drank, never again. And she doesn't smoke cigarettes or she doesn't do any drugs either.

Thomas (16 years old)

SMR: Did your mom still -- was she able to still, like, cook for you and provide for you, even when she was drinking?

Thomas: Yeah, oh, well sometimes she'd be hung over a couple days.

SMR: Oh, hung over. But you did you feel like you were taken care of?

Thomas: Yeah, my sister is older, just loved us, watched us lots.

Paula & Nadine (17 years old)

SMR: What's here for like people that are having lots of problems, what's here for them?

Paula: Their friends.

Nadine: Friends and..... maybe their family.

Paula: Uh-huh.

SMR: Would you guys go to your parents for any problems or your friends?

Nadine: Friends. It would be easier talking.....

Paula: Yeah. They're -- yeah.

Nadine:because they understand.

SMR: Have you ever gone to your parents when you've had like something major going on?

Nadine: I don't think so.

Paula: No.

Nadine: Just talk to my friends first or else my older sister.

Soldier (19 years old)

SMR: How old are your younger brothers?

Soldier: I have a 15-year-old younger brother and a 11-year-old younger brother.

SMR: And it was the 11-year-old brother that you took out last year to hunt?

Soldier: No. The 15-year-old one.

SMR: Do you do anything with your 10-year-old brother?

Soldier: Not really. I try to teach him mechanics as much as I could whenever he wants to pay attention and things like that. And just not long ago, when I came home, I bought him a motorbike. You've probably seen that one that goes around here. I bought that for my brother so he would do good in school and since then his grades came up a little bit, so I'm pretty happy. And I told my other brother, if he does good in school, when he gets at least B's and C's all year, I told him I'd give him my snow machine, too, so, yeah.

The rules for sibling relationships in *Yookkene* continue to change and adapt as the relative size of families is decreasing. Still yet though, the expectations for this relationship remain fairly strict. Older siblings in a family can expect to watch over and watch out for their younger siblings. Younger siblings in a family can expect to be loved and taken care of by their older siblings. These relationships are typically tied to the

household and are strongest during childhood. When young people grow up, their focus shifts to relationships that are more often established and maintained outside of the household. Importantly, sibling caretaking relationship rules also establish early on the cultural importance of peer-based relationships for social learning and survival. Friendships are a natural extension of the sibling relationship, and non-kin friends will often refer to each other as “bro” and “sister.” This is also common practice in other cultural groups, but in *Yookkene* the terms often come with more literal meaning. Friends do not just become like brothers and sisters, they become brothers and sisters because they are loved. Siblings will remain important throughout adolescence and adulthood but the emphasis will often shift to siblings that are closest to each other in age and are part of the friend peer group outside of the home.

4.3 Friends

By the time young people reach their early adolescence (12-13 years) relationships with friends become the central focus of everyday action and interaction in the village. Friends are also important throughout childhood; they are who you play out with and be mischief with, but your time is shared with relatives during childhood. When young people reach their teens they recede into the back of the house (while home) and spend as much of their free time as possible every day with friends. Young people become so emotionally dependent on friends that these relationships take on critical importance for surviving youth in the village. Very little information is available regarding the lives of Native female youth in villages or on reservations. Much more has been written about the lives, problems and circumstances of young Native males, but access to the female peer groups in villages or on reservations has proved more challenging (e.g. Condon 1987, Condon and Stern 1993; Honigmann 1949; Kunitz and Levy 1994).

John Honigmann (1949), working among both Kaska Athabascans in Northern British Columbia and among Inuit in Frobisher Bay, described female peers groups as “closed.” He was never able to move beyond speculation as to the psychological drives and motivations of females growing up in these communities. Richard Condon (1987),

working with Inuit youth in Holman, a settlement on Baffin Island, also mentioned his problems gaining trust with female youth. His now classic monograph, *Inuit Youth*, is almost entirely focused on male youth. This bias towards researching and representing male youth was often justified with the traditionally higher rates of suicide, substance abuse and arrest of Native male youth. This bias is becoming increasingly more untenable with recent data demonstrating competing rates of substance use and abuse among females and much higher rates of suicide attempts among female youth. Despite these recent increases in the problems of female youth in the village, the general scholarly trend remains to conclude that Alaska Native female youth are healthier or have an “easier” or less stressful or conflicting or at least in a general more successful, transition from adolescence into adulthood (Billson and Mancini 2007; Hensel 1994; Honigmann 1949).

This conclusion has contributed to the bias in the literature regarding the status of Native males and Native females. Native males are often presented as the most at risk, a very nearly endangered group (Rhoades 2002). These studies will present all sorts of State and tribal statistics showing the higher rates of suicide, substance abuse, and interpersonal violence among Native males and then explain the behavior as part of the post-contact demoralization of traditional male roles in Alaska Native indigenous culture (Brems 1996; Segal 1998; Hippler 1973, 1974; Wolf 1980, 1984). Much of this, while well-intentioned, has continued to perpetuate negative stereotypes of Native men as suicidal, alcoholic and/or sexually and physically abusive. The Native female comes out looking stronger and more capable of adapting to social change and contemporary circumstances.

A review of the contemporary ethnographic literature on Alaska Native and circumpolar indigenous people demonstrates this bias clearly. Recent works including Frink, Shepard and Reinhardt’s (2002) *Many Faces of Gender*, Billson and Mancini’s (2007) *Inuit Women*, and Fast’s (2002) *Northern Athabascan Survival*, all provide hopeful and powerful accounts of the enduring female spirit in times of great change. Native men do not fair so well in the literature, unless they are elders (e.g. Bodfish 1991;

Cruikshank 1986; Jackson 1998; Krupa 1996). The strength and endurance of the male spirit was clearly evident among the men and male youth I worked with in *Yookkene*. It was these young men that stayed in the village that were most often the ones taking care of the elders: hauling wood, chopping wood and dropping off spruce hens and willow grouse. These young men might also on occasion drink and get into fights, but they would often do so in defense of their sisters, cousins or girlfriends. The village life is based on the activities and relationships of these young men who remain very much at the core of these rural communities.

Despite recent additions to our knowledge of Alaska Native women, we still know next to nothing about the lives of female girls and youth in these communities. I also found female youth to be the most challenging group to gain access to and acceptance among in the village. Several factors prohibited my initial involvement with the younger female crowd. I was in my (very) late 20s and on the outside edge of youth. I hung out with older (adult) females in public and formed a close relationship with a female friend that was my same age and also had children and worked in the village. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I had initially much greater success finding willing male youth informants, and it only occurred to me later on that this made me competition of a sorts for the younger females in the village. After about four months of working in the villages I gained the trust of one female youth, Natalie, in *Yookkene* and she helped me gain trust with the other girls. She would often come to my house with two other girls in tow, and we would all sit around and talk until Natalie would say something to one of the other girls like, "You should do an interview with her, she's cool." After only a short time, girls began showing up together without Natalie having to bring them over. Teenage girls typically preferred to do interviews with their best friend. I had been doing interviews with everyone individually prior to this, but I found that for younger females, doing interviews in pairs made for a much richer interview. This was not so for male-female couples or for two males together. I interviewed one married couple together, and it was a complete disaster. Both partners were inhibited and kept the interview as superficial as possible. When I attempted to interview two male friends

together, one would assume the role of speaker and the other would mainly just agree by nodding or saying “yeah” to whatever the other had said. Female youth would interact together and finish each other’s statements or each add to the other’s answer. Being interviewed together allowed these girls to open up to each other in front of me rather than to me.

For both female and male youth in *Yookkene*, relationships with friends are constructed around having fun and also provide fundamental things such as safety, security, social support and social status. Male friendships and female friendships do similar things but with less intensity. Male friendships are typically more diffuse, contextual and transitory. Males will hang out in groups of three to five and do things like play video games, watch sports on television and smoke-out (use marijuana). Male friends will also go out together on the land to hunt for chicken or take a long ride. Males do have a regular set of friends with whom they spend the most time, but these sets change in composition more easily and males will not get jealous if a regular friend starts hanging out more with another group of guys. Adolescent age boys also spend more time riding around alone than girls do. Girls almost always ride around on snowgo or 4-wheeler with another girlfriend. The social norm is for girls and women to not be alone in public. A girl walking around the village alone or riding around alone will cause gossip. Anyone out in public alone is thought to be “looking around” for something or someone to play out, hang-out, party or hook-up with. Cultural norms in the village place negative values on females who go out alone to “check it out” or look around. There are not the same kinds of restrictions on male youth and they will more often ride around alone as they go look around.

Hanging out with “the boys,” though, is a preferred activity for male youth. It’s uncommon and culturally inappropriate for male and female youth to hang out together unless they are “going around,” and this rule will generally only be broken when there is substance use involved such as smoking out or drinking. Most of the male youth I talked to said that they did not like to hang out with girls because girls create too much drama and cry and talk too much. Girls, one younger male once told me, are for hooking-up

with and not for hanging out with. Girls, on the other hand, said the boys are “too boring,” because they only want to play video games or are “too crazy” for trying to hook-up with them all the time. In *Yookkene* there is marked gender segregation in everyday social activity. Men and women will often spend the majority of their social time having fun with same-sex friends. There are a few exceptions to this rule but couples who are “always together” are often talked described as “boring” or even “greedy” for keeping to themselves.

“Bros” or male best friends in the village are important because they get your back and they let you have a good time. Best bros are often first cousins, and are those that you play ball with, never fight with and can trust around your girlfriends. Young males will typically have one or two “best bros” and these are important to have around when you are partying. Males will also tend to go out hunting or traveling in pairs with their best bros. Overall, male youth talked about hanging out with their bros and having a good time. These relationships lack the force and emotional dependency that was clearly part of female friendship relationships.

Female relationships are highly protective, supportive and essential for making it past certain local obstacles during youth. Females, young and old, will pair up to form close relationships with one or possibly two other “best friends.” Female friend dyads are the most common type of friendship relationship in *Yookkene*. Younger girls may play in larger all-girl groups or boy-girl groups. By the time girls reach early adolescence they tend to spend the majority of their time with one other girl or select a smaller set of girlfriends. Adolescent age females will typically pair up, and these pairs will then commonly team-up regularly with another pair to do things like hang out, ride around, and party. The core unit, though, is the two girls. These relationships can be extremely intense, and the loss or disruption of such a relationship can be devastating to a young girl. The most common way to lose a friend in the village is by “going against each other.” When girls go against another girl they will essentially “banish her” from the social group. What typically happens is that one girl in a dyad will be accused or suspected of something by her best friend or by another girl in her peer cohort. Some

common reasons I heard for a girl deciding to go against another included stealing, acting too good all of a sudden, being too jealous, talking too much or spending time with another girlfriend, and trying to go after the same guy. The girl that is going against the other will then attempt to convince all of the other girls in their relative age group that could be potential best friend replacements not to pair up with the rejected girl. In the most extreme or effective cases, the girl that everyone is going against will be completely ostracized from her peer group. She will have no one to walk around with or hang out with. She will become entirely housebound or will be forced to walk around the village alone, causing either confirmation of the reasons that triggered ostracism or creating new reasons to continue going against her.

A common action response when girls go against each other is for the one being targeted to attempt self-harm. The most common way to attempt self-harm among female youth in the village is to overdose on pills, most often Tylenol. This fits with recent epidemiological data reporting that Alaska Native females are at much higher risk for suicide attempts and receive treatment for suicide attempts at a rate of 2:1 compared to Native males their age, and at a rate of 4:1 to non-Natives (Perkins 2007).

When girls go against each other, it is critical that relationships be re-established. Sometimes girls that have gone against each other will enter into a new peer dyad with another girl in their age group. Other times they will re-establish their former relationships. If a young female finds that others have gone against her and is unable to re-establish or create other close relationships with girls her age, she will be at great risk for lonesomeness, a feeling-state in the village that makes people feel like they do not want to live.

Female peer relationships are not only important to protect against lonesomeness and self-harm; they also protect against harm from others and they provide fun, safety and security. When I asked Rebecca, a 19 year-old youth in *Yookkene*, what she does to make sure she is safe at a party she said:

I make sure I have someone watching over me. I have one of my friends and I'm like okay if I get drunk don't let this person hit on me and all that stuff. And

they know and I know too. Me and Amber always do that. Okay if you get drunk and I'll just quit drinking and just watch you and we'll do that. That works perfectly.

The younger girls that would regularly babysit for me would always come over in pairs. One night I had a 12-year old neighbor girl come over to babysit for me so I could go out to the community hall for a fundraiser. A local man had recently been seriously injured in a snowgo accident while he was driving drunk on the river and hit a piece of protruding ice. The community was having a fundraiser to raise money to help send his parents into town and pay for their lodging and food. Fundraisers typically are lottery style or are cake walk style. People will bring in all kinds of items to donate for the fundraiser such as six packs of pop, jarred fish, fresh fish, beaded purses, handmade earrings, handmade socks, extra store bought goods like shower curtains, pillows and sheets, or items ordered from town, most often Pizza Hut pizzas. Then they will have a raffle or a "cake walk" where you buy a place in a large circle and walk to music, stopping on a particular number that may be called.

My babysitter got to the house around 7:30pm with her best friend at the time who was 11 years old. The fundraiser went to about 9pm and it was wintertime so it was dark. I had attracted the attention of a younger male youth who had shown up at the community hall intoxicated. When I left he insisted on walking me backtown to my house. He tried to come in "to visit" but I would not let him and he said he'd wait outside then. I went in a little shaken and the girls were hiding behind the couch and jumped out at me. I startled a lot more than I would have normally and they asked me what was wrong. I told them that a guy had followed me home and was bothering me. They asked who it was and I told them. The 11-year old wrinkled her nose and we had the following exchange that I recorded in my fieldnotes that same evening.

Heather: Oh he always tries to do that to me too sometimes. You just got to go inside and leave them alone. Drunks always do that. They're scary, they'll just follow you anywhere and try to grab onto you. Drunks are gross.

SMR: They do that to you?

Heather: Yeah sometimes they do. But that's why you don't walk around alone. I always go out with someone like Abby (the 12-year old), or Jolene (9 years old). We watch out for each other. Like one of us will see a drunk walking out of a house and tell the other to like run or hide.

Abby: Sometimes it's fun, or funny.

Heather: Yeah, but mostly they just don't even see us. Just don't talk to a drunk person.

SMR: Maybe you should call your mom to pick you up (to Heather who lives downtown).

Heather: Oh, because of the wolves?

Heather did try and call her mother but her mother told her to walk home. This was early on in my stay in *Yookkene*, and I was just still learning that the young people had clear strategies for surviving the village. Heather's response to my request that she get a ride home with an adult shows that she did not make the same association between the drunk guy outside as potential threat, but instead thought I was worried because there were rumors going around that wolves were sighted near the village. Drunk guys she can handle, wolves though are another matter.

Female friendships can have the closeness and intensity of boyfriend/girlfriend relationships in the village. Not having a close relationship can put a young female at greater risk for harm, but having a strong and supportive one can actively protect against harm, and can be the single greatest source of individual strength and power.

Stormy (15 years old)

It's like Della -- that's my best friend. Without her, I wouldn't have made it through much of the things I went through. Like the main reason I went to treatment was because I tried committing suicide. I thought about it a lot before that, like I just wanted to leave, and Della was there every time I tried. Della was there every time I thought about it, and it's like she's the sister that wasn't given to me. And I don't know, I just treasure her. Like I can't be mad at her.

Female youth often wanted to do their interviews in pairs. This was the only subgroup in the village that asked to do an interview like this together. I did a couple of interviews with male youth together, but at my suggestion, and at the end of one of these interviews the young man commented that he would have preferred to be on his own for a “one on one” interview. My interviews with young females together provided significant insight into how younger females in *Yookkene* interact. A segment from an interview with two youth females will illustrate important aspects of this type of relationship.

Tami (17 years old) and Della (18 years old)

SMR: Do you guys ever like fight amongst -- or not fight, but like have arguments?

Tami: Yeah. We have arguments.....

Della: Every now and then.

Tami:but we never show it. It's kind of funny, because like -- just like recently, like, maybe like a year or so ago (our other friend) used to be like -- wait... How is it again? Like if she got mad at me, she'd go to all these other girls.....

Della: Yeah, I know...

Tami:and then she'd like group them up and try to -- like try to make them be against me.....

Della: Yeah.

Tami:because she was mad at me, and so she used to like make sides.....

Della: I know. I hated that.

Tami:she used to make people take sides.

Della: She did that to me all the time too.

Tami: I know. That was the reason I got medivaced out. She just -- she just gets to me.

Della: Yeah. She tries -- it's like she wants to be like the queen bee.

Tami: Yeah.

Della: She's just like trying to split us up, you know?

Tami: Yeah.

Della: Like she'll try to do that so she'll be one of our best friends and we'll be her best friend. I mean, she is.....

Tami: She's cool.

Della:our best friend, but just like sometimes she just like tries to split us up, and it never works, though.

Tami: Sometimes she does get me mad.

Della: Yeah. That's just the best way to put it, I guess. She just gets you mad sometimes.

SMR: But what did you mean that you almost got medivaced once because of her.

Tami: Oh, no. Not just because of her, just because like, I don't know, it's just like a dumb little conflict going on. Like what she was just talking about, it happened to me and then I... what did I do? Oh, yeah, I overdosed.

SMR: With like Tylenol or.....

Tami: Yeah, I think. I don't remember what it was.

Della: We were just assuming at that time, like assuming something stupid, like we thought she took something or something -- or even we didn't know who took it, but.... We were like thinking of all the possible suspects, and then they're like, oh that was Tami, and they're all like saying that's Tami. So we got mad at Tami. We were like -- it was kind of dumb, because we were like all against her.

SMR: What happened after you overdosed?

Tami: I went to API [Alaska Psychiatric Institute]. Do you know what that is?

SMR: Yeah.

Tami: I went there three times, because I overdosed three times. Right?
Yeah. No, not the second -- no. I overdosed twice.

Della: Yeah.

Tami: Everyone -- it seems like all -- like most -- like some -- just some people, I would like -- I don't know, like how do I say this? Like everyone -- or like a lot of us actually tried to kill ourselves one time or another.

Della: Yeah.

Tami: Like I remember like Soldier, he always used to. It seems like -- it was just like we were so depressed when we were younger. I don't know why.

Della: Yeah.

Tami: Just like every now and then we'd be really depressed. I overdosed once, but they didn't do nothing because I was drunk that time. That was when I was really young, too, like 13 or something, maybe 14. I don't know. Somewhere around there and I was just like chugging -- what was it? Ibuprofen. I drank like two bottles of that when I was drunk I guess, and then I -- I woke up at a friend's house and I started throwing it all up. But then -- I didn't get sent nowhere for it or anything, because no one knew.

SMR: So -- but it was something that a lot of people your age were turning to when you were younger?

Tami: Yeah.

SMR: But is it something that you kind of, now that you're older, you don't think about doing that as much or.....

Tami: Not at all.

SMR: Not at all?

Tami: It's just -- now all I think about is like moving. All I want to do is move, like just move somewhere, just disappear and.....

Della: That's what I'm doing.

Tami: Yeah, me, too. I'm just going to disappear and then.....

Della: Just be gone.

Tami:not come back.

SMR: Huh. Do you guys have somewhere in mind you want to go?

Della: Anywhere.

I interviewed four sets of best friends and together they reveal the importance of these relationships for emotional survival. Young females can be open with each other but very few other people. They depend on their relationships with their best friends to get them through hard times. Interestingly, it is relationships with *girlfriends* (for both females and, as I will turn to now, for males as well) that have the most power for youth in the village.

The intensity of female best friend relationships is comparable to the intensity of boyfriend/girlfriend relationships in the village. Girls will get jealous over their best friends and will go against them if they feel like their best friend is talking too much to other people or basically if they do not feel loved enough within the relationship. The intensity and feelings attached to girlfriend relationships such as love and jealousy draw parallels between girlfriend relationships between females and those between males and females but with the primary difference that the latter is sexual and the former is not. The issue of homosexuality is not discussed openly in the village and if it came up in conversation it would in a teasing or shaming type way. I would hear people jokingly talk about two women being “just in love with each others” if they were seen out spending too much time together, typically also to the exclusion of being around males. I would not hear people make the same kind of joking sexual references about two men together.

Relationships with girlfriends are *power relationships*. The concept of “power” is an important one in Athabaskan culture (Helm 1994; Goulet 1998; Nelson 1983; Ridington 1988). Long ago relationships with certain kinds of animals conferred “power” on the individual. Individuals would seek out and maintain power through rites of passage and certain kinds of formal emotional decision-making (Nelson 1983). In

contemporary Athabascan culture individuals seek out and maintain power through relationships with other individuals, and in particular relationships with the opposite sex. In the village, relationships with girlfriends confer power on the individuals involved. Power can protect and strengthen an individual, but it can also overwhelm and harm or damage a person. Likewise when an individual loses his or her power, often through disrespecting, defiling or neglecting the relationship, that individual will be weakened and left more vulnerable to threats. In an indigenous emotional economy an individual could seek out and gain power from a multitude of sources. Today there are less ways for individuals to gain power and status in the social group. The power that comes from male-female relationships is not a direct substitution or replacement for aboriginal sources such as that the human-animal relationship provided. In the lives of youth in the village though today, to be loved is to have power.

4.4 Girlfriends and boyfriends .

Entering into a sexual relationship, locally referred to as “*hooking-up*,” is a rite of passage and there are local rules regarding these relationships. Preoccupation with sexual relationships emerges in late adolescence in the village. By early adolescence boys and girls begin to hang out less and less. By the teen years these groups are generally segregated in everyday public activity. With this separation comes the intensification of interest in each others’ doings. Teenage boys and girls will spend a lot of time talking on the phone or MySpacing with each other, but direct interaction is limited. In *Yookkene* it is much less common for mixed groups of teenagers to hang out than it is for average non-Native urban teens. The cultural rules of conduct between young males and females in the village are stricter than they are in Euro-American culture.

I never saw youth in their teens walking around holding hands or displaying any type of sexual affection in public. This was true even of couples that were known to be “going around” together. Instead, as I’ve noted elsewhere, I would often observe the very opposite kind of public behavior, one that was very near deliberate ignoring and avoidance. At basketball games or softball games, sometimes when I would be sitting next to an adult female friend she might mention that she heard about one of the teenage

girls messing around with one of the local male youth. I would watch the two to see if they would give any indication of their relationship. Besides the ever common hickies there would never be any other kind of obvious acknowledgement by either party of the relationship. Hickies are a culturally consonant way of stating sexual status in the village; they announce sexual activity so that the individuals themselves do not have to.

This type of strictly monitored behavior between boys and girls in public does not mean that the youth are oblivious to each other, far from it. They are near experts at covert observation. After the games, at someone's house or on the phone it is common to sit and recount the evening from each person's perspective, often including accusations of "caught" behavior such as "I saw you looking at so and so," or, "I saw you looking at me," or, "How come you didn't look over?" In smaller, interrelated groups such as these it is known that someone is watching all the time.

Sexual relationships among youth in the village are limited not only by cultural rules of conduct, but also by sexual taboos concerning the degree of relation between two people. It is generally considered inappropriate for cousins to go around. In aboriginal times, these Athabascans reckoned kinship matrilineally and would allow marriage of the father's sister's children (paternal cross-cousins) (Osgood 1933, 1958). Today these communities reckon more bilaterally and sexual relationships between cousins from either side (including second and third cousins) are highly discouraged. In a community of less than 300 the odds of having a degree of relationship that prohibits a sexual relationship, at least a publicly allowable one, are high.

This means there is always a shortage of available sexual partners in the village. Young people will often have to wait for those few times a year when they travel to other communities for sports, memorials or cultural events to meet potential mates or "hook-up" with similarly unattached and/or unrelated members of the opposite sex. During the rest of the year competition in the village for sexual partners is fierce. Young males are the ones generally expected to "go after" the female, but females too will compete for males by calling around for them and checking-out places where the sought after guy may be hanging out. Competition for sexual partners is the most frequent cause of

fighting among males, most likely to erupt when they are drinking. Drinking allows for the suspension of the normative relationship rules and sexual desires become much more explicit in the context of a party.

There is no formal social context for dating in the village. Instead, youth will “hook-up” when they can. Serious relationships between youth, locally described as “going around,” are less common until after the young person is out of high school. Going around indicates that one or both members of the relationship love each other and that others’ sexual access to one or both partners will be more limited. Hooking-up involves people motivated to have fun and be loved. Going around is essentially the intensification of hooking-up. If a guy starts hooking-up with the same girl all the time people will start saying they are going around.

Boyfriend/girlfriend relationships seem to take on significantly more individual meaning for males than do females. Female youth will certainly talk about being into a certain guy or being in love with someone, but they do not appear to be as emotionally dependent on the guys as the guys appear to be on girls.

Young men are much more likely to “go crazy” for a girl. When a young man goes crazy for a girl he will call her house non-stop, sometimes 50-60 times a day to “check on” her. If she does take his calls he may go over to her house and try to get in a window or just walk around the outside of the house. He may go drink to “get brave” and call or show up and cry or yell at her. He may also try and fight other guys that he feels are competition for her attentions. Finally he may get depressed and stay in or start making threats to kill himself, and may even attempt or complete a suicide. Girls can also “go crazy” for a guy, but it is still less common and less dangerous when they do. When a girl goes crazy she will call a guy’s house, or walk around the village all the time trying to run into him, and will threaten or trash talk other girls she sees as competition. None of the girls I talked to, though, said they had thought about suicide or tried to harm themselves because of problems with their boyfriends. Several of the young men I talked to said they had done all kinds of “crazy stuff” like fighting and trying to commit suicide over problems with girls.

Jealousy is often described as what causes people in relationships to “go crazy.” Jealousy is associated with loving someone too much and/or not being loved enough. When you love someone too much you begin to worry about what they are doing all the time and become more afraid of the possibility of ever losing the person. Individuals that love too much will be those that say that they cannot live without the other person. Not feeling loved enough can also lead a person to become jealous and go crazy. Ironically, a person can feel they are not being loved enough if the other person is not acting jealous enough. Other indicators of not being loved enough involve not spending enough time around each other, not calling each other all the time, not getting each other gifts, and talking to other people.

Young men are more likely to go crazy over their girlfriend because their options are more limited and the competition is typically more fierce, and certainly more violent and dangerous, among men in the village for females. Men also tend to go crazy more readily than females because their social status is more closely associated with their ability to have girlfriends. It is a matter of individual power and local prestige for young men to have several regular or occasional girlfriends in the villages. Conversely it is a matter of prestige for females to have one primary and *public* boyfriend because it indicates the guy is willing to forgo hooking up (or at least limit it and hide it) and be only with her.

Youth in their interviews would almost never talk about being in love with someone. It is not appropriate to talk about love to other people, like it is not appropriate to talk about luck out loud, but individuals’ social actions indicate the importance of it. When I would ask them about boyfriends or girlfriends, they almost always talk about hooking up or “snagging” around. The motivation to be loved is the primary force for hooking-up and many of the young people that would talk noncommittally in their interview about another person would the next weekend being “going crazy” for them.

Henry (19 Years old)

SMR: Did you have relationships? Like did you have girlfriends?

Henry: Oh, yeah, but it was temporary.

SMR: I mean, did you hang out mostly when you were partying?

Henry: Yeah, basically. We used to, yeah. During the summertime, there were all these baseball tournaments, you know. It was like a gold opportunity to go out and hang out, hook-up and just come back. Like, I don't know, there was always a discreet place that I had, I don't know. Yeah, I don't know, it would just happen when everybody really went out. I don't know I just usually ran into somebody, it's like, I'd say, "Let's hang out for a little bit." But I was like, I don't want to be too committed around here. It just like oh man, it's like a land of opportunity - just chill out girl -- you might make me travel, you know, but I'll be out of here the next day.

SMR: Is it something that you want in the future?

Henry: Yeah, I don't know, I don't plan on being single for too long, I just want to hang out. I'm in school, anyway.

SMR: Did you ever have like a serious girlfriend?

Henry: Never. What, do you see that as strange?

SMR: No. No judgment.

Henry: Yeah, it's just like, I don't know, never really wanted one. It was fun being single. My uncles were always telling me about it, you know.

SMR: Talking about being single?

Henry: No, just like how they enjoyed the single life. And I was like, yeah, I bet you guys have a lot of fun, obviously. And they're always traveling and doing all this stuff. I travel a lot with my uncles, and they always had these different women to talk to. I was like, all right, maybe I'll up in step with you guys some day.

Chasing girls is a commonly stated characteristic of mischief and young people are motivated to seek out relationships with the opposite sex because the chase is fun and exciting, regardless of the actual outcome of the pursuit. The chase or the hunt for girls is what is most exciting and is what motivates young men in particular into action. Not being able to catch girls is like not being able to catch game in terms of social status and

power in Athabaskan society; both have to do with having or not having luck in life. For young men in the village, catching girls, like catching game, determines your “rightness” and success in the world. For these young men, if they cannot catch girls, or if their girlfriends leave them, they fear that people will think there must be something fundamentally “wrong” with them. In this way males have more to lose when their girlfriends leave or break-up. In an indigenous emotional economy, male-female relationships were managed through the human-animal one. Men could get women by getting game. Today in the village young men have to go after the girls themselves. This fosters a greater emotional motivation to get and keep girlfriends for young males in the village than for young females to get and keep boyfriends.

The intensity of these early male-female relationships for Native youth in the remote northern communities has been observed by others as well. Hugh Brody (1975: 209), working with Inuit in Frobisher Bay, found that, “The boredom of inactivity, uncertainties and malaise that nurtures a preoccupation with alcohol and drugs also creates a desire for intensely romantic affairs. Such an intensity provides a kind of emotional security.” I think that dependency may have been a better term than security in this case, but his observation remains relevant today. Jean Briggs (1975: 180) also observed the intensely aggressive displays of affection between male and female in the Canadian Arctic settlements.

Always a matter of strong interest, sex becomes the dominant concern in adolescence (among Qipi). Teenage girls talk about little other than their sweethearts, and all group play has a sexual aspect- even ball games. When they have an empty tent at their disposal (a “play tent” as it is called) a good deal of sexual play goes on, most of it of the ugiangu (aggressive-affectionate) variety. Teenagers hit, bite, pinch, kick, rip each other’s clothes, and destroy each other’s possessions- all as demonstrations of affection.

By far the most common reason given for fighting in the village had to do with male-female love relationships and jealousy. Males were much more likely to get into fights with other males over girls than girls were likely to fight with other girls over boys. Males were also more likely to fight with their girlfriends because of love as well as

jealousy. Many of the young men I interviewed had been arrested, some several times, for charges of Assault IV's for domestic violence. Girls on the other hand would talk about hitting or trying to fight with their boyfriends over jealousy, thinking they were messing around, and fighting with their girlfriends over boys. Girls did not talk about hitting their boyfriends because they loved them too much as many of the guys stated. The intensity of youthful relationships in *Yookkene* is clearly evident in the emotion schema of youth male-female relationships that revolves around love, jealousy and drama.

4.5 Love, Jealousy and Hooking-up

Relationships in *Yookkene* are motivated by the desire of individuals to be loved. The social construct of love today in the village is a lot like the aboriginal construct of luck among Athabascans (e.g. Helm 1994). Luck among Athabascans has been defined as, "A powerful force that binds humanity to the nature spirits and their moral imperatives" (Nelson 1983: 26). Luck is a feeling-state that must be earned and sustained by following rules of conduct toward natural things. Nelson (1983: 27) writes that, "Luck can be passed along to others, but it is a lot like money. The one who gives it may be left with nothing." One could replace "love" for "luck" in any of these quotes and the same properties and meanings would hold true. Love does things for the individual who has it. Love is something you either do or do not have; and individuals are constantly measuring how much love they have from others. Some people will have more love than others, and these people will in general be better off. Love is also like luck in that once you have it you are always at risk of losing it. In an indigenous emotional economy luck is the *measure* of the love between humans and animals. Elders will say how much animals "love it" when humans do the right things, like respect them and treat their remains appropriately. "They'll just love you if you do the right thing for them" is a statement I would hear from an elder woman in the village. The hunting taboos that have been documented by ethnographers such as Nelson (1983), Osgood (1958, 1959), Brody (1982) and Ridington (1990) provide evidence for the relationship between love and luck. The hunting taboos include things like "gentle" treatment of animal remains, talking

softly or not at all while butchering remains, “feeding” the animals a little bit of food/water to take with them into the afterlife, or to entice them to come back to you again, handling hunting/processing implements with “great care,” etc. Individuals in an indigenous emotional economy were motivated to be loved by the animals to get luck. The aboriginal animal relationships for the Athabaskan people, and for Athabaskan men in particular, greatly increased their capacity to be loved. The loss of the emotional aspect of this indigenous relationship with the social transition to the villages may have seriously impacted the mental health of Athabaskan men who essentially lost an entire set of available relationships through which they could be loved and get luck, and with luck get women, power and wealth.

Being loved is the most valued and desired feeling-state and the desire to be loved motivates individuals to act jealous and hook-up. *Jealousy* is a feeling-state that is produced by loving too much or not being loved enough. Jealousy is a locally prescribed way of protecting love. Jealous behavior involves such things as calling too much, stalking (by riding around all the time trying to run into the person, or going to where they are), accusing the other person, threatening potential competitors and fighting. Adult females would often state that their husbands or men were “too jealous” over them and did not like them to leave the house or go around in public too much. Other researchers working in Northern indigenous communities have observed the role of jealousy in male and female interaction (Bodenhorn 1988; Fast 2002; Shinkwin and Pete 1983; Stern and Condon 1995). Briggs (1975: 186) found that adult jealousy was based on social norms clearly present in the childhood training ground:

The exclusive attitude that is expressed in rejecting some people while taking possession of others is clearly seen in the behavior of Qipi peer groups during childhood, and this attitude carries over into their adolescent relationships too, in the form of sexual jealousy. Sexual jealousy on the part of either spouse- is a major cause of friction in both Qipi and Utku marriages and may be expressed in reluctance to let the spouse go out to visit. I have mentioned that physical attack on the suspect is sometimes rumored, but I have never seen evidence of this.

While Briggs interpreted the experience of jealousy as responsible for only negative social outcomes in relationships; I found that some jealousy worked in the favor of maintaining and strengthening relationships in the community. When women would talk about their men being jealous over them, it would not be stated as a negative thing; but more as the expected way for a man to behave in a relationship if he is in love, and this was true at any age. Women also are supposed to act jealous over their men. They are not, though, supposed to act as jealous as their husbands. Couples that do not act jealous over each other, as indicated by comments about one or both going out too much or talking to other people in public or dressing too provocatively, will cause others in the community to question their love for each other.

These intense feelings can occur in any type of close relationship in the village but are most commonly associated with sexual ones. To love but not feel loved intensifies feelings of jealousy to a point where a person may start “acting crazy.” Hooking-up protects people from loving too much, by allowing a young person to feel loved, for a short but intense time, without loving too much. A segment from an interview with two female youth demonstrates this motivational schema.

Paula & Nadine (17 years old)

SMR: So is that like a big thing that like everybody is having relationship problems and stuff?

Nadine: Yeah. I can't keep a relationship anymore.

Paula: I can't either.

Nadine: Just can't.

SMR: What do you mean?

Paula: It's hard. Because the boys right here are like.....

Nadine: They're players mostly.

Paula: Yeah.

Nadine: It's hard. Yeah, but when we were younger, there was more, you know, going around. But I can't now.

SMR: What changed do you think?

Nadine: They're just like into getting laid too much, and drinking, smoking.

Paula: Yeah.

SMR: Have your heart broken?

Paula: Yeah.

Nadine: Like there's this one guy and well recently he's like been saying.....

Paula: He's always talking.....

Nadine:like when he's drunk sometimes, he would like -- like call the house and say like, you should come over, we live next door and I'm like so? Or if we don't mess around, he'll be all, you should move on, I don't see you around here anymore, and stuff like that.

Paula: And like he'd tried breaking into.....

Nadine: Yeah. He was banging at the door and the window and stuff.

Paula: She -- her mom went out there and told him to go away. Because he broke a couple knives trying to get in and knocked the door in and stuff.

Nadine: I was sleeping.

Paula: That's so scary.

SMR: He didn't want to break up?

Nadine: No. He just said he was in love with another girl and stuff.

Paula: I guess not, right?

The young male could not have really loved the other girl because his jealous actions proved otherwise; at the same time this same youth could not have loved enough because of all the hooking-up. The paradox of this local emotion schema is clear. Youth are motivated to hook-up because they desire love and excitement. Hooking-up increases the chances that one will be loved. It was clear from the constant references to being loved, and the constant measuring of how much love a person has at any one time, that love gives an individual their power to be in this world. Jealousy is a way of protecting

and expressing love that is an expected cultural response in the context of a relationship. Too much jealousy or not enough jealousy can cause love to be lost. Jealousy can preserve love and power, but if practiced incorrectly or inappropriately it can diminish love and power. Being loved creates an emotional dependency between two people that can be extremely supportive and protective in times of stress and hardship. The loss of love can be devastating to an individual and can bring about a particularly dangerous feeling-state referred to in *Yookkene* as *lonesomeness*. It is on this unmanageable emotional ground that individuals in the vill get on the edge.

Chapter 5

Loss

So, anyways, now to sum it up through the whole thing, what I learned is that if you are not doing right in the mind, if you're not doing right in what you do, you don't live long. My grandfathers has always taught me, you know, that if you don't keep your hands busy, if you don't keep your mind busy, if you don't work, then you -- you no longer have the will to live. And there was a reason for that, and I seen it. You start getting lazy or you start being mischief to the point where it's hurting other people, you don't live very long, not around here. I seen them all pass away... And either they got caught up in some kind of problem with other people, or alcohol and drugs were involved. They eventually go away. They got on the edge.

Victor grew up in *Yookkene* and is now is in his late 30s. He has seen many of his peers get on this edge and not make it back. Villages are places where people represent the scarcest resource and each individual is highly valued for what they can contribute or potentially contribute to others in the community. Losing anyone in these communities represents a substantial loss to this collective resource. Losing one elder, when there might only be six in the entire community, can have devastating consequences for the collective cultural knowledge and community history. Losing one young man to suicide means losing a potential cultural carrier, as well as a friend, hunting partner, lover/husband and family member. Loss in the village can be particularly intense as people are highly dependent, emotionally, physically, economically, on only a few selective relationships. The loss of a person or a relationship can mean the loss of an important and sometimes singular source for fun, excitement, and love. Losing a person or relationship can lead to boredom, jealousy and lonesomeness and these are all things that in the village can make a person "go crazy." Going crazy is the local term used in *Yookkene* to describe certain kinds of emotional action.

Based on the life histories of adults and elders in *Yookkene* it is evident that the loss experience in Alaska Native communities has changed significantly in the last half century. Elders recall infant and child mortality as the hardest part of growing up when they were young. It was common for most families to experience the loss of one or sometimes several children due to disease, complications in childbirth, isolation and

dangerous living conditions on the land. Even though these deaths were mainly through “natural causes” at that time, the frequency of the loss of young children was described by some of the elder generation as a primary reason that some people took up drinking when alcohol became more available in the rural areas.

Loss of children in a community through adoption was also more common in this generation. If one parent, particularly the mother, died, the children would often be sent to a mission to be raised by clergy. The loss of a parent was and still is a fairly common childhood experience out in the village. Many of the elders I talked with had lost a parent when they were quite young, most often to disease or injury. Children also used to be sent to boarding schools for mandatory schooling when they were as young as five, not to return to live in the community until they were in their early teens. Enforcement of schooling for children in the more remote Alaska Native communities proved difficult and expensive. BIA agents would have to go by boat or later fly into these communities to pick up school-age children to send out to boarding schools. Some of the older adults I talked to remember hiding from the agents and staying home from school because they needed to help their families trap and hunt. Many children were sent out of the village by their parents who feared retribution if they did not send their children out for schooling.

The settlement and boarding school experience contributed another dimension to the indigenous loss experience in Alaska that involved the relationship between humans and animals. The loss of entire cohorts of children to a community for schooling outside contributed to the disruption of traditional ways of living. Elders, adults and even the younger adults mourn the loss of ways of life that are no longer sustained. Most significant are the changes in the relationship between the Native people, the land and its resources. The human-animal relationship was once the very basis of survival for Athabascans in the Western Subarctic (Brody 2001; Nelson 1986; Osgood 1958, 1959; Ridington 1990). People in the village do continue to hunt and fish today but their lives are no longer sustained by the relationship. The loss of the emotional aspects of the human-animal relationships (see Chapter 6) due to external pressures and globalization has shifted contemporary sources of power and survival to other types of relationships.

One of the most significant changes in the Alaska Native loss experience has been the dramatic increase in alcohol-related accidental death and suicide, particularly among the male youth in many of the communities (Goldsmith et al. 2004; Perkins 2007). Numerous studies have tracked the increases in alcohol-related deaths and suicides in the villages in Alaska, but none of these have looked at how children and youth experience, and survive, these losses as they are coming of age in the community. Surviving loss, from death, suicide and breaking-up, is a fundamental part of growing up in the village.

5.1 Death

Life in the villages is lived much closer to death. The hazards of a land-based existence are still encountered on a daily basis as people travel on the ice, fly on small planes in extreme weather and go boating in small vessels on vast rivers. There are sometimes 2-3 deaths per year along the Yukon due to snowgo accidents, drownings or falling through the ice (Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium 2001). Sometimes there are many more than this. Alcohol has caused a dramatic increase in these types of occurrences over the past few generations. The remoteness of these communities and their small and interrelated nature means that death will be experienced more totally than it would be in a city or urban center. The death of any one person in the village affects everyone.

In interviews with individuals in the village, I would ask about the hardest times growing up in the village. Nearly everyone, regardless of age or gender, would answer this question by talking about early childhood experiences with death and loss. It was not drinking or drugs or abuse that were most commonly associated with hard times in the village; the most painful and difficult experiences of childhood were losing people. Losing people is hard anywhere, but in the village, losing someone can be even more difficult to recover from given the more limited and highly dependent nature of the relationships. In the village it is more difficult to replace the relationship that is lost when someone who loved and is loved leaves.

The hazards of a village-based existence have produced a distinct set of obstacles that youth must deal with growing up. Young people encounter these and must adapt

strategies for surviving them. Alcohol-related accidents and suicide are hazards that are fundamentally associated with life in the village. Alcohol-related accidental death occurs at a much higher rate among Alaska Natives in the villages compared to any other Native group in the nation (Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium 2001). All of the youth that I interviewed in *Yookkene* had experienced the loss of a first-degree relative (parent, grandparent, sibling/cousin) to accidental death. The majority of these were alcohol related. One of the young people I talked with had lost both of his parents when he was 10 years old as they went through the ice traveling together in the spring. Another had lost an uncle to the ice and still yet another young person lost a cousin.

Nearly every youth I talked to knew someone that had died from drinking. Just last summer a 36-year-old man died in *Yookkene* from aspiration while he was passed out. A month later another man in his early 40s drowned in the river while he and three female youth were trying to swim to shore after their boat ran out of gas; all four had been drinking. While I was in the village there were two serious accidents that were alcohol related. The first was a young man in his late 20s who crashed his snowgo while out on the ice. He had been drinking and did not see a section of uneven ice. His skis hit a piece of ice sticking out above the trail and he flew off his snowgo and was knocked unconscious. He was found the next morning and was flown into the city for medical treatment. He had a serious head injury and sustained permanent brain damage. The other accident occurred the following summer when two 4-wheelers collided on a trail outside of the village. There were three people on one of the 4-wheelers and one on the other. All parties were drinking at the time and driving fast around the unlit back trails at night. When the two collided head-on everyone was thrown, and the driver of one of the 4-wheelers received a broken collar bone and the driver of the other received a concussion and a broken arm.

The loss experience in *Yookkene* is a collective one. The community experiences the loss together, but in different ways depending on the degree of relationship and age. Those that were loved by the deceased will experience the loss hardest. It is not surprising that youth in the village recall deaths in the community as among the hardest

times of childhood. It was also relatively common for youth to recall experiences of finding a close relative dead or witnessing a death first hand. In the *vill* youth live close to death everyday, coming of age always on this edge.

Soldier (19 years old)

Soldier: My hardest times was probably when I was 16. I actually got in a snow machine accident with one of my buddies, and we both got into the river down here, and I was just a kind of a smaller guy, and he was a bigger guy, and he drowned right in front of me, because I couldn't get him out of the water. That was probably my hardest time I can remember.

SMR: And you guys were sober at the time?

Soldier: No. There was alcohol involved. I knew we shouldn't have done it, but we were both pretty high, and when I get high, everything kind of tends to say, okay, to everything instead of saying no..... to things I should say no to. Yeah. I should have said no that time. But I said, yeah, and jumped on anyway and went for that ride and ended up in the river and I just watched him die. Couldn't do nothing about it.

SMR: How did you kind of get over that?

Soldier: I kind of just stayed away from everybody. I'd take my snow machine and go for long rides down the road and just be by myself all the time. Never really wanted to talk to anybody, because like I said, I don't really like the whole counseling thing. My mom tried to send me to counseling, but I just refused, and I said, no, I'll be okay. Yeah, and like people would watch me all the time and stuff like that, and that kind of bothered me, but after awhile I got over it and realized, I guess, it was just his time to go, so, yeah.

Jordan (21 years old)

SMR: So what are some of the bad things that you've had to deal with in your life so far?

Jordan: Like what do you mean? Just bad experiences or what?

SMR: I guess like when I asked about your best memories. What are some of your worst?

Jordan: Oh. My cousin committed suicide and that was pretty tough and all.

SMR: Was she your age?

Jordan: She was my brother's age. Yeah and my gram when she passed away.

SMR: Losing people then?

Jordan: Yeah.

SMR: Do you remember going to the wakes and funerals and stuff when you were little, when you were a child?

Jordan: Not really. I didn't really like it. It was too much drama for me.

SMR: Do you go now?

Jordan: No, not really.

Trips (23 years old)

SMR: What were some of like, some of your worst memories growing up?

Trips: I think I was 14 and I seen my auntie die. That was pretty rough. It was her and my uncle that we, me and my cousin, always used to hang out with them all the time, since we were young, small.

SMR: How did she die?

Trips: I don't know. She like threw up in her sleep I guess when she was drunk. Yeah, I seen that.

Captain (20 years old)

SMR: What are some of the harder memories, like the bad memories?

Captain: The hardest memories are dead people. I found my Uncle on the bank when I was eight years old. That was probably my worst memory in my childhood and he committed suicide. Yeah, that's memory burn right there.

If I'm having a really hard time, like last year my cousin died and

that was really hard. I really didn't know what to do or who to go to, so that's still in there some place. I don't know. My best friend lost his mom and I was really close to her. I guess that's the only thing I really have problems with is losing people and people always getting mad at me, because I don't go to the funeral. Even for people that I care about. I just can't do it. I'd rather remember them for who they were, what they did and how they acted and how much of my friend they were and how close they were to me than to watch them go in the ground and that be that. Like I said I have a lot of friends and I know a lot of people come to me though when they speak their problems. I guess that's why I'm so strong emotionally and mentally, cause if I break down and do something, like I can't even hack it myself, then my friends probably wouldn't even come and tell me about what their problems is.

Leroy (19 years old) and Devon (18 years old)

SMR: Have you guys lost anyone in... close like in your lives to suicide?

Leroy: My grandpa and my -- well [other grandpa]. I lost them. I was really close to [my one grandpa] because it was like I was never really around real grandpa. My I always used to go to my [other grandpa's] house. I used to sleep there all the time, and nobody knew where I was at. The whole... my family would worry about me. Where's he at? And then, of course, I would come home. Every day I used to go down there, and everybody would ask where I'm at. Down at [grandpa's]. Because like I don't know how even we got to know each other. I really don't. It's just that me -- me and the old guy, we're -- I don't think we're even related, but just me and him, we just had a really good bonding, and then after he drowned, I just -- I never had anybody, so -- I don't know.

SMR: How old were you when you lost him?

Leroy: I think I was about -- I don't know. I have no idea. That was a long time ago. A long time ago. It was just I was always down at his

house, and he always used to cook for me and stuff. He let me sleep on his bed and stuff. It was really peaceful, though. It was like a getaway to me when I was a kid. It was like a few years ago when he died. You know, I never -- I lost people, but I never cried for people. I don't know why.

SMR: Do you go to the funerals?

Leroy: Yeah. A lot, like -- yeah. Yeah. I do go to their funerals. It just didn't really affect me, or do anything for me. I guess it takes more to make me sappy and teary-eyed.

More male youth in the study talked about witnessing someone close to them die in their childhood. Female youth would also report death as the hardest part of growing up in the village, but far fewer witnessed death first hand. None of the female youth I talked to had been involved in a snowgo accident or seen someone go through the ice; nor had any of the female youth in *Yookkene* found someone dead who had committed suicide or died accidentally from drinking. Nearly every young male I talked to had witnessed death first-hand. Living in the village means living close to these memories and experiences everyday.

5.2 Funerals and Potlatches

Every culture has a way of formally dealing with death. In aboriginal times, Athabascans along the Yukon would focus their death rituals on the spirits of the dead and would hold community-wide ceremonials to ensure the spirits of the dead are appeased and in their rightful place (Osgood 1959; Simeone 1995). There was less emphasis on physical disposition of remains, and death rituals were often postponed for subsistence needs or until families could gather to collectively deal with the loss (Osgood 1959; VanStone 1974). Today in *Yookkene* there are two primary rituals that attend a death of a member of the community: funerals and Memorial Potlatches (or Stickdance for downriver people).

Funerals in *Yookkene* occur after the death of a community member and are part of the hard times individuals experience growing up. The term “funeral” for the ritual

events that occur after a death in the community could be misleading to those unfamiliar with the villages. In most Athabascan villages in the Interior death rituals follow a fairly uniform pattern of events, of which the actual funeral is only one part of a longer series of events. I use the term funerals because that is the term used in the village to talk about the events following a death. Funerals begin with a three day wake. The wake does not begin until the body has been released to the family by a medical examiner or law officer. Often, when someone dies in the village their body must be sent into Fairbanks or even Anchorage for examination or autopsy. Other times, especially in the case of elders, the body will be examined in the home or the village clinic and then released immediately to the family. When the body is released the family will wash and dress their relative and bring them to the community hall for the wake. The wake lasts for three nights and on the fourth day there will be a funeral service in the hall or in the church and a short prayer at the gravesite followed by a food potlatch in the evening.

The majority of the youth I talked to said that they did not like to attend funerals in the village and many youth refused to go all together. The reason most gave for not attending was that funerals were “too sad” and would make them feel too lonesome. The following sections are taken from fieldnotes of a funeral in *Yookkene*. A few months after arriving in the village an elder woman passed on in her home rather unexpectedly. My notes follow the fairly uniform sequence of events that I would observe two more times during my fieldwork in the village.

Fieldnote: Death in the Community

In church this morning Marie asked if I wanted to come to her house later on for a Mary Kay party and it seemed a good opportunity to meet more of the older local women. Marie is in her 40s but is single and fun to be around. Marie was putting on the party because the itinerant health aide, who doubled as a Mary Kay representative was staying at her house. It was cold out so I bundled my kids and walked into town. We walked up with my neighbor Gail, and when we got there there were already several ladies present. Marie and her older sister were in the kitchen. Jessie was finishing up her fruitcakes and Marie was

cleaning up from making snacks. Aggie apologized when we came in that the health aide had been called on another emergency and so we could come in and wait for her. There were three other ladies and an elder seated on the couches. Not a few moments after we had come in the phone rang and Marie suddenly became distraught and hung up and ran to grab her coat. Jessie asked what was wrong and Marie said she didn't know but that her sister-in-law (Sheila) had just called crying really hard and saying her mother was doing really bad and was going to be medivaced. She needed someone to go stay with her young daughter. Marie ran out to go over to Sheila's mother house and Jessie put her cakes away and got ready to go over to sit with Sheila's daughter. Everyone else got ready to go over to see what was happening, and Jessie asked if I would stay in the house for a little while and tell people that came in what was going on. After a while Gail came back and said that it looked like she had contracted the flu and the illness had caused her blood pressure to drop very low. Gail reported that the health aides were still unsure if they should call for medivac and were waiting for a medical consult. Sheila's mother was sleeping now and it seemed the immediate crisis had passed.

Later on that evening I went to dinner over at Gail's and Lottie's home. Not more than ten minutes after I arrived Gail received a phone call that Sheila's mother [age 67] had died. Gail and Lottie were shocked and Lottie became very upset (that was her close friend) and left immediately to go over to the house. The health aides had decided to call for a medivac but it had taken several hours to arrive and as Gail and I stood there in silence, we could hear the medivac plane coming in. About a half hour later Gail gets a call that Girlie was pronounced dead by the medics. After Gail hung up she said that if they could get the medical examiner to come in tonight they would take Girlie's body to the community hall (or just "the hall") and everyone would gather there. Another hour later Gail heard word that the medical examiner could not come in tonight and the Troopers couldn't come in until tomorrow. Until the Troopers release

the body officially to the family the remains must be kept down at the clinic and cannot be moved to the community hall or left in the home. A little while later Gail got a call that they were allowing community members to view the body at the clinic and the family would stay the night in the clinic. Gail got ready to go down to the clinic and asked if I wanted to go down too.

Gail said that the family would go to the clinic to be with the body – while other community members would stay at the deceased's house putting her belongings in boxes and storing them under the porch to be given out at the potlatch. Some things would be given away after the funeral and other things would be put away for the memorial. Gail said that not all of the things that belonged to the deceased would be given away at this time, just those things that the deceased used everyday or were special to her.

When we got to the small village clinic there was a very large group of people waiting outside. There were groups of men, elders, younger kids and other mixed groups of adults. I saw more women inside in the clinic busy doing things. The body was laid out in the waiting room of the clinic and people were taking turns going in to view the body and sit briefly with the immediate family who would remain in the clinic all night. In one corner of the waiting room there was a table being set up for cards [Pan]. The body was laid on a pallet on the floor. Blankets were piled on top of the body, covering it nearly completely. Two rows of chairs were lined up on either side of the body and family members were sitting in the chairs. People would come in and go out all night and bring food to the family and other people in the waiting room. As soon as the Troopers release the body to the family the three-day wake will begin at the hall. I stood outside for about 30 minutes before heading backtown. I did not go into the clinic but I talked with several people outside. I stood next to the young children who were playing around outside. They did not go inside the clinic either. Tonight I saw some older teenagers and young adult youth – hanging around on the periphery of the large group outside the clinic door. They would stand

around for a while, smoke and say what's up to people, and then walk away. I did not see many children or youth go into the clinic.

Fieldnote: First Night

The State Trooper came in on the Frontier flight at 6pm and was brought down to the clinic. People began to assemble at the hall to wait for the body to be brought over. People had been readying the hall and had built a fire yesterday and set up the food and Pan tables. People began to show up at the hall at 6 p.m. bringing food to put on two long tables running down the center of the hall. By 7 p.m. most people had eaten and everyone sits waiting. People speculated on why it was taking so long and some were saying that the medical examiner should have come in last night. At 8 p.m. a group of men came in carrying the body on a thin wooden plank. The body was still covered with blankets and in the same presentation as it was in the clinic. The men laid the plank on the floor at the front of the hall. Other men started to set up the two rows of chairs on either side of the body. Another man put a small red footstool at the foot of the body and laid out a tray of candy, a bowl of gum and plate piled with cigarettes. As soon as the chairs were set up by the body a group of three children came and sat on the chairs and looked at the body. The children seemed to materialize from thin air and it made me realize that there were not many young people about in the hall. I saw very few people in the hall between the ages of 16 and 30. There are few small ones and few younger children and pre-adolescents, really no young adults or teens. When the footstool with the candy, gum and cigarettes were set out a toddler ran up and grabbed some of the candy. The father of the boy jumped up and grabbed him and told him no. He went back and sat down and the toddler ran back over and tried to grab some more candy, the father hollers at the boy to get away from the candy and then instructs another child standing closer to get the boy. I ask a woman I was sitting next to what the candy, gum and cigarettes are for and she said that they are put out for those who go up to view the body and pay respects. When they leave the body they can take one of

the items. After these things were put into place, members of the immediate family took their seat on either side of the body and the rest of the community members seated themselves on the benches lining the walls of the hall.

A woman and man bring in a box of rosaries and begin detangling them and passing them out to the audience. Once the rosaries are distributed to everyone in the hall, the Father stands up and begins the recitation of the Holy Rosary. All of the children save for the youngest ones have left the hall and are playing outside. The rosary is recited each night of the three day wake at 7pm. After the rosary there is a small break and several women go out of the hall to get the clothes to dress the body. Gail and another community member play guitar and the people in the hall sing hymns. When the women return they go up to the front and a few of the men unfold three large blue tarps. The women stand inside the tarps as the six men hold up the tarps and tell the kids to stay out. The body is washed down and dressed. They brush her hair and place a blanket on the body up to her chin. Her arms remain straight underneath the blanket. Two groups of adults and elders have pulled two large round tables out onto the peripheries and are starting up a couple Pan games. I watch them play Pan for a while. I learn from someone else that a group of men have already begun the casket and will work through the night tonight to have it ready to bring in to the hall tomorrow. Some people have their own small saw mills and the caskets that are produced are finely constructed from birch or alder. I leave shortly after this but I learn that people stay in the hall all night and play cards and visit. The body must never be left alone in the hall during the wake and family members will take turns sleeping in short shifts to ensure there are always people in the hall together. After the body has been dressed and readied the tarps are lowered and people begin to formally come up to check the body.

Fieldnote: Second Night

I go back to the CH for the community dinner at 5:30 p.m. This is the official first community dinner with the body in the hall [last night the body had not

been released by the Troopers until after 7 p.m.]. There is so much food stacked on the table that other dishes are put under the table to be traded with empty dishes as the dinner progresses. The elders eat first and have already made their way through the line. The hall is full of people – but I notice again that there are mainly adults present. When I asked one of the local women where her son and daughter were and where all the other teens and youth are, she said that they prefer to eat something at home and then go to the open gym they are having tonight. She said that her kids have never liked to go out and be around a lot of other people. Then she explained, “I don’t know why they are like that. Me and my husband are always going around and being really active in the community and none of them will do it with us. I guess it’s just a stage they go through, not cool to do that or something.” I asked Val what the teens and youth do when all the adults are at the hall, she said they mainly go over to their friends or have their friends come over and watch movies. Younger children, preadolescent and early adolescent age, will more often come and hang out in the hall. I’ve seen the same group of four girls (9-12) in the hall each night.

People sat and ate from 5:30 p.m. until about 7:30 p.m. At 7:30 p.m. Father started the rosary. When the rosary is recited the children are told to go play outside and to not make too much noise. After the rosary several of the adults left the hall. Many of the children came back into the hall to warm up and sit on the benches.

After about 20 minutes of singing hymns the community fundraiser began. On the second and third nights of the wake a raffle or donation will be taken from the community to help with the costs to the family for the funeral and future memorial. Community members will donate items that will be raffled off – the proceeds of the raffle will be taken to the Native store to pay down the bill there, or will be used to purchase items and supplies for the wake or the funeral or the potlatch, and may also be used to pay for travel for family members to come in to the village for the funeral. The rest will be put away for the

memorial. Raffle items included: several six packs of pop, bath soaps, clocks, towels and blankets, jarred fish, beaded jewelry, moccasins, knitted scarves and hats, a cordless phone, flashlights and many other items. There were two tables full of various items that would all be raffled off individually over the course of two evenings. The raffle tickets are one dollar a piece and there were 15 raffle draws.

The raffle went on for almost two hours. Around 9 p.m. a group of five men brought the casket in. The caskets are constructed in the village by male family members of the deceased. They use birch for most caskets. When the finished casket is brought into the hall the women line the casket with embroidered satin material.

At 10 p.m. the raffle concluded and Father returned to give the closing prayer. Many people stayed to play Pan and others to talk and have coffee.

Tonight in the hall there was more laughter and lightheartedness. During the raffle local people teased some of the winners and joked about the prizes. The immediate family of the deceased appeared calmer and sat around with people more easily, talking and laughing and catching-up.

Fieldnote: Third Night

Today the women finished lining and decorating the interior of the casket and the body was placed in the casket and laid back on the floor in the same position. There were more people expected to come in from other villages and Fairbanks for the last night of the wake and for the funeral tomorrow.

The evening began with a community dinner and was followed by the nightly recitation of the rosary. The remaining three daughters of the deceased had arrived on the evening Frontier flight from Fairbanks and were seated at the back of the hall. During the rosary a woman friend leaned over and whispered that she was getting mad at the daughters for not moving up to sit with the body in the chairs. She said that it isn't right for family to sit way in the back like that. After the rosary more people filtered out of the hall and the benches were

sparsely populated and people began to move to sit at the tables. One group started up a Pan game. Another group sat next to the guitar players and sang along with the hymns. There were only elders and few of the adult family members left in the hall. There's always a coming and going of children into and out of the hall. Girls and boys between the ages of 5 and 13 or 14 will often come in and stand in the doorway and look around at who's there. Sometimes they will come in pairs or small groups and sit on the benches near the door and talk quietly or sit and look around. The parents of these children are often in the hall, but the children rarely go sit by them, except during the raffles when they sit by their parents to get dollars to buy tickets.

The raffle began at 8 p.m. and I won the first raffle [again – I also won last night]. One of the women sitting next to me commented on my “luck.”

Tonight two female youths (15-16) assisted with the raffle. These were the daughters of the adult female family members that were helping most centrally with the wake. Both girls circled the hall to sell tickets and one of them read out the winning number. At first the girl reading the numbers would only whisper them out. Her mother and aunts had to keep telling her to speak up and yell out the numbers and eventually the girl got it and was shouting out the last four numbers in a strong voice. Tonight there was a more festive feel in the room and sometimes after the numbers were read someone would shout “Bingo” and everyone would laugh. Tonight was the most energetic and almost joyous of nights. The singing was lively and they had an elder fiddler from the neighboring village accompany the guitarists. The raffle winners were followed with more resounding applause and lots of joking.

I still have not observed teenage boys or older male youth out in public settings. I see them riding around on snowgos in the evening and will see them leaving the store or walking in small groups from one house to another, but they never seem to hang out in public places for very long (except at the gym).

The men have already finished digging the grave for the burial tomorrow.

Fieldnote: Funeral and Potlatch

The funeral for Girlie was today at 11 a.m. at the Catholic Church. Father gave the homily and family members read the recitations. It was unusual to have the funeral at the church, typically the funeral is conducted at the community hall. The church was packed full of people. I stood in the back by the door, the pews were full with elders and family members. Adults lined the walls by the pews and around the back. There were no children present and I did not see anyone that appeared under the age of 30. When I asked a couple of people about their feelings about that they said that it's probably better because funerals are sad and they don't want their kids to be too sad. One of the teachers at the school, a local woman, is having her class help out at the hall, cleaning and preparing food as part of their classroom assignments and homework. The funeral closes with a prayer and the family and many of the community members go with the body to the cemetery for the burial. No speeches were made about the deceased at the funeral because these will be made tonight at the potlatch. After the funeral, people go back to the hall to finish getting it ready and others go home to prepare food to bring for the potlatch.

The potlatch began at 6 p.m. and was underway when I arrived at 6:30. As I walked up to the hall I counted over 20 snowgos outside and knew that there would be a full house. When I opened the door an elder man was in the middle of a speech. There were two teenage boys standing next to the door (first I've seen out at the hall) and I stood next to them until the speech had ended. When the speech ended one of the women motioned for me to come over and sit next to her. Extra benches had been added to accommodate all the people. A woman stood and began making a speech. The hall was filled with people but it was quiet enough to hear the speech clearly. Tonight I observed many younger people that I had not yet seen in the village. The bench by the door was lined with male youth who appeared in their late teens and early 20s. There were also

several pairs of female youth that looked to be in their teens. I still do not see many females in their 20s in the community.

There are four large round tables in the center of the hall that are filled by elders. Elders sit at tables during a potlatch and have their food served to them or placed on their table so they do not have to kneel down to fill their plates. In the middle of the room there are two long runners of white cloth with dishes of food lined from end to end. In the front of the room there are three long tables lined up end to end and covered with boxes holding cups of Indian ice cream [boiled white fish, Crisco, sugar and blueberries is most common variety here], boiled prunes, Jello, candy, gum, apple slices and dry fish pieces. The food items in the boxes will be passed out by helpers. The helpers are teenage age girls and adult women (family members).

There are somewhere between 7 and 10 speeches made by community members at this potlatch. The speeches typically begin with a memory about the deceased and then also include expressions of appreciation and gratitude for others that helped with the funeral or were particularly important to the deceased. A few of the elders would also include in their speech admonishments to the general community to live right or live better. For example, one man in his 50s stood and made the following speech:

I just want to say that when you look around this room you see that we are losing all our elders. I want to tell the young people here that they need to really respect their elders and listen to them and help them out. These are your elders and they won't always be here. The young people need to remember to respect their elders. Thank you.

As he made his speech he would gesture towards the door. Right before this man made his speech a larger group of adolescent boys (probably all the teenage boys in the village) had come in and were standing in a big group (+8) in front of the door. They were in snowgo-gear and stood clumped so closely together that a woman couldn't get through them and started elbowing them to get

through. They stood in front of the door for a while and listened to the man's speech and then two went and sat on the bench with the other youth and the rest filtered out the door again. After the man made his speech, the woman I was sitting next to got up and made a speech. In the midst of her speech she announced the plans for a family night and logo contest and introduced me as the researcher from the university. I was surprised by her inclusion of local "business" in her speech and felt uncomfortable by it. After she finished her speech a few more speeches were made. An elder man (2nd chief) got up to say that he "felt bum" that no one had remembered to sing in Native last night over the body, and that they [the community] should really make an effort to continue to do this. One of the son's of the deceased got up to make a speech but was obviously inebriated and he swayed and mumbled a few things and then began to cry and sat down. After this one elder woman shouted "let's eat already." There was some strained laughter and then one of the family members announced that Father would now bless the food. We all stood up and Father prayed over the food and said the blessing.

Everyone got out their potlatch gear (plastic cafeteria style trays with individual compartments and spoons and forks that are privately owned) and headed over to the food. People kneeled down on the cloths to dish food onto their plates or tray and some would begin eating as they waited to move over to the next dish. Some, when they filled their tray or plate, would sit on their knees on the cloth runner and eat at the edge of the runner. People are not supposed to step over the food and must remain on the edges of the cloth and circle around the outside of the two rows of food.

In the midst of the eating there was a loud crash and a few people shouted out. An older man in Carharts had fallen face down on the floor with one of the food dishes pinned beneath him. Two people yelled out in surprise (anger?). One person went to help him to his feet but he had already gotten up and was heading unsteadily for the door. He nearly fell again and grabbed another man by the

back of his coat for support and the sober man got him out the door. Things continued on and the mess was cleaned up quickly. I heard people joking about the incident later on. I didn't see too many of the young people eating and when I had finished with my plate I noticed that their bench was mostly empty. The hall was again mainly populated by adults.

The event began at 6 p.m. and the speeches lasted until about 7:30 and the dinner was over by 8 p.m. People left the hall right after the dinner was over except for a few people who would stay to play Pan in the hall while it was still warm.

The material belongings of the deceased will be given away and formal tribute will be made to all those who assisted with the wake, funeral and potlatch at the memorial. A memorial will be held "when the family is ready", this is usually not less than five years from the date of passing and can be more (but not too much more).

Walking home tonight there were lots of people out on snowgo. Most of the nighttime snowgo riders appear to be children and teenagers. Children tend to ride together – sometimes three to a snowgo and teens ride one or two to a snowgo. The night sounds with their outdoor activity.

There are traditional ways of dealing with loss in these communities but these ways have had to be adapted to meet contemporary social conditions. For the elder generation, dealing with loss involved distancing from the experience, and redirecting strong feelings as quickly as possible. This often involved physically moving the family to a new place and possibly never returning to the place where the person was lost or killed. Dealing with loss also involved reestablishing the normal pattern of everyday life as quickly as possible. In the village people cannot distance or redirect their feelings in the same way.

Funerals in the village continue aboriginal strategies for adjusting to loss including sharing, distancing and redirecting. Funerals are prolonged events where everyone is encouraged to go out (distance), help out (redirect) and not be alone (share).

When there is a death in the community people suspend their everyday activities, grievances and emotions to come together to support the family who lost an important source for and object of love. In the village, individuals deal with loss by intensifying everyday interaction and heightening existing social relationships. For a period of five days or a week people will go out of their way to be around others, particularly those that are most directly affected by the loss (the ones that loved or were loved by the one lost). Being alone following a death in the community is strictly avoided. This is symbolized by the constant companionship given to the body. The body must never be left alone until it is buried. In general, being alone is dangerous for many different reasons. Being alone is dangerous because there is no one there to watch out for you should something go wrong. This is true both on the land and in the village. Being alone leaves an individual more vulnerable to threats from outside. Being alone is avoided all the time, but is particularly taboo after a death in the community. After the death of another elder in *Yookkene*, I was told not to leave my son sleeping in the house alone because the spirits of the ancestors will try and take the very young with them when they go.

Children are more vulnerable during times of loss. They are protected from the spirits through certain ritual actions by adults, and by exclusion (albeit indirectly through non-involvement) from participating in death rituals in the community. Exclusion from death and funerary practices and avoidance by children and youth is more difficult to accomplish in the village. Children see and experience the same things as everyone else living together in the communities. Their ability to move on from death is more limited in the village than it was on the land. The village limits just how far a young person can distance and in what ways they can redirect and share their feelings. In the village there remain the everyday reminders of loss.

Memorial potlatches are the other part of the local way of dealing with loss in *Yookkene*. The memorial potlatch is a community-wide ceremonial that is put on 4-5 years after the death of a family member. It is a collaborative event with many families coming together. Memorial potlatches are often described as exciting and fun in the village, even though they make people lonesome for those they lost. The fun and

excitement aspects of memorial potlatches draw people out of their villages, homes, and selves to share in the event together. Osgood (1958: 157) has also pointed out the “important role the potlatch for the dead takes in the drama of the living.” In this way people are motivated to have fun to prevent lonesomeness. While I was in *Yookkene* I was able to attend a memorial potlatch for an elder matron who had passed away four years prior. Fieldnotes taken during the event describe the experience and demonstrate this important final step in dealing with loss.

Fieldnote: First Night of the Addison Mallard Memorial Potlatch

Today the village was busy with preparations for the first night of the potlatch. The tribal offices were closed today and tomorrow for the potlatch. The school did not take the potlatch days off. Memorial potlatches are not like funerals where the kids will get out of school to attend. This means that school age youth will not get to observe or be involved in a lot of the preparations that go on all day to get ready for the evening activities.

All of the adult women were busy preparing dishes for the food potlatch. They call it food potlatch to distinguish it from the potlatch on the last night that is a give away. I decided to go watch Willa make fish ice cream for the potlatch.

Willa had already boiled the fish and had squeezed all of the water out of it. She was painstakingly going through all the flaked meat to take out all of the remaining bone fragments and hard pieces of cartilage. After she had cleaned the fish thoroughly she added it into an electric mixer with Crisco and sugar. The mixer wasn't working as well as Willa liked and she was worried about the consistency and took a spoonful over to her mother's house next door. When she came back she said that they had said it was okay but that she needed to use her hand to whip it up because the warmth of her hand would help melt the sugar so it wouldn't be so grainy. Willa whipped it for almost an hour and then started to add the raspberries and cranberries. The family (that was putting on the potlatch) had started to call around for food that needed to be picked up and brought to the hall. Dutch Mallard (20s – grandson of Addison) and Sean Mallard (early 30s –

grandson of Addison) came in to pick it up (younger men go in the house to pick up the food – older men drive the trucks and organize the food pick-up). They asked Willa if she had anything and she said she'd bring it up herself when it was ready.

Before we left Willa told her girls to come up after a while to eat – they didn't have to sit for the speeches if they didn't want to. By the time we arrived at the hall it was packed close with people. They were just about ready to start the speeches and Willa, Bette and I looked around for a seat. The tables were full with elders and the benches lining the hall were filled. We stood by the door for a little while. The middle of the hall was filled with food and there were several women working on dividing up the Jello and fish ice cream into individual cups. Willa put her ice cream down and Martha Kingfisher exclaimed over it – “Wow you make this?” And Willa said proudly, “Yep, first time too.” Martha exclaimed even more and laughed. We finally found a small open space on the benches behind the stove. The large drum stove blocked my view of the speakers and I had to crane around it to see who was speaking. Addison's daughters spoke first. They talked about how much they looked up to and loved their mother and how grateful they were to everyone in the community for the help with the potlatch. The tenor of the speeches was lighter than those I heard at funeral potlatches. A few of the women did become emotional and cry, but their tears would typically come when they began talking about how happy they were that they were having the potlatch and how loved they felt by everyone in attendance. Several of Addison's adult grandchildren also made brief speeches. A few elders made speeches as well. These were Addison's peers and they would tell a short story about her (usually involving participation in a subsistence activity – having something go wrong or be done wrong and Addison correcting it). The speeches went on for about an hour with Jake Kingfisher facilitating. After about 45 minutes Jake began hinting after each new speaker that the food was getting cold and the elders were getting hungry.

Three or four more speeches were made and then Jake announced that they would need helpers to pass the food out.

Younger adult males and females (typically 17-22) went up to the tarp to help. The new school principal also went up to help pass out the food. Children do not pass out food. Children between the ages of 4-11 sit on the edges of the large tarp on the floor. Once girls reach puberty (first menses) they cannot sit on the tarp anymore. Willa's daughter Harmony is ten years old and is already starting to complain to her mother that she feels too old and too big to be sitting on the tarp still. The young children sit by themselves and there does not appear to be a gender division in seating arrangement. The younger children are expected to sit quietly on the tarps – not moving around or playing around too much. If they start to get too rowdy during the speeches – or start to talk too much to their friends – one of the adults will get their attention and will indicate for them to calm down. The younger children are served separately and are given the requisite spaghetti and moose soup with cake and Jello. The choicer selections (meat and fish) and the more Native foods will be given out to the elders and adults.

When they start to pass out food, Willa and I move over to another bench by the door. I have not observed the hall this full of people – the food servers barely have room to squeeze through the crowd. People eat as the food is being passed out and will generally get full and then save up the rest of the food to take home for later. People start leaving the hall almost immediately after all the food has been passed out. The Native dance is set to begin in an hour or so and the hall needs to be cleaned and readied.

After all the preparations are complete and the singers have arrived and arranged themselves in the front of the hall they begin the dance. The dance begins with a traditional song sung by the elders to bring in the dance cloth. The dance cloth is brought through the door of the hall and everyone near it grabs on to it to help walk it around the hall in a circle. The dance cloth is a long rope of

cloth fabric and furs. The fur is mainly wolf and coyote but there is some wolverine fur as well. The cloth is as long as half the circumference of the community hall (as evidenced later on when it was hung on the walls). Those that cannot find a place on the cloth to hold walk behind with cloth scarves in their hands. For the first dance the participants walk the cloth around the hall and shake it to the rhythm of the singers' voices. The dancers are told to shake it harder by some of the spectators that are sitting down the benches.

After this first dance they have a couple more with the cloth on the floor and then the cloth is transferred to the wall to be hung above the dancers. There are seven singers that evening, all elders except one woman (daughter of Addison – who received her mother's song that spring and is singing it for the first time – she is in her 50s). Willa's father (Wander Sparrow) is the only male singer. He sings last and his powerful voice draws more of the male dancers to the center than any other singer. After the cloth is hung the female dancers continue to walk in a circle with their scarves held in both hands in front of their torso – they shake the scarves slightly with their hands elevating it and lowering it. Some of the older women stand stationary and move the scarf in a more circular motion with their two hands. Anna Kingfisher gets out near the middle at one point and tries to show a small group of younger girls how to dip their knees and move their arms more vigorously and rhythmically to the pulse of the singer's voice and drum. About half-way through the men move into the center and dance in a more animated and unconstrained style. Buzzy Sparrow goes out to the center first and more men join him quickly and excitedly. The young boys dance in the center as well. The men stomp and dip down with their knees while they ball their fists and pound their arms away from their bodies and upwards into the air. There are less male dancers than female dancers. There are only a few younger men in their late teens and early 20s (4 to 6 – and these are immediate family members of the deceased – Jay Sparrow and Dutch Mallard are two of the more vigorous younger male dancers), there are quite a few young

boys that try it out for a while and then go back outside (where they are playing tag and wrestling).

There are between 50-70 adult and elder females dancing around the periphery with another 20 or so girls and teenage girls. The younger girls (9-12) stay in the hall more continuously than the boys and do not go out to play during or between songs. The teenage girls come in and stay a song or two and then go out and often do not go back in. After the men have moved into the center of the hall they do not dance around the periphery again.

After all seven singers have sung their songs they ask for any more singers and then they go through each of the singers one more time. After they do this the Native Indian dancing part of the evening ends. People go out and sit down along the benches to wait for the family to collect up the scarves and pass out snacks. The younger female and male family members pass out little plastic sandwich bags and go around with big bowls of dry fish and orange and apple slices. They pass out candy to the children. After the snacks have been passed out most of the people go out.

There are a few other adults left and several elders. People say that it's mainly the elders and older adults who enjoy fiddle-dancing. There is a small group of younger men that stand outside the hall or on the porch by the door and sometimes an older woman will go out and tell them to come inside and be dance partners for their aunties and grandmothers. It is more common to see very young men and younger boys dancing the elder women around the hall. I did not see older men dancing with younger girls. The fiddling started around 11 p.m. and lasted to about 1am. During the Native dancing I noticed that no one seemed visibly inebriated and there was no public consumption of alcohol (either inside or outside the hall). At the fiddle dance it was more apparent that some of the adults had been drinking, but there was no public consumption of alcohol and things never got crazy.

Fieldnote: Second day of the Potlatch

There is no food potlatch tonight and the dance doesn't begin until 7:30 or 8 p.m. During the day the family works to get things ready for the give-away (third day). The Native dancing begins more informally without the cloth dance. The same seven singers sing tonight. The hall is less full than it was last night. There appear to be more younger adults and youth and fewer adults. The Native dancing goes on until 10 p.m. and then the fiddle dancing starts. There is more drinking going on around the village but it is kept private and is not brought out into the public context of the memorial events.

Fieldnote: Third day of the Potlatch

Today is the final night of the potlatch and the events today will be held in the school gymnasium (instead of the community hall). The cooking begins early in the day. Typically each household contributes at least one main dish or dessert. The household with more immediate familial relations to the deceased typically contributes more dishes. The immediate family will provide food all day for elders and others who are helping with the preparations. Cynthia Mallard and her family cooked each day outside of their house – using a large basin on an outside fire to cook up huge batches of moose soup and meats.

Willa's sister is cooking a curried goose dish with rice to take to the hall. The food potlatch begins earlier today at 5 p.m. After I drop off my son (with Drew K. who is 24-years old and was not attending a lot of the events) I meet Willa at her house (about 4:30 p.m.) and we head up to the gym, Harmony (10 years old) and Charity (5 years old) in tow. Harmony asks to play outside the hall during the speeches. Charity takes her place on the tarp that has been spread in a rectangle on the gym floor. Willa and I sit on one of the bottom bleachers. The tables are mostly full with elders and some older adults. There are chairs lined around the outside wall opposite the bleachers. After a while Jake (who is MC-ing) announces that they will begin with speeches for Addison. Jake gives a brief speech first and then in turn all of Addison's children (4 daughters, 1 son)

give speeches. The speeches tonight are longer and more intense and emotional. At one point one of the daughters talks about her mother's final moments and one of the women around me gasped, *hutlaanee!* It feels like each person is saying what they have kept back this entire time and are letting out once and for all. Three of the daughter's speeches end with wracking sobs torn from raw throats. The speeches go on for almost two hours. Towards the end the speeches become lighter and more directed at Addison's legacy. At one point, about half-way through the speeches, Jake took a moment to remind the young children of the need for them to remain quiet and to remain still – he chastised them mildly to be respectful and to listen and learn all they could. The children were becoming restless by then and his speech made the young boys straighten their backs and sit up on their heels. The girls sat hunched with the heads on their fists and once in a while whispered to the girl next them. I only observed the children acting up on two occasions during the entire two hours. One time it was a small group of three girls that were nudging each other and whispering. Willa's daughter Charity was on the periphery and kept shooting slightly scared glances at her mother. Willa caught her daughter's eye and gestured for her to quit. Charity sat stone still even as the girl next to her continued to nudge her and whisper to her. Willa mouthed to Charity to tell the girl that she is being watched. Charity can't understand what her mother is saying and walks over to us on the bleachers. Charity asks if she can sit with us on the bleachers and Willa says no she needs to sit with the other children and she needs to tell the other girl that her mother is watching her. Charity goes back over and (with apparent reluctance) tells the other girl what Willa told her to say. The girl quiets immediately and casts her eyes down.

The second instance involved a small group of boys. Three boys began to throw their bowls around at each other and started to push and pull on each other (this is what appeared to prompt Jake's speech to the children to behave). The school principal's wife had been sitting on the tarp with her 4-year old daughter

and she would periodically tell the boys to settle down but they would start back up again after a few moments of quiet. After Jake chastised the children the boys stopped throwing their dishes and were quiet for the duration of the speeches. Victor Grebe got up when the speeches were nearly done and praised the children and asked them to stand up and look at their elders. He told a story about how he learned from his elders when he was child and then asked the children to sit back down. He thanked the children for sitting down this whole time and praised them and their parents for letting them learn and continue their culture. It was a good speech that elicited a loud round of applause from everyone in the hall.

Jake called for the final speeches and then announced it was time for the blessing of the food. There were a few more people that wanted to make a speech and Jake said they would continue with speeches during the potlatch. The community church pastor said a prayer first and then Hazel Kingfisher gave the Catholic prayer to bless the food and the dishes were uncovered and people came forward to help pass out the food.

After the food potlatch people went out to bring their food home and let the gym get readied for the give-away. The give-away is the main event of the memorial potlatch and is what can take years to prepare. The gifts for the give-away include store bought items, hand-made items and the personal belongings of the deceased that have been saved. Typical store bought goods include: blankets (Pendleton blankets are bought as special gifts for those that significantly contributed to the potlatch), towels (dishtowels, bath towels, washcloths), individual Tupperware, candles, earrings, inscribed coffee cups (for all), designed jackets (for the family members and main helpers), other clothing items, gloves, socks, and special miscellaneous items (these can include large framed pictures, clocks, figurines, etc. that are given to specific people who contributed something special of their own). Items that are made for the potlatch include: knitted socks, knitted ovenpads, knitted satchels, beaded earrings,

beaded necklaces, beaded vests, beaded gloves and beaded moccasins, wood carvings, etc.

At the same time they also give away all of the deceased person's material possessions. On the second day of the potlatch the family announces that they will be going through their relative's possessions and that everyone is welcome to go to the house and pick out what they want from the goods. Cynthia coordinated the effort to go through all of Addison's belongings yesterday. Willa went up to Addison's house and had identified an item that she wanted. Most of the goods that were being given away had been laid out together outside of the house on a large tarp. Community members were allowed to put their names on items they wanted. These would be boxed up and brought to the gym to be given away after the new/purchased goods were passed out.

The family was just finishing the sorting of the materials when Willa and I arrived. The bleachers were nearly full and all of the chairs were occupied. Two of the older daughters of Addison started off the potlatch by making a brief speech and then making a presentation of six large Pendleton blankets to the elder Native singers. After this ceremonial presentation they began to give items away more rapidly. The daughters appeared to be in charge of what items were given out and to whom. When they came to a special item they would announce who it was for and why it was being given that person. So for example, they announced when they were giving a specially made pair of beaded moccasins to Lola Heron because Lola's family donated a wolf skin to the family for the potlatch. After the special gifts were given out they began to distribute the community goods. There were about six to eight adults helping to pass out the materials – these were all close family members – both male and female. After they passed out the “new” items they moved onto the personal possessions. Some of the larger items such as furniture were announced and then picked later after the give-away was over. More than half the people in the gym left after the new and made items were give out. There were no dances tonight and there was

a lot more people out on the street – more 4-wheelers buzzing around the village roads and more public action.

Funerals and memorial potlatches most fundamentally bring people together to share in the experience of loss. These activities work to disperse the intensity of the emotions experienced by individuals to be shared by others in the group. Another critical component to both these ways of dealing with loss is the idea of *getting out*. Individuals are encouraged to “be out” and “not stay in” during funeral or potlatch times. Distancing, along with coming together, are important aboriginal strategies for dealing with intense emotions. Those that stay in are thought to be more vulnerable to harm. The spirits are lonesome during this time and will be looking around for others to take with them. Lonesomeness in the village is more of a constant threat than it is on the land. Lonesomeness is caused not just by the loss, but by the reminder of the relationship. In a village, an individual is reminded of the loss of their relationship every day as they witness others engaged in close relationships like those they once had. To avoid this, many people who lose someone close to them will stay in and stop going around other people. When people stop going out and start staying in this is an indication of their mental status. It’s “not right” to stay in all the time. When an individual starts staying in too much, his or her family members will start visiting them more often and inviting them out. Staying in all the time can make people go crazy, and when people go crazy in *Yookkene* there is a danger they will harm themselves.

5.3 Suicide

Suicide is identified by all community members as one of the most urgent social problems facing young people today in the villages. Every youth that I interviewed reported knowing someone who had committed suicide in the previous five years. The majority had lost one or more close family members to suicide. Suicide has increased significantly over the past two generations within many Alaska Native and Canadian Inuit communities. Some communities have seen sharp increases *and* decreases in overall occurrences within single generations (Alaska State Suicide Prevention Council 2007). According to the life histories, suicide among the elder generation in *Yookkene* was

uncommon, although not unheard of. Several of the elders I talked to said that they remember hearing about someone in another community that had committed suicide but it was a rare thing. This is one of the reasons many elders report feeling so shocked and helpless to do anything about the dramatic rise in suicide among their own children's generation. Several of the elders I talked to in the village had lost one of their own children to suicide. In *Yookkene* it appears that a peak suicide rate occurred in the 1980s and early 1990s. Adults in this generation recall losing over half of their high school friends to suicide. John Peregrine, at 42 years old, is a survivor of this generation.

John (42 years old)

My experience growing up here in *Yookkene*, in my earlier days it was tough, a male-oriented household where we had to, non-stop with four seasons of life. Four seasons we had. We lived with four seasons and the financial part was the toughest part because my dad was always away, never home. He was always working. And my mom, she was always home. I learned to live with four seasons and I that's all I knew how to do. And it's basically all still I know how to do. I never wanted to go on to school or go away from home. I was always scared of the outside world, the Western world, let's put it that way. And as I grew older and times changed, all the jobs were for inside office work and no men that I really know actually worked in offices. At least not Native men anyway from around here. And our roles changed. Our roles changed from us being the men to basically taking care of the houses, being home and taking care of the kids. So men, when Western world took over. When I was, I wanna say 15, 16, 17, 18, we didn't really have much of a role to play. And that's a tough time, you go from 18 to 23 it's a tough time for a young man, because 18 is when they're kicked out. Basically legally kicked out of the house and we had ... that's where most suicides that I've known, all my best friends committed suicide. A lot of my best friends committed suicide because they were in that age. And even before we

started talking about all this in the past ten years, you know statistics are showing it, I knew that long before that because I experienced it in my time. We had to learn how to do other things and so if it wasn't for my mom and my family during that age I'd have probably been a statistic myself. I mean they put up with me time after time. And I mean I started drinking at 15 years old.

A lot of my friends drank. We had tough times together and results of that I have [names six friends], a bunch of close, close friends that had committed suicide.

Most of the adults between the ages of 35 and 50 that I interviewed in *Yookkene* had lost a sibling or best friend to suicide when they were themselves teenagers. The suicide rate began decreasing in *Yookkene* in the mid-1990s and there have been fewer suicides in the past decade than there were in the decade before this. Even though suicide rates overall have declined in *Yookkene*, and in many of the Athabascan villages, the rates are still twice what they are among non-Native youth in the urban areas. When I was in *Yookkene* I was told about six suicides that had occurred over the past 10 years in the village. When a suicide occurs in the village, everyone is affected. Sometimes people are present to witness the suicide, other times it is young people, children even, who find the body. Suicide is one of the most urgent and vexing issues for the Native communities in Alaska.

The problem of suicide in the Arctic has been the source of much scholarly study as the rates have drastically increased over the last 40 years in some areas (Chandler and Lalonde 1995, 1998; Duclos and Manson 1994; Echohawk 1997; Gessner 1997; Kettl and Bixler 1991; Kirmayer 1992; Kral 1994, 1998; Leenaars 1999, 2000). The majority of the research on suicide in the North American Arctic and Subarctic has been conducted with Inuit in the Canadian Arctic. Inuit experience among the highest rates of suicide in North America (Kirmayer, Fletcher and Bootroyd 1998); but overall, on a global-level, indigenous peoples in remote communities undergoing rapid social change

tend to experience disproportionately higher rates of suicide (Morrell, Page and Taylor 2007; Rubenstein 1983, 1992). The similar trends in suicidality among indigenous peoples around the world provide strong evidence for the role of social and cultural factors in the emotional decision-making of youth in these communities.

A similar problem exists with the research on Natives and suicide as it does with Natives and alcohol. The field has been dominated by etic theories of causation including anomie and assimilation; even though the vast majority of the evidence points to a local pattern of “perturbation” and “lethality” (Schneidman 1985). Perturbation is what causes the individual to consider suicide as an option for dealing with the pain or problem. Lethality is the means of acting on the feelings. Most researchers tend to either focus entirely on the internal sources of perturbation such as depression or neuropsychological dysfunction or abnormality (e.g. Duclos and Manson 1994; Sullivan and Brems 1997). Others look entirely at the social causes of perturbation, such as anomie (Carstens 2000; Davenport and Davenport 1987; Durkheim 1951; Young and French 1995) or assimilation (Chandler and Lalonde 1998; Duran and Duran 1995). Social anomie and assimilation theories tend to all adhere closely to the following argument: individuals who find themselves alienated or marginalized from their traditional and/or accustomed means of production including the social group and social roles within the group are more likely to consider suicide because it is, minimally, *something to do* with purpose.

Few people are looking at these patterns in their cultural and social contexts, from the inside – out. Like the problem of Native alcohol use, no one wants to deal with it as part of the local culture. Leenaars (1999: 346) even goes so far as to state absolutely that, “There is no question that the high rates of suicide in the North and South [Canada] are largely due to cultural genocide.” I believe there is room to question this idea. There are several examples of Native North American groups that have experienced earlier, more forceful and unrelenting colonial pressures than the majority of the Inuit groups in the Arctic, and do not experience the same high rates of youth suicide. The Tlingit in southeast Alaska experience rates of suicide that are more consistent with the national average, and in some cases are lower than the national average (Alaska State Suicide

Prevention Council 2007). Suicide on the Northwest Coast is generally lower overall than in Native groups in other culture areas in North America such as the Southwest, the Great Plains and the Subarctic and Arctic (Lester 1997). This clearly indicates more complex and locally specific “causes” for the higher rates of suicide in some indigenous areas. These “causes” can be understood through the emotion schemas that motivate youth into action in the village.

In the contemporary context, suicide *is*, just like alcohol is, a part of life in the village. It is something that everyone has to deal with. Youth in *Yookkene* would talk about suicide most often when I asked about hard times in childhood. Many talked of hearing about or witnessing the suicides in the community, like Henry described in Chapter 1, and a few youth also talked about dealing with thoughts of suicide and attempting suicide. Everyone that I talked to in the village knew someone who had committed suicide.

Stormy (15 years old)

SMR: So how old were you when you started going down that road?

R: I was about 12 when I -- oh, I don't know. I think I tried weed when I was a little bit younger, but then when I started doing it a lot was when I was around 12. I started drinking a lot. Just like -- I don't know. I didn't have a care in the world. I didn't care what went on. I think back then I didn't -- I didn't care about my future, like I just saw that suicide is the only way out and so I tried it a lot, and like -- I don't know.

SMR: What did you try, overdosing?

Stormy: Yeah. That's how I got sent to treatment. Like I tried it. I was going like -- I was in the process of doing it, but I got caught, like my mom walked in on me, and that night they sent me in, and a couple days later, I was out of here. In a way, I wanted to leave the world, but in a way I didn't want to. So like I guess that taking pills, like they'd bring me back to life, but if I did anything serious, that I wouldn't have another chance. So I was scared, but I just didn't see anything else, and I felt alone, and I

just wanted to do it. But a lot of me was too scared to do it. But that time that my mom caught me, that was when I had everything planned out. I had how I was going to do it, when I was going to do it, where, what would happen to me and I knew that I was going to go to treatment after that, and I didn't really care, because I just wanted to get away because -- I didn't have anything here.

Amber (26 years old)

SMR: Do you have close friends here now?

Amber: Well, ever since ever since like my [cousin] died I don't really have that kind of friend. But its like that's why sometimes I'll be lonely you know, because I see people with their close somebodies and she was always my close somebody.

SMR: I mean when you were growing up do you remember suicide being a problem?

Amber: They said [my cousin] killed herself, but I don't believe she did and that like five years ago. Then when I was away for school my other cousin shot herself and that was really hard not being here. And then like I remember even when I was in high school, no after high school, it was like maybe when I was 19 or 20 my really close friend shot himself. I don't know, there are a lot of people I could think back and I always just like daydream and think you know what it would be like if they were still living. And it's like they just all took their own lives. That's kind of why when I used to ski and we used to be able to shoot a 22 and now it's like I can't hardly stand to touch a gun. Even at New Year's to hear all the guns it's just like I'm kind of scared you know so much people just so much young people have died. I always think gee what if they were still here, what would they be doing?

Drew (24 years old)

SMR: Was she one of the only people of your classmates that you knew

that committed suicide?

Drew: No, Travis did, too. He was two or three years younger than me, too. And my friend, Monica -- I don't know if she committed suicide or if it was drugs or something. I don't know. She died three or four years ago. She was a year older than I am. And Nate and Jack. I don't know how old they were. They were maybe around -- probably around 28 by now and a couple of my friends in Galena that were a year older than me.

Belinda (24 years old)

SMR: Do you think that there are things that could be done today to help the young people?

Belinda: Just keep them more occupied. Keep more things to do. Give kids more things to do. Just develop better relationships for the kids. Give them something to look forward to. Give them some kind of comfort feeling. Cause I won't lie, there was a few times when I tried to take my own life. Thank God I didn't. But it's really hard a lot of times. I just felt I had nobody to go to that time. The last time was because of my parents. I had like so much money after my tax return and I allowed them to take my ATM card and to take some money out, because I had my student loan that I wanted to pay off. Plus I was living in my own house and I was paying my own bills as a single mom. They ended up taking all of it out and left me with nothing. So I felt so bad and I didn't... I had to be medivaced. I had to be on medications and all that kind of stuff for a long time, because I tried to overdose. There was an extreme amount of the medication in my blood that was damaging my liver and my kidneys. So I had to stay in town for a while. Ever since then my parents have been trying to give me all the money they can, so probably for that reason. They never talked to me about it after that. My dad I mean I tried getting them on the phone after I found out that happened before I decided to go off the edge.

Life in the village, like life on the land, is sometimes lived “on the edge” of existence. Everyday life required decision-making that would either allow an individual to live or not. To keep living always required hard work and good relationships. Within an indigenous emotional economy, life and death decision-making occurred not only within the context of human relationships but also within the context of human-animal relationships (see *Chapter 6*). In the village, individuals are more often engaging in emotional decision-making solely in the context of the human relationships and thus find fewer outlets for their emotions.

A review of the literature from researchers working on the issues of suicide and suicidality in the North demonstrates areas of consistency in reporting with certain key factors apparent in the patterning of suicidal behavior in these indigenous communities. The findings from this research suggest that a cross-cultural study of local motivations for suicidality that is based on emotions in everyday life is long overdue. Love, jealousy, boredom, lonesomeness and feelings of loss are consistently mentioned as motivations for suicide in the literature from other Native North American communities.

Leighton and Hughes (1955) provided some of the earliest documentation on suicide in the Canadian Arctic. They found, even very early on in the development of the problem that, “Suicide is stated to be fairly common among the Koksoagmuit, south of Hudson Strait; remorse and disappointed love are the only causes mentioned.” Shortly after this study, Balikci (1960), found a considerable number of successful and attempted suicide cases were reported among the Arviligjuar Inuit of Pelly Bay. From his research he posited that during the last fifty years, there were 50 cases of successful and attempted suicide that had occurred in the general area; 35 represent successful suicides; 4 were attempted but unsuccessful suicides, and 11 individuals expressed their intention to kill themselves but did not go further for various reasons. He found that:

It seemed that the essential characteristic of about half of the number of our cases was a preoccupation with the other during the emergence of the suicidal process. The fatal decision can be spontaneous and take the form of a reaction to a disaster occurring to another individual, or slow, following a succession of misfortunes. In all these cases the suicidal

decisions can be understood only within a set of pre-existing social relations. (Balicki 1960: 8)

He then went on to attempt a sort of psychological autopsy on those that had committed suicide in the recent past by interviewing local people about family members or relations to understand the motivations of people that had attempted or committed suicide. He included the following as illustrative of motivating factors for suicide among the Arviligjuarmiut:

Kaokortok's case appears as really strange. He was married to Unalerdjuar and in the process of wife exchange used to borrow Adgoner's wife. Thinking about this other woman, Kaokortok asked his wife: "You really don't want another in the igloo to help you," The reply was negative and contained an invitation to the husband to kill himself. Kaokortok asked her to fetch something from the neighbors. Alone in the igloo, he shot himself. Our informant added: "He killed himself because he was angry with his wife." (Balicki 1960: 10)

Avagaidje was convinced that a man wanted to steal his wife. Avagaidje wanted to kill her; she managed, however to run away. Then he pointed the gun against himself and fired. (Balicki 1960: 10)

Already it is apparent that jealousy and problems in sexual relationships are a primary factor in suicidal behavior in the Arctic. Since these first primary works on Inuit suicidality there have been many other studies that have provided overwhelming evidence for the role of sex and love in suicidality in the Arctic. Hugh Brody (1975: 201) included this testimony of an 18 year old male youth who had recently gotten a local 16 year old girl pregnant and was being pressured to marry her by his parents.

I was thinking I would jump off some hill into the sea. I went out walking from our house. My mother saw me go and came after me. I was walking and she caught up with me. She told me I did not need to lose myself and I did not need to walk out of our home. I came back to our home with her. That way I did not get married.

In this case the youth used locally meaningful signals to communicate his intentions (self-harm) and feelings (anger). He could not just tell his mother he did not want to marry the girl; it would be inappropriate to communicate such thoughts/feelings directly and even if he did the words might not communicate the force of his feelings.

This is like when Soldier would not talk to people about his feelings after his friend died, but his “going off” behavior signaled his need for others to come around him and watch over him.

Ronet Bachman (1992) provided two case studies (Alice and John) of completed suicides in the Canadian Arctic where both involved problems with a partner as the primary reason. For Alice, “The overdose had apparently occurred after her boyfriend had a fight and ended their relationship.” And for John, “He was experiencing trouble with his girlfriend...” Inge Lynge (1985: 56) researched completed suicides among Canadian Inuit and found that:

Often suicide takes place in the young one’s own apartment, behind a closed door, but with relatives in the house, the act thus creating terrific anxiety and sorrow. The manifest problem is often a broken partnership. (...) As for the breaking of longer lasting partnerships there has often been a period with increasing problems with drinking, jealousy and violence. (...) This cluster of problems reminds us about the easily elicited feeling of loneliness and abandonment among traditional Inuit – and eventually leading to hostility.

She argued that this story of suicide in the community sounds very different from the standard suicide profile purported by outside experts who typically only report on the drinking as the primary factor. Lynge states that it is not the drinking but a “yearning for love, feelings of abandonment, anger and/or hopelessness, with a profound loneliness and no ways of seeking help,” that motivate the person to take hostile action.

In a current study of suicide among Inuit in Greenland, Leineweber and Arensman (2003) recorded the following accounts of two youth suicides taken directly from the death records and police reports.

The deceased was a young boy aged 17, living with his family in a small settlement. Prior to committing suicide his girlfriend had ended the relationship and told him that she wouldn’t go back into the relationship. The boy had threatened to commit suicide earlier when girls had ended a relationship with him. Medical examination indicated that he had 2.05 alcohol in his blood when committing suicide. The evening of his death, he had been drunk at a party. He was jealous of his girlfriend and argued with her. Later on that evening he went home and hung himself. (Leineweber and Arensman 2003: 48)

A second case concerned a 17 year old girl. She had been in love with a boy who killed himself and had sworn to follow him into death. (Leineweber and Arensman 2003: pg. 48)

They found that the highest suicide rates were in the districts of North and East Greenland, which are the most isolated parts of Greenland where traditional hunting still plays a major role in the communities among the older adult members (Leineweber and Arensman 2003: 42). The authors stress the importance of the continuity of the hunting traditions in areas with higher rates of suicide, but what may, in fact, be more indicative of the higher rates of suicidal behavior among youth is the isolation of the communities and very recent shifts from a fulltime hunting and gathering way of life.

It is not only problems in relationships with sexual partners that can motivate people towards suicide. Foulks (1972: 22) found among Inupiaq Eskimos in North Alaska, "People on the prime of their lives whose relationships with members of their group had been threatened were candidates for suicide." Problems in relationships with parents appear to be another critical factor in the lives of young Native people. Other researchers working with Native groups have observed this as well. Ward and Fox (1977) went out to a Northern First Nations reserve to conduct a follow-up study after a cluster of suicides occurred on the reserve, drawing national attention to the problem.

On Christmas Day in 1974 in a lonely farm house on a large Indian Reserve in Northern Ontario, a seventeen year old youth became upset at the impending separation of his quarrelling parents. He consumed a considerable amount of alcohol and loaded a 22 caliber rifle, fired into his forehead and died eight hours later. This set off a tragic chain of deaths, eight in all, within the next twelve months and all in the same small rural community. (Ward and Fox 1977: 423)

What these references have shown is how suicidal behavior is motivated by love, or rather the condition of not being loved enough. Minore et al. (1991: 10) found that informants from Cree and Ojibway communities in Northern Ontario attributed suicidal ideation to the following: "Little or no communication between parents and children;" "Children's feeling of being unloved or unwanted;" and "Absence of love as a young child, and a sense of being unable to give love as a result." Not feeling loved enough is a

critical factor in what makes people feel jealous and lonesome in *Yookkene* and these are both conditions that can motivate suicidal action and are locally referred to as “going crazy”.

Sometimes outside researchers are tempted to ignore the local explanations as ‘trivial’ and search for the ‘real’ causes of the problem and action. Lawrence Kirmayer (1992) works with First Nations in Northern Canada on mental health related issues in these communities and found that often the medical and clinical first responders report the suicide as occurring for “insignificant reasons” such as quarrels and boredom. He argues that this constitutes a linguistic and cultural barrier to communication between the Aboriginal population and the providers that leaves the observers ignorant of the sufferer’s predicament. He points out that:

Contemporary Inuit youth sometimes report “boredom” as a reason for attempting suicide, giving the superficial appearance that it is a causal act. It is likely that ‘boredom’ masks intense feelings of emptiness and alienation; closer examination usually reveals significant family conflict and depression. (Kirmayer 1994: 27).

A few ethnographers have attempted to fill in the important gaps between local explanation such as “boredom” and “absence of love” and social action such as suicide; just how does one move from feeling into action? John Hongimann (1949) provides one of the most detailed first-hand observations of an attempted suicide by a Kaska Athabaskan man in a remote community in Northern British Columbia. He observed suicidality as a normative social action that would occur most often during a drinking party always with the same precursors and resolution. I cite his work here at length for its relevance to the present study.

As he brandishes the weapon the would-be-suicide announces his intention in an emotional outburst. This becomes the signal for interference to block the deed. One or more men leap forward to wrest the gun from the intended suicide’s possession and toss it out of sight. The would-be-victim is now usually emotionally overwhelmed by this behavior. The individual is comforted and in the future, while intoxicated, he is watched lest he repeat the attempt. By his aggressive behavior the intoxicated individual violates personal standards of deference, betrays hostility, and earns the loss of love. Guilt follows and, while intoxicated to

reduce the efficiency of the egocentric defenses, he reacts to this guilt by sudden reversal of activity. Aggression and hostility are deflected toward the self and this reversal leads to such behavior as Edward Prince manifested just before he attempted suicide, complaining that he was all alone in the world without relatives, or else the individual announces his intention of self-destruction. The function of this announcement is clear. It is a plea for help and a defense guaranteeing that the attempt will be unsuccessful. People immediately rush to stop the suicide. This is the would-be-victim's payoff. In the attention he receives, he is assured of the affectionate regard which a moment ago he so strongly doubted. By this time the attempt is a thing of the past. The gun has been safely thrown away, the anxiety of loss of love and assurances of love pile up in the catharsis of emotion that typically terminates a sequence of hostility. (Hongimann 1949: 209)

I would observe similar behaviors in *Yookkene* among the youth when they would be drinking. It was not uncommon for me to get phone calls in the early hours of the morning from a couple of the male youth in the village (ones I had interviewed) telling me they were going to kill themselves. This seemed to be used as a way of ensuring I would stay on the phone with them and listen as they then talked mainly about their loves and their break-ups. Usually after they had talked for a while and heard some kind of reassurances from me, such as – there's other girls, she'll come back, your mom needs you, you're a good ball player, etc., they would apologize for talking crazy and hang up.

Being suicidal is a way of eliciting love from others in the community. When I worked as a mental health clinician out in the Yup'ik communities in southwest Alaska I would get at least four calls each weekend of people being suicidal. When I would respond to these I would generally find a younger female or male who was intoxicated and sitting or walking around with a knife or gun talking about killing themselves and joining ancestors who were already dead. There would usually be a large group of people in the house or outside standing around the person. One or two of the spectators would be keeping up a constant stream of talk at the person about how much they were loved and how important they were to their family.

These assurances sometimes worked to calm the individual down to where they would start crying and hug one of the supporters in the crowd. Sometimes the assurances

did not work, and in these cases the individual usually had to be restrained by the local police and taken into the Title-47 cell. Title-47 is the legal term for involuntary commitment when an individual presents a clear threat to themselves or others. Once in the cell they would typically get a steady stream of visitors who would continue to provide assurances of love.

Jilek-Aall (1988: 96-97) contends that in:

Amerindian and Inuit communities teenagers have been heard to express the sentiment that only at their funeral will they get the attention and acceptance they long for in life. For the young, violent deaths, accidents, and suicides have become the major excitement in their boring life on the small reservations.

In my clinical work I had young Yup'ik clients tell me that they would sometimes imagine their own funerals and see everyone crying over them and it would make them feel good and loved. At the wakes I attended for youth that had committed suicide I would observe the young children watching their parents or relatives cry and express deep and powerful emotions in the context of death that they would strictly reserve in every day life. The children would stare intently at the faces of the adults and would hang around the body watching until they were told to go play out.

In *Yookkene* news of someone being suicidal or talking crazy would cause immediate action in the community. Relatives of the person being suicidal would be called and a group of close family members would go over to where the person was and talk with them and stay with them until they were back in their right mind.

Michael Kral (1994, 1998, 2003) has conducted extensive research on suicide among Inuit in Nunavut (Kral and Idlout 2006). He argues that rather than focusing our area of inquiry inward we need to be asking just "how deeply embedded is suicide in the cultural system of ideas?" Kral has conducted community-based participatory research with Inuit on the idea of suicide in culture. He had Inuit youth conduct interviews with other Inuit on motivations for suicidal thought and action and his team came up with a cultural schema of suicide that is determined by the nature and status of key relationships. His team found that:

Narrative themes concerning meanings of suicide in general were in the order of aloneness, romantic relationship problems, family problems, anger, dissembling, and mimesis. Aloneness was related to feeling unloved, rejected, shamed, hopeless, and angry. Most references to family concerned not being cared for or else criticized by parents, or the highly negative impact suicide has on family and relatives. Anger was primarily connected to feelings of being rejected. Many Inuit talked about suicidal people ‘hiding’ their sadness and their intent, or dissembling, often looking content and acting in a friendly manner prior to their death. Finally, a number of Inuit talked about mimesis, contagion, or copying with regard to both suicide and sadness. (Kral 2003: 33)

The cultural schema of suicide among Inuit is based on certain key relationships within the community. Kral (2003: 42) argues that:

Youth need significant support with problems in romantic relationships, the single most common precipitating factor associated with suicide. Anger and jealousy were common themes in stories about such relationships. Programs addressing romantic relationships, for example in the areas of education and healing, are viewed as urgently needed.

The same is true for youth in *Yookkene*, where relationships with girlfriends are a motivating force and a source of power, status and survival.

5.4 *Breaking-up*

Loss in the village is not only related to death. Loss of a relationship can also occur when people fight, or go against each other or break-up. Young people learning how to be in relationships must learn how to manage their jealousy and deal with problems and break-ups. Break-ups in the village occur between males and females who are “going around” and between female best friends.

In the previous chapter, Tami and Della (17 and 18 years old) described an instance where everyone went against Tami and Tami attempted suicide because of it. Even Della, Tami’s best friend, went against her and wouldn’t talk to her for a while. Another girl was accusing Tami of taking something from someone else’s house and now, after the incident, Della recounts how that was an attempt to break up her relationship with Tami. This interview selection demonstrates the importance of female best friend relationships in the village. Female youth can also experience loss if their best

friend goes out of the village to boarding school or to stay with relatives in town for a while. Most often female best friend pairs will decide to go out of the village for school together, but in some cases one of the girls may not be able to go because of family obligations in the village or lower academic achievement. I talked to a couple of teenage girls who were “stuck” in the village while their best friend was away at boarding school. These girls were more often by themselves in the village and would talk about how much they missed their best friend when I asked what was hardest about life in the village.

Having a best friend is the most important thing for female youth. Female youth between the ages of 15 and 20 spend most of their time with their best friend. Young females most often have only one very close girlfriend. The relationship between best friends is extremely intense, both in terms of time and emotion. It is not really possible to have more than one best friend. The extremely close and intense nature of these relationships has the potential to be both life-saving and life-threatening.

Best friends were nearly unanimously cited by young females as what gets people through hard times. Young females would say that they would only talk to their very best friend about their problems. Stormy, in the last chapter, said that her best friend was one of the only reasons she had survived a very difficult time in her life. Best friend relationships can break up and this can be an extremely devastating experience for girls in the village. Girlfriend relationships are closer and more intense than relationships between male friends. When best friends “go against each other” (break-up) their options for forming new relationships may be much more limited.

It is more fun and can be more exciting to hang out with a girlfriend. Being with someone is doing something, and doing something means not being bored. When youth are under a certain age they are more limited in who they can hang out with everyday. Youth in general do not hang out in girlfriend/boyfriend pairs. Most adults still view this as inappropriate for young people under a certain age (19-20 years). There are a few exceptions of persistent young couples that eventually gain acceptance by their relatives and will hang out at each other’s houses or walk around together in public. In general youth hang out with same-sex friends. Having a best friend in the village provides more

opportunities for youth to go around in public and check things out. Girls do not often walk around or ride around alone, but will go out and do these things together with their girlfriends. When girlfriend relationships break up or end this means there may be less to do every day except stay in and be bored, and the very thought of enduring this is highly aversive to young people.

Young males do not experience this motivational response within their same-sex friendships, but instead experience loss with break-ups or problems with girlfriends. Several of the young men I talked to reported a suicide attempt or thoughts of suicide after a break-up with a girlfriend or after finding out that a girlfriend had been cheating. Here Trips describes how problems with girlfriends affect relationships in the village.

Trips (23 years old)

Trips: Well, I couldn't go anywhere because I had a girlfriend and she'd get mad every time I, like say I'd go to town, man, she'd really trip out. Cause, I don't know, I was seeing this other girl. Or I wasn't, we were just talking really. We weren't doing anything. But she didn't like her. I don't know. It's crazy. Crazy times.

SMR: So do couples go out together in the village?

Trips: No, I haven't seen any couples. Everybody's too jealous. Everybody too jealous, all the men get too jealous to bring their girl. They don't want the other men looking at their women or what. I don't know. Heck. I never asked those kind of questions to them, "Why ain't your girlfriend here?" They'd be like, "What? Why you worried about it?"
(...)

SMR: So after you broke up you were put on anti-depressants?

Trips: Yeah, well, when we broke up, I was going through it pretty rough, things I was hearing about her and stuff like that. I started drinking all the time, all the time and I had to go to counseling because I was going crazy and scaring my mom.

The hardest time for young men is immediately following the break-up. Break-ups were described as harder if the girl moved on right away, and the former boyfriend had to hear about or witness her be with someone else. Males seemed to have a harder time moving on from a loss of a girlfriend than females for a boyfriend. Edward Foulks, a psychiatrist who conducted research among Inupiaq in Barrow and other villages in North Alaska has proposed the following as a potential reason for Native men to experience such intense feelings of jealousy and loss about their mates.

A man depended on his wife for so many aspects of living, that losing her through death or abandonment threatened the very basis of his sense of life. To be without her, meant to be without a life; one might as well be dead. The strong sense of jealousy which exists in Eskimo men toward their wives' relationships with other men is to a certain extent based on this fundamental dependence. (...) When it became apparent that a relationship might be irreconcilably lost through ostracism or through death of a loved one, suicide was considered. (Foulks 1972: 22)

Young men, even more than young women, depend on their relationships with girlfriends for love, fun and excitement. Talking to girls and having girlfriends is a measure of a young man's ability in life. Losing a girlfriend impacts a young man's power and status at a critical time when he may have little else of measure in these same terms. The more girls a young male can get, the higher his standing will be among his peers. Male youth compete for the attention of any and every available female in the village. This does not mean they will go around with all these females. The goal is to have the most options between girlfriends. Having girlfriends, and having boyfriends, is a central preoccupation of youth in the village. These relationships sometimes do not go beyond calling each other on the phone every day and occasionally hooking-up at a party or seeing each other around town. The intensity of these relationships is often more fictive than real at this stage of social development. Break-ups at this point are often devastating more for what the relationships could have been rather than what the relationship actually was. When these relationships end they threaten to take away the future.

Break-ups are harder in *Yookkene* than they are in other social contexts due to the limited dating pool in the village, and the selectivity used by individuals in the village about relationships. Jean Briggs observed a similar problem in youth relationships with Inuit in settlement communities:

Substitution of a new relationship for a lost one is often difficult, not only because people are in short supply in camps, but also, I think, because the ambivalence about loving and the doubt about whether one is loved, make people possessive of old relationships and at the same time reluctant to extend themselves to new ones. Consequently, loneliness and feelings of rejection are common problems among Inuit, even in relatively stable camps, and under modern conditions of individual, rather than group, mobility, these problems may be exacerbated. (Briggs 1985: 44)

Young females seem to deal with break-ups better than young males because they are more likely to have boyfriends from out of town, and they also seem more open to dating outside their culture. Girls also tend to form much closer “love” relationships with their female best friends than boys do with their male friends. A common complaint by village men is that the girls go crazy for the White boys when they see them. It is much more common to see a mixed couple with a Native female and non-Native male than it is to see a Native man with a non-Native woman. Chase Hensel (1996) and Phyllis Fast (2002) have both written about this social phenomenon in Alaska. Native women will marry outside of their village and culture at a much higher rate than Native men. This may be related to the cultural values that appear to promote Native females into higher education and into certain wage labor positions, and encourage Native men to stay in the village and be hunters. In an already limited pool of available mates, losing potential girlfriends to competition from outside can drive Native guys crazy.

Boyfriend problems were common among female youth as well, but were not generally talked about as a cause for suicide. Females could go to their best friends for support and love when they were having problems with their boyfriends. Girls will typically also have several other young men competing for their attention, and will move on from a break-up more easily. It was not that relationships with boyfriends were easier for females. It is just that females will more often go crazy while *in* relationships, and

males will more often go crazy coming out of a relationship. While in relationships with boys, girls will often have a harder time because they experience more problems with their girlfriends during this time. Girls in relationships with boys often have to sacrifice time with their best friends or even stop spending time with their best friends at all and this can cause their girlfriends to go against them. Girls in relationships with boys also have to deal with jealousy from other unattached girls, often locally referred to as “the haters,” and then they also have to deal with their own jealousy over their boyfriend – and often without the support of their best friend. Girls in these situations will often “go crazy” when they are drinking and cause drama and possibly threaten suicide. Boys in relationships are less likely to go crazy when they are drinking. Boys in relationships with girls generally are too busy trying to keep their girl(s) under control.

With all of the available evidence pointing to problems in romantic or sexual relationships as the primary force motivating suicidal actions in the villages it is surprising to see how little is being done to educate youth about healthy relationships. Relationships between men and women have changed substantially with the transition from the land to the village. Being out on the land not only provided a lot of intimate time between children and parents, but also between husband and wife. Jealousies were mitigated by distance and redirection in a subsistence way of life. In camp you were isolated and away from other people for long periods of time, and there was significantly less time to mourn loss or feel jealous or be lonely out on the land. On the land, thoughts as well as actions were strictly controlled. It was not good to think about things when out on the land. In the village people are not distanced from and have less to do with their emotions in everyday life.

5.5 Loss, Lonesomeness and Going Crazy

Loss is hard because it makes people feel sad and be *lonesome*. Lonesomeness is a local idiom of distress in *Yookkene* (Kleinman 1988: 26-27) that describes the worst kind of feeling an individual can experience. People will use the term “lonesome” in the following ways: “I got lonesome for you,” “I get too lonesome when I am here by myself,” “I got lonesome for my fish camp, so my son took me out by boat,” “I got

lonesome for my little brother when I was away at school,” “It gets too lonesome sometimes here in the village, nothing to do.” Lonesomeness does not only describe an internal emotional state, but also indicates a particular social state. An individual who is lonesome is feeling sad or disengaged and possibly “depressed” because they perceive themselves to be without something or someone that make them in some way feel love or loved.

Several other researchers working with Native people in the Arctic and on reservations in the Lower-48 have found loneliness or lonesomeness to be an important idiom of distress in these communities (Briggs 1970; O’Neill 1996). Chance (1966: 78-79) working in North Alaska included this description.

An Eskimo usually tries to surround himself with familiar, friendly people. Rarely does a youth or adult entertain himself alone, preferring the company of others. Under the conditions of high individual and family mobility described previously, people often complain of feeling lonely. Darkness is ‘lonely’. ‘Loneliness’ is a synonym for boredom. A person living in a house alone must be lonely. A person who likes to be alone is viewed with suspicion and distrust. (Chance 1966: 78-79)

In the introduction I reviewed Jean Briggs’ (1970) and Teresa O’Neill’s (1996) work and described how they both identified local definitions of “loneliness” among Inuit and Flathead respectively that describe not only an internal feeling but a social way of being in the world (e.g. Merleau-Ponty 1962).

People who are lonesome in the village would probably meet all of the major diagnostic requirements for clinical depression (APA 2000: 356). They typically feel sad all the time, they stop participating in activities they used to do, they stay inside, they may stop eating and lose weight, and they often feel tired and sleep for prolonged periods. They may also begin dreaming about people that have recently died and might start hearing their voices talking to them, and they will become more preoccupied with thoughts of death and suicide. Lonesomeness is one of the clearest predictors of suicide attempts in the village. After Soldier witnessed his best friend drown in the river he began to stay to himself and withdrew from social activities and interaction. Others around him

noticed the behavior and identified it as dangerous and would “watch over” him all the time.

Being alone too long or too profoundly can, in some cases, motivate a person to want to end their lives because they may feel there is nothing else to do. Loss of a relationship presents the single greatest threat to individuals in the village. Lonesomeness is the motivating force for many individuals to want to commit suicide in the villages. People in *Yookkene* do not really talk about suicide, instead they talk about people going crazy or being crazy. Lonesomeness, along with boredom, love and jealousy can cause people to go crazy. Going crazy is not always a bad thing, just like being mischief is not always bad either. Instead there are different types of craziness; some kinds are fun and exciting, and some kind of scary and dangerous.

“Acting” crazy is different than going crazy. Acting crazy involves a more deliberate violation of certain social norms and taboos, particularly those between men and women. I was told I was “acting crazy” by going for snowgo rides with certain men, going out by myself to walk around at night, laughing and joking too openly in public and talking to anyone who would talk to me. Acting crazy also involves going out and drinking and partying and hanging around guys (or girls) and hooking-up. Acting crazy implies that a person is not crazy all the time but can get crazy sometimes and have fun and get into mischief and create the drama and excitement that makes life interesting today in the village.

Going crazy describes an entirely different set of behaviors. People can go crazy because someone they love is acting crazy. Going crazy is when a person starts behaving in a way that is completely outside of the local norms for appropriate behavior. This most often involves screaming and crying, verbal assaults, fighting, and self-harm. Most people only go crazy when they are drinking, but sometimes they will also go crazy when they are sober, and in these cases self-harm is the only action that will be taken.

Other researchers have documented the aboriginal experience of “going crazy” in Arctic and Subarctic communities. Foulks (1972: 14) famously identified *pibloktoq* as a culture-bound disorder among Inuit that is, “a form of hysteria, not caused by fright or

joy or sorrow, but possibly by jealousy, abuse by the husband, or a craving for affection.” Nelson Graburn (1969) also recorded the local use of the term “crazy” to describe certain types of behaviors and actions.

Some of the adolescents are said by the adults to be “crazy” (*isumairsijuk*) because of their frequent and unrestrained sexual activities, but usually the accusers will admit that they also were probably “crazy” at that age. Eskimos allege that a certain sort of mental unbalance goes with these activities, causing individuals to become preoccupied and even melancholy, but that usually they get over it when they marry and have children. Perhaps these phenomena account for most Eskimo suicides, such as the recent one at Ivujivik. (Graburn 1969: 182)

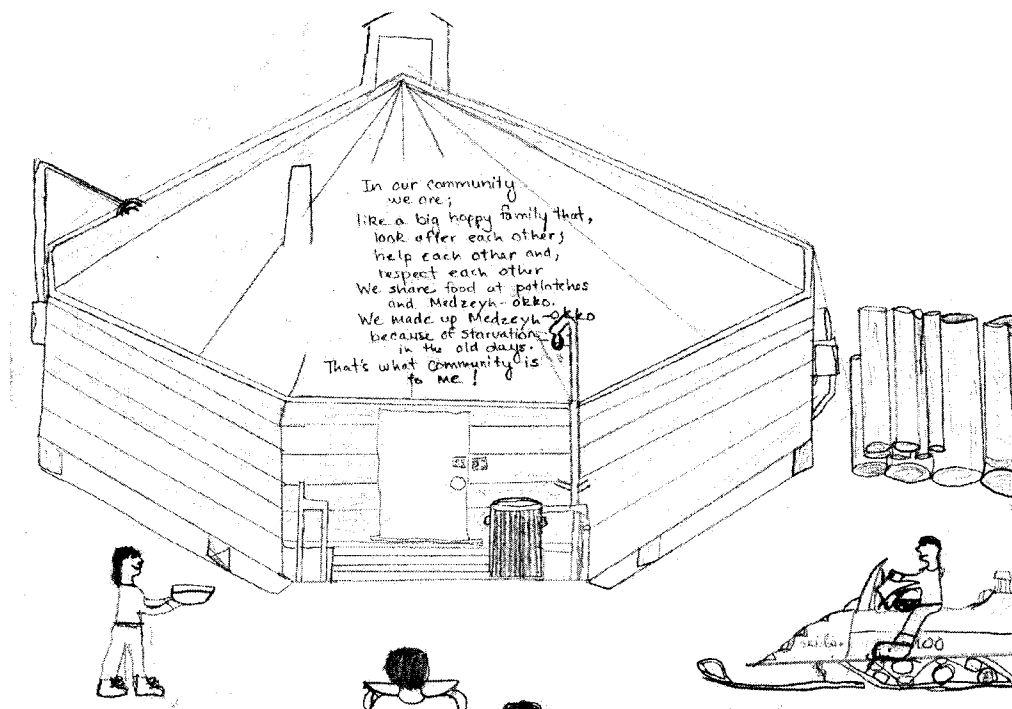
The essential quality of going crazy is an uncontrolled or intense emotional response with action outcomes that most often result in harm to oneself or others. The culture of crazy in *Yookkene* is based on the emotion schemas of the group, and these are based on the socially prescribed ways that individuals in the culture experience certain social facts of life, such as loss, infidelity, breaking-up, drinking, conflict, etc. and how they are motivated to act on these experiences. An emotion schema of youth self-harm in *Yookkene* is produced by the social experience of loss that leads to lonesomeness and going crazy.

The emotion schemas of youth that have been presented thus far represent the emotional development of youth in the village. On a developmental trajectory boredom is the experiential precursor to lonesomeness as mischief is to partying. There is evidence from this study that individuals who experience more boredom as children will be those who experience more lonesomeness as youth and adults. Conversely, too, children who did not experience as much boredom when they were growing up seem to experience less lonesomeness when they are older. What this could indicate is that the right childhood can inoculate against future loss. Those more likely to “go crazy” when they experience emotionally intense things like being cheated on, broken-up with, gone against, or worst of all, the death of a loved one, are those that have experienced fewer and less productive relationships throughout their childhoods and youth. Going crazy is the product of emotional decision-making often engaged in response to the local experience of love (too

much and not enough) and loss (death, breaking-up) and the intense emotions that come from these experiences. Emotions are the edge that everyone in the village lives on; and relationships are like the ice around it. One must know the rules for navigating relationships in the village to survive. These rules are part of the indigenous emotional economy of Athabaskan life and culture. The relationship rules that assist individuals through the emotion schemas of everyday life have changed dramatically with the adaptations that these social groups have made to accommodate a village-based existence and increasing inclusion in a global community (Lewellen 2002). Even within this much changed and changing environment, Athabaskan youth still live a survival-based existence. Only today it is an emotional landscape that youth must learn to survive within. Youth learn early on how to map their emotional world, and the final chapter turns now to the ways in which the emotion schemas of youth interconnect in time and space to reproduce the indigenous emotional economy in the vill.

Chapter 6

Survival



This is our way of life and this is how we live.

Henry (19 years old)

6.1 Navigating the Emotional Landscape of Youth

This study has been about trying to answer the question of what is going on with the youth today in the village. What causes young people in *Yookkene* to feel a certain way and how do these feelings contribute to emotional decision-making and motivational drives?

The previous chapters have described a few of the fundamental emotion schemas that motivate young people in the village to do certain things and make certain kinds of decisions in their every day lives. The emotion schemas are the local or emic explanations for behaviors that are often observed by outsiders coming to the village or

those working with young people referred from the villages. There are certain emotion schemas for certain types of behaviors. Chapter 2 described the emotion schema of youth motivated to be mischief or delinquent in the village. Chapter 3 described the emotion schema of youth motivated to party and hook-up. Chapter 4 described the emotion schema of youth motivated to go against each other and fight. Chapter 5 described the emotion schema of youth motivated to go crazy or be suicidal. This chapter will describe the interconnections between these emotion schemas by mapping the schemas onto the emotional landscape of contemporary village life.

The emotion terms identified in the schemas are the essential landmarks in the emotional landscape of youth in the village. These can be mapped out to demonstrate potential pathways leading from the experience of a particular feeling-state to an emotional action response. The following figure (Fig. 6) demonstrates the relationship between emotional motivations in the village.

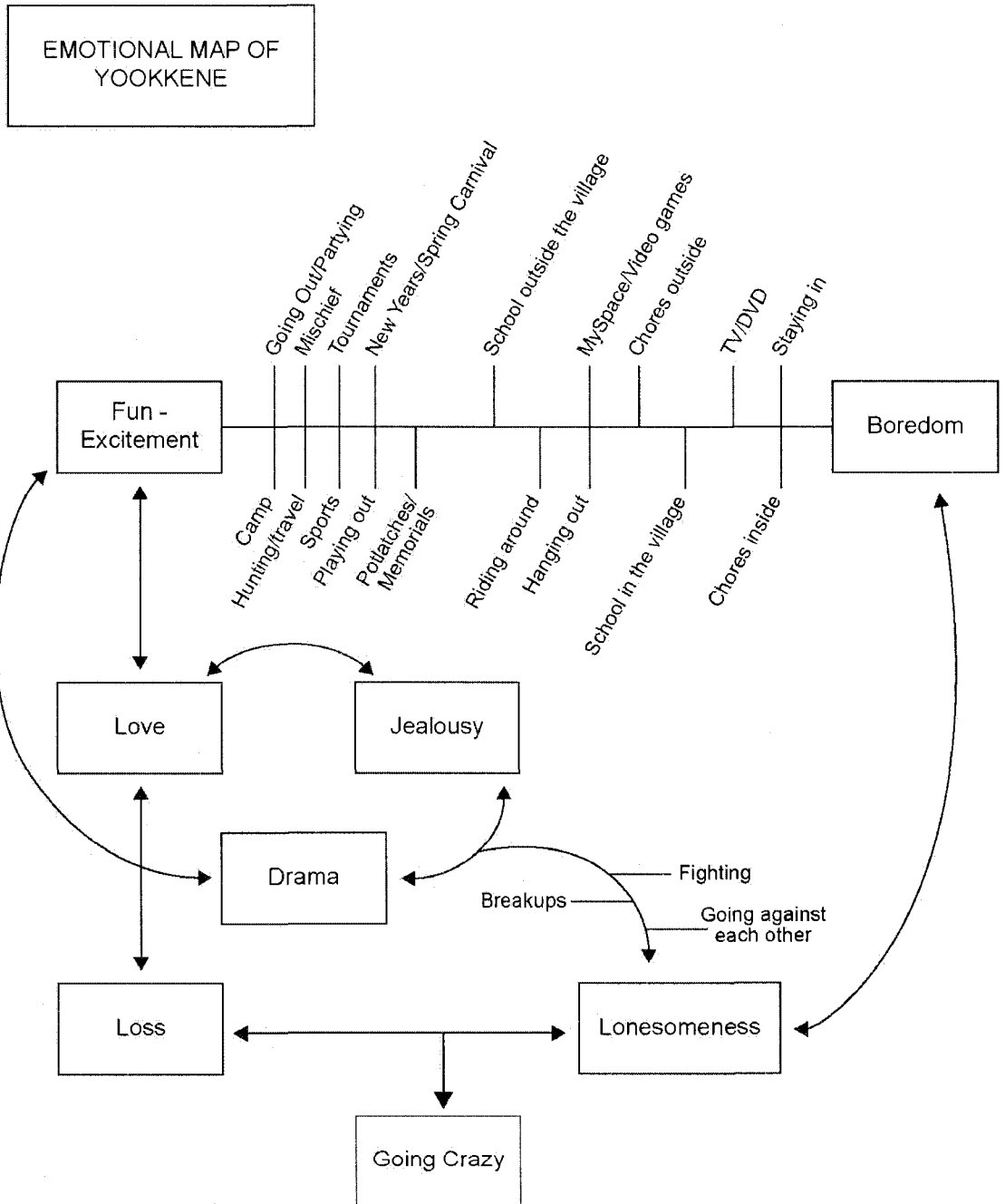


Figure 6: Emotional Map of Yookkene

The boxed terms represent the Athabascan feeling states using the local emotional terminology. The lines connecting the Athabascan feeling states indicate a potential directional association between certain feeling states and certain actions. Boredom in the village is an emotional term used to index not just the way an individual is feeling but indicates an individual in the state of emotional decision-making. A young person who is experiencing boredom will often follow one of two primary emotional pathways. They will either do something to have fun and not be bored, or their boredom may increase to lonesomeness which in turn could drive them to go crazy. Similarly a young person that is having fun may feel more loved but this could then lead to jealousy or drama and jealousy and drama can lead to loss or lonesomeness. The emotional map also shows how certain emotional experiences such as loss can cause a young person to go crazy but it does not necessarily have to, particularly if the loss leads to actions such as memorials, or engagement in new or stronger relationships, which make the experiencing individual feel loved. If an individual experiences a loss and does not engage in activities or relations that make them feel loved they have greater potential for lonesomeness and going crazy. This emotional map of the village supports the argument made by Kral (1994) that suicide may more be the product of the decision-making strategies present within a group than it is the outcome of internal, psychological or neurological disorder.

Youth in the village today survive by learning how to most effectively navigate the emotional landscape. Youth must learn how to engage in strategic emotional decision-making on a daily basis. The emotional decision-making of youth in the village is socially constructed. Young people make emotional decisions as part of a social group. Sometimes the decisions are made as part of a relationship dyad, such as those made by best girlfriends and by boyfriends and girlfriends or sometimes they are made as part of a peer group such as those you would play-out with or be mischief with, and sometimes they are made as part of a family group. Emotions among Athabascans are not thought to originate independently within individuals. An individual's feeling-state is the result of the person's social interactions or current social status in the group. This is reflected in the emotional map of youth in the village. All of the primary feeling-states – boredom,

fun, love, jealousy, drama, loss, and lonesomeness – come from an individual’s assessment of their social status or from disruptions to an individual’s social relationships. Mapping out the emotion schemas also illustrates the critical points in this decision-making process where intervention might be possible not just relative to certain behaviors but also with respect to those nascent motivations that could lead to certain behaviors.

Young people growing up in the village have had to adapt new strategies for surviving not only a new economic base, but a new emotional one as well. The contemporary Athabascan emotional world is mapped out onto the village. The emotion schemas of youth in *Yookkene* illustrate the paths young people take through this world. These pathways were not always so limited and did not tend to end as abruptly. Rather in an indigenous emotional economy the world extended far beyond the limits of any human reckoning; and the relationships one could have in this world were virtually unlimited. The changes to the aboriginal economy had tremendous impact on the indigenous emotional experience.

6.2 Indigenous Emotional Economies

Today the emotional lives of youth in the village are charted through village social group organization, but how were the emotional lives of Athabascans mapped prior to this social change? Just how “indigenous” are Athabascan emotional economies? The interviews I conducted with elders for this study suggest the aboriginal origins of the contemporary Athabascan emotional economy. Hazel Kingfisher’s narrative presented in Chapter 1 demonstrated how lonesomeness and loss were survived through the subsistence life. When loss would occur in a family it was not uncommon for the family to move away from the place immediately and not return to that same place again. This may have served as an aboriginal therapy to combat such things as depression and post-traumatic stress. The land is full of symbolic markers for Athabascans. Any boat trip on the Yukon will elicit stories along the way inspired by rock formations, smaller side sloughs or bends on the river course, groves of certain kind of trees or berry patches. The stories will often be about something amazing or scary or funny or sad that happened to

someone at that place. In this way emotions are quite literally “taken out” on the land. The Athabaskan world is in this way emotionally charted and navigated. The stories told by elders who grew up in Yookkene provide other insights into the rules and boundaries of the aboriginal emotional world.

Abraham Madros was one of the first elders I met when I arrived in *Yookkene*. Abraham is well known along the Yukon as one of the traditional leaders of the region. Abraham grew up out at camp and continued to base his life and livelihood around subsistence pursuits even as he settled in the village to raise his family. Abraham was 85 when I interviewed him for the project to learn about what it was like for him growing up.

SMR: So when you were growing up, what other kinds of things did you do to help your parents?

Abraham Loon: You had to pack water from the bank. That’s the first thing you have to do right after school, you know. Work at wood or go pack water. Or even at lunch hour you do a little something. So, we were pretty busy. We had no chance to play around or anything. We were just trying to survive.

M: Did they talk to you about things, your parents?

R: Oh they do, yeah. They even used to make fire in the hall and sometimes at night there was no radio or nothing when I was a little kid, you know. So they make a fire in the hall and they take turns talking about the old times. Some of it is terrible; you don’t want to hear it. When they start talking about starvation that’s when they cried. They seen that, you know, and don’t like to talk about that too much, you know.

Like always talking about how to hunt and stuff like that, you know, how to shoot the animals, know where you are hitting and stuff like that, so it was good. We picked that up pretty fast.

So, they did a lot of things for us. They took us out in the woods and we could survive. If you kicked these kids out right now they wouldn’t know what to do the first thing. They don’t know what to do. We used to camp up like this.

There is no tarp like we have right now. Plastic tarp? No. We have camps if we are lucky, so it was really terrible. I hate to go back to that time, but we are gradually going back to that time, you know that?

And trapping is really hard too if you are alone. I've trapped down there 40 miles by myself. And when it snowed like this, you know, I come out of the house and no track of anything. I'm the only one that is going to make tracks. And I snowshoe seven miles up the river day before I leave, you know. Because I know I couldn't make it without a little trail for the dogs. But I had strong dogs and I wasn't afraid of it because I knew I could handle it. I was young. I was strong.

SMR: You did that alone or did you take your kids with you?

Abraham: My kids were too small then. Yeah, they were too small. They didn't go out. They don't even know my camp. They went to school. They know where my camp used to be, but they don't even know the country. They've never been around there where I used to trap. I talk about it. If they were interested, they would ask me. I was thinking -- I never tried to force anyone to do this and that unless they want to. I leave it up to them all the time. Just like me; I'm pretty much a self-determined person. Even sometimes I never listened to my dad, but I should have, you know. I make mistakes. But every mistake teaches you another lesson; that's all it is.

SMR: Can you give me an example of that? Can you tell me something that your dad would tell you and that you didn't listen to, that you did anyway and then had to learn from that?

Abraham: Oh there are so many of them!

SMR: Maybe you could just try telling me one?

Abraham: Yeah, well you know he always told me before I leave he says when you walk on the ice in the lake, he says you've got to be careful. If you think that ice cannot hold you up, don't get up there don't get on it. You can always

go along the edge of the willows on land he said. No matter how tough it is snowshoeing, it was a safe place to go.

When you are alone, you have to be very extra careful at that. So, where I used to track there were a lot of big lakes and stuff like that. I never go across the lake; no. I go around, around the beach. So I'm careful that way.

There are times I make mistakes where I take the wrong road or something. But I get out of it some way. You've got to use a lot of common sense when you are out there. You've got to figure everything out for yourself, even what your daddy never told you. When it comes up, you have to figure it out yourself. Many times I think it was fun, so now that I start to think about it, it was fun. Especially handling dogs because I had good dogs, I had strong dogs up there. I could turn...And I was the only man in *Yookkene* when I build a house out there. I would unhook my nine dogs and they would come back there to where they are tied up. Every one of them would get to their boxes. So I walk back there and I just chain them up. They got that training from me being alone down there. So down there when I come back, I just turn them all loose, you know. They go back to where they're tied. Gosh that was good. I had good dogs like that except that my leader, I don't know why he wanted to run away from me all the time. Because he's the captain of the team I guess.

Abraham's experiences demonstrate the aboriginal relationship between work and emotion. Many of the elders such as Hazel and Abraham would often say how there was never any time when they were growing up to be bored or lonesome. Strong emotions cause people to "self-center" and this can be adaptive such as when Abraham was forced to make life and death decisions on his own out on the land and describes this experience using the emotional index "fun." Strong emotions also have the potential to be maladaptive such as when the experience of loss, boredom and lonesomeness causes people to become preoccupied with their "emotion work" and distracts them from the work that contributes to the social group. Elders will often describe how avoiding things

that can cause strong feelings in the village can contribute to the collective survival of the group.

For example, Francis Jaeger is an elder in his mid-60s who was raised by his grandparents in *Yookkene* in a traditional subsistence way of life. His interviews include richly detailed descriptions of the aboriginal relationship between humans and animals and shows how this relationship was mapped out in the emotional landscape of Athabascan people.

SMR: Did your grandparents used to tell that there were restrictions on things; like that things that women couldn't catch or do?

Francis: Yes, yes. You are not supposed to... Like a man comes home and he got lucky that day. The woman could take that knife or whatever and wash it, put it away, get it ready and put it away and not leave it out and stuff like that. But like if my grandparents-- they used to look at them as a person coming in the house by their boots. If there was blood on there or anywhere near, then they had to stand right there. The woman would get the cardboard or whatever they can, so no blood gets off on the floor.

And there are certain animals like the bear, the wolves, the wolverines-- men have to have party for those animals that women are not supposed to touch or go close to. They are making the dinner, but then while they are making the dinner the men would come in and gather around and eat. The women were not allowed. Only the woman of the house-- that's all would stay you know to serve the men or whatever.

So you know there is respectable animals; like the bear, wolverine, wolves— *respectable*, you know. Even us men we've got to respect those animals. It's the boss. It's like wolverine we call it, *doyonh*, and in our language that means boss. It's like our regional corporation that's why they call it the *Doyon*.

SMR: Do people still do that? Do they still have parties when they catch those animals these days?

Francis: Oh yeah we still do that. Whoever gets lucky, you know. Or if they are trapping or if they run into an animal while they are out, they get it, you know. And they are supposed to have a little dinner or a little party. Even if it's just coffee and cakes, or strips or whatever, you know. Whatever the person can afford he supposed to have to.

And like the bear and the wolverine, especially the wolverine, goddamnit-- When a man is bringing it in, if he is lucky, he starts hollering before he comes to town, "*Doyonh O'yo*" It means the boss is walking into town. He would holler till he gets to wherever or the house.

They bring it in and put paper out there. It's laid upside down, open its mouth and put a rock in there. And the rock is... I don't what, I forgot what the rock symbolizes. That's what we're supposed to do when we get the *doyonh*, wolverine. That's been going on ever since I can remember.

One time me and my grandpa, he had.... Up at four mile, we had fish camp up there in the smoke house, and it was about this time of the year I guess. Wolverines were coming down raising hell with our fish, our winter fish. So my grandpa said he was going to set a trap for that damn thing. He caught the son-of-a-gun, and this wolverine broke the toggle line and he took off with the trap on his foot.

He came down and he got me out of school and gave me my snowshoes. He said we would follow it. Here take this .22. You're going to follow it. I walked four miles over the hill down to the valley, across the valley, up Seven Mile hill and then down the other side before I caught up to that wolverine. And it was just snarling and snarling. And it just sent chills up your spine. I tried twice to shoot it. Just after I got it, here comes my grandpa, him too in snowshoes. He followed my tracks.

I had to pack it all the way home. I had to because I was the one that shot it. Whatever game you got, you had to take the lead. If he shot it, then he would probably have to take it on or whatever. If he got tired, then I could take over

with his consent, type thing. Even moose the same way. Like we'll go out moose hunting or bear hunting.

Bear is another one I want to tell you about. Respected animal. My first one was with my grandpa. We were coming up from our spring camp. We got across the Yukon and we were coming up down there about 16 miles. We looked way up that way and grandpa... See we couldn't point. We couldn't go like this or like that [*Francis points his index finger at certain objects*] though because he used to say that the animal will see you pointing. You shouldn't point. When someone points at you, *you feel it*, don't you? He says the animals are that way too, especially bear. All animals are that way.

I remember we left the caravan of boats there with the dogs and we took off, me and him. We started sneaking off after this bear. We had the advantage. There was a north wind blowing, so we were downwind from the bear. A big black bear! He shot, he stood up and looked. By that time my grandpa shot again and he fell down. And I started running up. *K'o!* And he said No! No! No! Stop. Well I didn't have no gun, I was excited too because he shot it, you know? He said get those sticks. "No, *k'ode!* He said get wood and we prod it and prod it to see if he moves.

Because the bear, the black bear, is the most dangerous and most vicious animal. That's why my [other] grandpa, he got torn up. He went out in the spring time looking for bear-- the bear got him though. But he survived, survived for a lot of years after that. But anyway about this bear. It was the first time that I know we have to respect it. Finally he start by getting that long stick, as long as he could find and he pushed the bear with it while he had his gun pointing; pushing. He was finally convinced that he was dead. I think grandpa was mainly concerned about me you know being that I was there with him. He probably wouldn't care about himself you know, but I was there and there was two of us. Two against that black bear if it ever got up. We wouldn't be no match for it. But anyway he killed it.

We skinned it and he put a stick in the ground. He put the head on there; poked its eyeballs and pointed it to the sunrise. He said “*K’o*, you always have to do this.” He said my grandchild, you must always got to do this every time you kill a bear, a black bear. You put it on a stick and you point its head, poke its eyes and point its head going to the sunrise, you know in the springtime the snow will come up on the north side. And you’re supposed to throw away everything, the guts, supposed to throw it away. The skin we usually save, but like the guts and stuff if it is accessible to the water, we’re supposed to throw all the guts. And if we’re not going to save the skin we do same thing with that. But if it happen to be the first time out of the den and this bear had long winter hair, we save the skin and we brought it up with us. Just the head would be there, that’s all, on that stick. That’s where I learned you know that little deal that we do, we respect that animal. Any kind of game that we brought home.

Francis uses emotional terms to describe the relationship between humans and animals out on the land. Animals are “respectable” and must be treated as such all the time. This includes not only proper treatment of their remains, but also includes proper interactions with them in daily social life as well. Francis states that animals “feel things” just as humans do. Anna Kingfisher, an elder matron in *Yookkene*, shared this story that demonstrates this point.

SMR: Did you do that [puberty seclusion] with your girls after they had their first menstruation?

FR: Uh-huh. The reason they do that is so that men’s don’t get bad luck. We got one silly girl, she’s kind of goofy. Her sister is so wise. The two oldest ones. And he [their father] was getting bears in the den all the time-- two, three sometimes. And when both have period together almost, but two days apart, that’s all-- and so I talk to them. I really, you know, sit down and talk to them-- what grandma used to say, you know, what other people used to say, especially the bear meat. And the one just kind of smiled, you know, look around and didn’t pay much attention-- so I didn’t trust her, but I really talk to them.

So next year, he didn't got no bear. Pretty soon, next year-- then fourteen years and then he got another one. But then he finally found one in the fall, a little one. And in our story, grandpa used to tell that story about that Lynx and Bear, when they were human, they talk with each others and-- Bear ask Lynx, "what would you do if they do you wrong?" And he said, I never look back. That means that guy wouldn't catch him no more. And he tell him, how about you? And the Bear said—"I'll look back when the man get gray hair." And that's exactly what happened-- he started get gray hair and he started catching them and find them again, or kill them. So just really a lot of big belief. You don't step over men's -- their feet or anything, or their belonging.

And my -- that silly girl used to say, how come they treat girls so mean and they just precious to their boys? I said that's not the reason. You're a girl and if there's a boy, that's a big different. How much more hunting you would do beside that boy? And that's the reason. They're the provider.

The human-animal relationship among Athabascans was not just an "economic" one, it was emotional as well. The human-animal relationship contributed not only to the physical health of aboriginal peoples but to the mental health of these groups as well. Individuals in the indigenous economy were expected to behave in certain ways and follow specific rules for living that would ensure the maintenance of good feelings between the people and the animals. If an individual violated a behavioral or emotional rule they could lose their relationship with the offended animal. Animals get angry, sad and lonesome and are motivated into action by their feelings just as their human counterparts may be. If the animals are sad or lonesome they may not come to the people or if they are "angry" they may act out violently against humans. In an emotional economy there were times when animals acted so that humans did not have to. Athabaskan people knew that if they behaved badly or wrongly they may risk their luck, and their relationships with the animals. The stories from elders show how Athabaskan people, long ago, would restrain or control their behavior for fear of risking or losing their relationships with the animals. A husband may control his anger or jealousy at his

wife because he fears that a wrong action such as abandonment or abuse would result in his diminished capacity as a good hunter out on the land, and he would be unable to support himself alone in this way.

Northern Athabaskan indigenous economies are fundamentally emotional economies. The basis of the indigenous economies was the human-animal relationship. Northern Athabascans based their subsistence complex around hunting large land mammals such as moose, caribou and “big animal” and smaller land animals including birds, beavers and porcupine, fishing the several species of salmon in the Yukon, and gathering wild plants and berries. They would do this alternating on a seasonal round between distance and intensification within these relationships (Nelson 1986; Ridington 1990). Spring through fall was the time for intensification of human-animal relationships. Winter was a time of distance and intensification of human relationships. The feeling world of Athabascans required the maintenance of good relationships. The strict gender taboos among Athabascans that many other researchers have also observed (e.g. Brody 1982; Helm 1994; Honigmann 1949; Nelson 1983, 1986; Osgood 1937, 1958; VanStone 1974), are about maintaining these good relationships. One of the measures of “goodness” of these relationships is if the individual has luck.

Many of the behavioral restrictions or taboos in everyday life among Athabascans are about preserving “good luck.” For example, a man must always sleep in a position so that no woman can walk behind his head, and a woman must always take care to not step over a man’s hunting implements, and must never eat the meat of a bear, and when menstruating must isolate herself from the family by eating and sleeping apart and not touching skins or meat at this time (McKenna 1959: 166-167). A boy must never allow a girl to grasp him by the wrist and one must never lie along the length of the trail. If one should ever come upon a wolverine they must immediately kill it so as not to lose one of their own relatives and so on. Should an individual break these rules of right behavior they risk their luck or the luck of other family members.

Richard Nelson (1983: 26-27) argued that luck is the primary “capital” in an Athabaskan subsistence economy. Those with good luck are generally wealthier than

those who may not experience as much luck when they out on the land. Luck is managed within the social group by imposing controls on individual behavior in the attempt to keep the animals *happy* and/or to prevent them from becoming *angry*. Luck, then, is also a measure of the emotional status of the relationships that individuals have and maintain in their lives. If an individual is not having luck on the land it might be because they have done something to disrupt the relationships on which they depend for survival. These relationships include those with other individuals, typically parents and spouses, or those with the spirits and with the animals. An individual can disrupt these relationships by breaking the relationship rules guiding appropriate behavior within these. When relationship rules are broken in one context there is often redress for these actions in another.

Oral traditions recorded during the early half of the 20th century from Athabaskan elders provide further insights into the ways the emotional world was mapped out among these groups prior to the settlement and social changes that have taken place since contact. Oral traditions are a fundamental part of the ethnohistorical record for traditionally non-literate human groups. Oral traditions can provide critical insights into the origins and meaning of contemporary cultural beliefs and practices. Native oral traditions have been shown to have empirical veracity strong enough to support claims to the ancient past in courts of law (Boxberger and Rasmus 2000); as well as supporting and sustaining the moral and spiritual structures of entire societies (Morrow and Schneider 1995). Here the oral traditions provide information on the role of emotion in aboriginal life.

Early ethnographic works by Cornelius Osgood (1933, 1937, 1958, 1959) and Robert Mckennan (1959) provide some of the most detailed versions of oral traditions common throughout the Interior of Alaska collected in the first part of the 20th century. Contemporary oral traditions told by Catherine Attla (1989, 1990) provide additional data about aboriginal feeling-states and emotional management.

When elder Athabascans talk about their relationships they often do so using terms such as power, respect and luck. One can see through these stories that the

relationship is being described and evaluated by interactions with animals and that it is done so in emotional terms. Power, respect and luck are indexes of emotions just as other terms such as love, mischief and fun are indexes.

The story of the *Woman and the Ducks*, told by Seldovia Fitka (Osgood 1937: 186-186), illustrates how relationships are managed within the indigenous emotional economy.

The Woman and the Ducks

Once there was a rich man who had one daughter. Many men wanted to marry her but her father would not let them. One day a rich man came and married the girl, and took her back to his country, which was across the bay. Every night he left her and did not return until the next morning. During the night time he went to the country of his wife's people, and on each visit he killed one person when he left. In a year they were all dead. From each one that he killed he took out the viscera and hung the bodies up to dry. While he was on these nightly ventures, he employed two women from his own country to watch his wife so that she didn't go out.

But one time one of these women told his wife that her husband danced each night. She persuaded her to lend her clothes and then she covered her hair with grease. She also dirtied her face so that no one would recognize her. Thus disguised she went to her people's country for she wanted to see her family. She climbed on top of the barabara and there she saw her husband dancing inside. Hanging up around the walls were the dried skins of her father, her mother and her brother. Her husband had fastened strings to the arms and legs to make them dance. After seeing this she went home and washed her face and laid down on the bed and started to cry.

When her husband came home in the morning he tried to talk to her but she would not answer. At last he asked if she wanted to see her mother. She answered, "Yes." And he said, "I will take you home then." When she was ready he put her in his one-hole kaiak and took her across the bay to her people's country. When they reached the shore he told her to get out. When she had done so he told her, "I will go behind you." As she walked toward the village, she looked for smoke but saw none and then she knew that everyone was dead. She turned back after going half way but her husband was already gone. She sat down and cried. Then she got up and went to her father's home. There she saw that it was a long time since there had been a fire. She looked over all the town but everyone was gone. She came back to her father's house and builds a fire and cooked some meat. There was plenty of food but no people. Every day she walked back and forth through the village and when she was hungry she came home and cooked some food.

Summertime came – the June month. She out to take a walk alone the little creek in the flat and when she saw a mallard duck go with young she followed

behind them. After a little way, they came to a waterfall and the ducklings could not swim up so she caught them all and took them home. She kept them there and put soft food in a wooden plate and the ducks came and ate.

One evening when she was lonesome, she started to dance. As she danced the mallards lifted their wings and started to jump, to dance around and around the fire. After that, she did not let the ducklings go out because she was afraid that she might lose them. Every evening when she was lonesome she started to sing. Then the mallards began to dance. They had become full grown. One evening when they lifted their wings to dance, small hands grew out from under their wings. The next day the woman made small bows and arrows and she taught the ducks how to use them. They started to play and shoot at sticks at the opposite end of the barabara. At first they missed the sticks but afterwards they learned to hit them.

One day when the woman was out walking, she saw a one-hole kaiak. She called to the man in it to come ashore and told him to come to her barabara. Then she gave him plenty of good to eat and said, "I'll show you I have some dancing mallards." She started to sing and the mallards began to dance and play with their bows and arrows. The man had never seen such a thing. She told him to bring all the people from her husband's country and she would show them her wonderful babies.

The next day at noontime she saw many big skin boats and many kaiaks coming. Everybody from her husband's country was on the way to see her babies. She ran back to the village and in every barabara she built a fire and in each fire she put rocks to get hot. Then when they were heated she put them in every sweat house. Finally she filled a seal belly full of old oil. When the people from her husband's country arrived, she served food in every barabara. She fed them very well. Then when they wanted to see the ducks she said she would show her babies to them after everyone had taken a sweat bath. So everyone went in to the bath houses and she closed the doors behind them. Then the mallards took the old seal oil and dropped some from the roof of the bath house on to the hot rocks. This made a black smoke. The mallards poured the oil on the hot rocks of all ten bath houses and the people were all killed before they saw the mallards dance.

Then the mallards went back to the creek and the woman followed them. There they met the old mother mallard coming down to the creek and she said, "A man killed your family – mallards killed all his family- that makes even." Then the woman went off and lived with the ducks.

This story includes references to certain aboriginal feeling-states such as love, loss, jealousy and lonesomeness that remain an important part of the contemporary emotional world of Athabascans. This story is fundamentally about husband and wife relationships. The husband in this story behaves very badly by keeping his wife from her

family of birth and killing all her relatives to prevent her from seeing them again. One could suppose that the husband's actions were motivated by his jealousy for his wife's love. When the wife discovers her husband's betrayal she is left alone in her relative's village now emptied of its people. She lives alone and in her lonesome feeling-state one day is motivated to dance. Dancing in the aboriginal way was often an ecstatic exercise. One elder interviewed for this project said that when people use to dance in the old days they would almost "become like crazy." The wife's dance leads a group of mallards to dance along with her. This creates a new relationship between the wife and the group of mallards. The wife becomes part of the mallard's social group. When the husband's kin group visits the wife to witness the dancing mallards they are all trapped and killed by the mallard group. The last line: "A man killed your family – mallards killed all his family – that makes even" demonstrates how the aboriginal emotional world was mapped onto the land and included the social interactions that humans had with each other and with the other occupants of the landscape.

Another example of how individuals interacted within an indigenous emotional economy can be seen in the story about *The First Sea Otter* as told by Seldovia Fitka in Osgood's (1937: 185) ethnography of the Tanaina Athabascans.

The First Sea Otter

A man married a chief's daughter. Then he wanted other women, so during low tide he put his wife out on a rock and left her. The tide came in and hit her feet and she sang a song, low and plaintive. Then the tide came up to her knees and the chief's daughter sang another song. When the water hit her waist she sang a third song, and another when the water reached her chest. When the water got to her mouth she sang the last and saddest song and sank into the water to become the first sea otter.

Several months later, in June, the sea otter recognized her husband's brother in his kaiak and went to him and asked, "Where is my husband?" The brother told her that he was hunting close to shore, so she went to her husband's boat, and said to him, "You tried to kill me, but I am going to kill you this time." The sea otter went under water and bit a hole in the skin of the kaiak, so that her husband started to sink. His brother came to try to rescue him, but the wife said, "Don't pick up my husband or I'll tear your kaiak too." When the husband tried to swim, the wife sea otter would bite him, and then she killed him. And that makes even. The sea otter went to some other country and was never seen again.

This story is also about husband and wife interactions and in this story it is again the wrong behavior of the husband that disrupts the relationship, and the emotional actions of the animal-wife that right the world. The husband in this story abandons his wife for other women. The wife, feeling not loved and experiencing loss, is motivated to sing. As the wife is quite literally drowned by her feelings, her last and saddest song transforms her into an otter. The animal-wife then returns to take revenge on her husband for his bad behavior. Both this story and the story about the woman and the mallards demonstrate the ways that the human-animal relationship contributed to the mental health of the social group. The husband-wife relationship was the basic unit of the aboriginal social and economic structure of society. This relationship was fundamental to the survival of the social group. It was very important that this relationship be maintained and function with minimal disruption. Mating relationships are never without their potential for discord and disruption, and every society must develop ways of managing these relationships. For Athabascans these relationships were managed as part of the indigenous emotional economy. The indigenous emotional economy included external controls on behavior through beliefs regarding the interconnections of the emotion schemas of humans and animals.

Animals have always had the potential to both help and harm humans. Humans, in turn, have long struggled with trying to figure out the ways of the animals so that they might tip these scales and reap more benefit and less harm from these relationships. Since animals inhabit their own world now, but were once human, there can be some amount of overlap between human and animal behavioral traits such that if humans act a certain way they are sure to be “understood” by the animals. This understanding is “proved” through the concept of luck and the opposite experience of misfortune. Men with good luck are those with good relationships. Men who experience misfortune are those that do not behave well in their relationships. Men, women and animals can all behave badly in relationships by being jealous, unfaithful or injurious, and the outcome is usually that one or all will not survive. Survival in an indigenous emotional economy also meant surviving feelings.

This was not always easy to do with characters like Raven around. Raven was the original maker of mischief. Chiasana Joe describes Raven in this way.

Raven was very wise. Almost as wise as *Tsa-o-sha*. Unlike *Tsa-o-sha* he was not always doing good. He was an awful liar. He would tell a man that he was his father's uncle. In this way he would make friends with him. Then he would kill the man and eat him. No one knows how old Raven is, nor where he came from. Tsa'o'sha grew old and died. No one knows what became of Raven. (McKenna 1959: 189-190).

In the Alaskan Athabascan oral tradition, Raven is always getting into trouble by being lazy, libidinous, impetuous, jealous, spiteful, and vain (Atlla 1989; McKenna 1958; Osgood 1937). Raven embodies all things that are typically attributed to the children or youth in a social group or those without "sense" yet. Raven will often transform himself into a child; something no other animal character will do. Raven's actions are often described by adults or elders as "mischievous," and "mischief" today is the local idiom used within many Alaska Native groups to describe children and youth that engage in certain types of behaviors that are reminiscent of Raven. Raven's mischief is not all bad, just as the mischief of children in the villages is also not always bad. Raven served as a model of misbehavior that could have "good" and even miraculous outcome.

For example in the ubiquitous story of Raven stealing the sun and moon (e.g. Bouchard and Kennedy 2002), it is really the bad behavior and emotional decision-making of the girl in the story that allow him to accomplish this goal. Chiasana Joe's (McKenna 1959: 190-191) telling of *Raven Procures the Sun and Moon* illustrates this point.

It used to be that an old man kept the sun and the moon. He lived far away with his daughter. Outside, all the world was dark. Many Indians had tried to go to his camp and bring back the sun and the moon in order that they might have light, but none had ever succeeded.

Raven said, "I can get the sun and the moon."

All the others who had tried and failed insisted that he would not be able to do it.

Raven said, "I will show you."

He started up the long hill that led to the camp where the old man lived with his daughter. Along the trail he placed a series of deadfalls. He came to the

spring by the man's camp. He changed himself into a spruce needle and dropped into the spring.

The girl was of high birth and was used to having her own way. She said to her father, "I am thirsty. Go get me a drink of water."

When the old man would not do it, the girl herself went down to the spring. She dipped out some water. In it was a spruce needle. She poured back the water and dipped out some more; still she had the spruce needle. After trying several times to get clear water she got angry and drank the water, spruce needle and all.

The next day she was pregnant and began to swell. In two or three days she gave birth to a boy. In a few days he was half grown. One day he asked his mother for the moon as a plaything. She did not want to give it to him, but when he began to cry she gave in. Then he asked for the sun and got that. He was playing with both of them on the floor.

The old man said, "Be careful. That little boy may be Raven and may fly away."

To prevent this the old man blocked up the smoke hole in the cabin. Though he did not know it, he left one little space open. The little boy put the sun and the moon together. Suddenly he jumped up, and turning into Raven, flew for the opening with the sun and the moon under his arm. When he reached the opening he made it larger and flew out saying, "Caw, caw, caw."

He raced along the trail leading down the hill. The old man ran after him but was caught in the deadfall which Raven had placed in the trail.

Raven arrived at his camp with the sun and the moon under his arm. He said, "Here is the sun and the moon."

At that time, the sky was very low. All the Indians tried to stick the sun and moon in the sky, but they could not do it. They would throw them up against the sky, only to have them fall back again.

Raven said, "Let me show you."

He took the sun and the moon and put pitch on their backs. Then he threw them up against the sky and they stuck there. He took a long stick and cut a path through the sky for the sun and moon. Then with his stick he moved them over this trail, and that is the way they move today.

Raven has a special relationship with humans and with the other animals. Raven was allowed to be mischief because everyone knew that he would have his way anyway, as like a child, and that something good might come of it, as also like a child's behavior.

Raven though was not always allowed his way. In *Raven Pretends Death* (McKenna 1958: 194-195), the human character warns everyone to not trust a man that has recently wandered into the camp and feigned death for it might be Raven in disguise. She proceeds to burn the man's body in the fire and Raven flies away. This was an

example of the strength of the woman's character and the wisdom of her decision-making.

Raven knows that humans are particularly susceptible to their emotions and he will constantly test their ability to survive them. In *Raven Creates Women*, Raven tempts men to go to the land of the flying vaginas so that they all might "have a good time." The men are afraid of the rough passage on the river and Raven intervenes on their fear and goes himself. He brings back a sack full of vaginas and proceeds to affix them onto the most attractive of the male lot before then ripping them free to make those men the "first women." In this story it is men's fear that has made them women (McKenna 1959: 191-192).

Raven demonstrates that there is a certain amount of cunning and risk-taking needed to gain status and prestige in the social world. Raven's actions are often contrary to the rules for survival and this is shown as he sometimes only narrowly escapes or does not escape death from his behaviors. Other times though Raven succeeds in his goals despite the ways he went about achieving them and he gains status and power among the people. In Athabascan culture, there were the rules for survival and then there were the conditions for status and power. To survive one must adhere closely to the rules for living but to gain status, wealth and power in this life, one must occasionally take risks, be cunning, follow one's lust, and own individual desires with intensity.

The intensity of indigenous emotion in the productive relationships that contribute to status, power and success for individuals required strict management in everyday life for group survival. There cannot be a bunch of Ravens in a family or kin group for that lineage to continue on. At the same time there need to be some allowances made for impulsivity and creativity as these allow for adaptation and innovation in any society.

The emotional basis of the Athabascan relationship between humans and animals can still be seen in the drawings of children in *Yookkene* that participated in a logo contest for this study (Fig. 13). The children were asked to draw a picture of something that would represent "health" or "mental health" or "wellness" for their community. Many of the children needed more prompts, so I added "happiness" and "fun" and "good

times” as ways of describing what “health” would look like in the village. Many of the young people in response to these prompts drew images of animals or images of hunting and fishing.

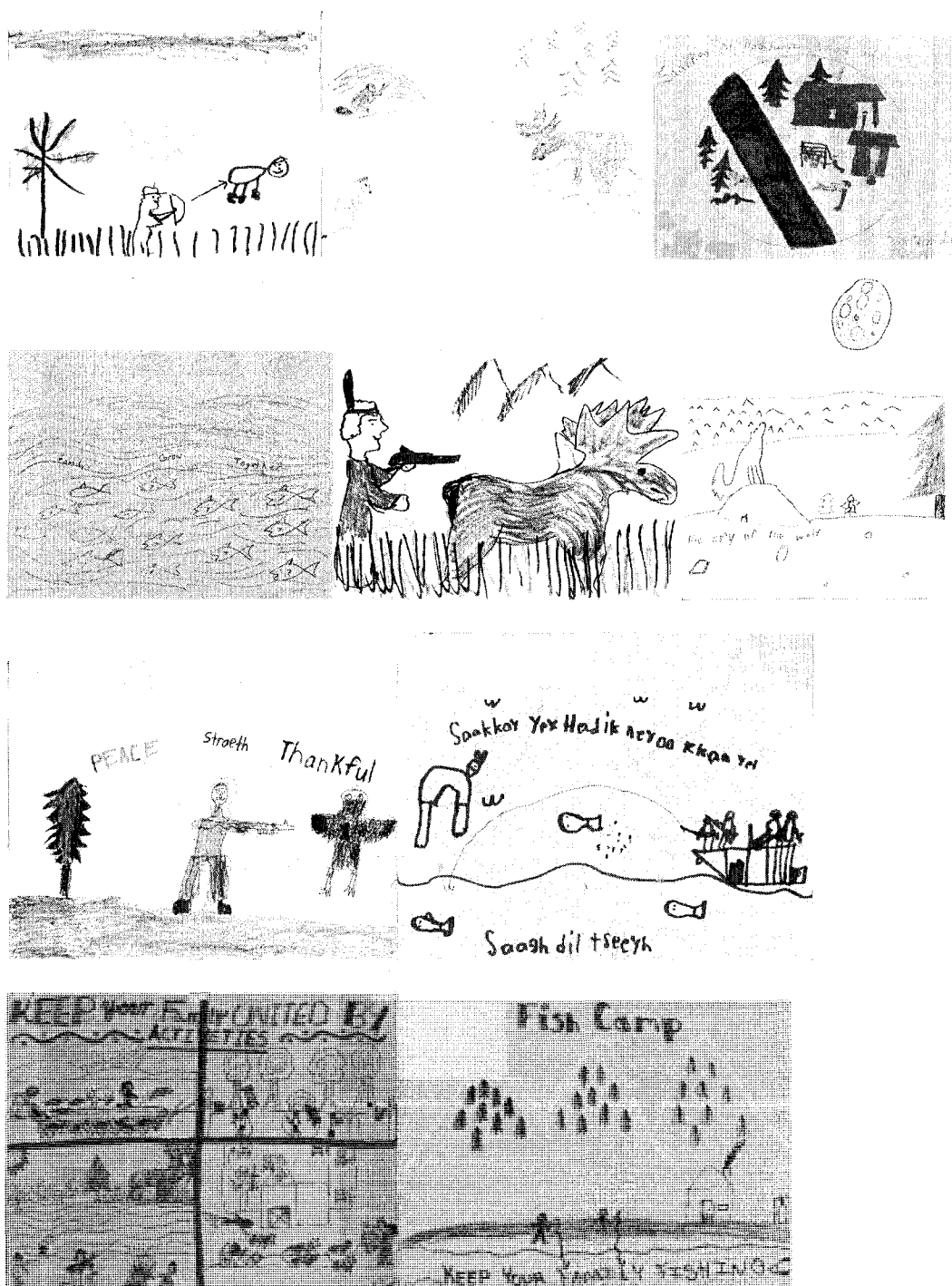


Figure 7: Logo Entries for the Children's Mental Health Research Contest

Indigenous concepts of mental health in *Yookkene* are based on the productive nature and variable types of relationships that an individual does have or could have in the social group. These relationships once more completely included those between people, spirits, animals and the land (Brody 2001). Today, though, the boundaries of the aboriginal feeling world are socially constructed within the village. This change to the indigenous emotional economy has had tremendous impacts on the social life of Athabascans. Animals are no longer part of the social world of Athabascans in the same way. Interactions with the animals remain important for economic and cultural reasons but lack the intensity to motivate behavior, thought and feeling in the same way.

6.3 Social Change and Survival

We can now return to the question of the changing emotional economy that was described in Chapter 1, by considering the effects this change has had on the survival strategies of Athabascans growing up in the village today.

The narratives from elders in *Yookkene* would often focus on the process of social change they have witnessed within their own lifetimes. Eliza Sparrow is an elder in *Yookkene* who was among the last of the families to continue taking their children out to the seasonal camps for extended periods of time. Eliza, today, sees a connection between the end of the subsistence camp life and the rise of certain social problems among the youth in the village.

SMR: And you saw that that [suicide] became a problem with young people?

Eliza Sparrow: Yeah, because, you know, they just start not going to camps and stuff-- like how we did long time ago because that's who we are, that's how we grew up. All these old stories handed down to us, we were living it in my time, you know. Just living off the land. And now, see, all our kids -- our kids, we went to camp with them every summer with our kids, but I hope all the other family did, too- but just very few I think. And then in winter camps, we have this -- one winter camp, way over 30 miles, we brought all our kids out there. Not only our kids, we brought other people's that are unfortunately without a father, so we bring them, too. And then beaver trapping, my husband would

bring other – other boys to beaver trapping because he taught all our boys how to trap furs in the falltime, like how we did long time ago.

Our youngest son, he was in high school and he'd get out at 4:00 o'clock and he had a little snow machine, so he'd just take off and dress up and run to his trapline. And one time he caught five lynx. He brought home five lynx. Yeah.

And then he finished high school and then he got into Marines and he was in Marines for four years. And he taught all our boys how to trap furs in the fall and then how to trap beaver in the wintertime. And our kids, all our girls, we taught them to fish, set nets and check nets and cut fish. And all the working on meat and stuff, like maybe rabbits or stuff, how to gut -- how to skin them and gut them. And cutting up the beaver or -- you know, lot of our young people, they probably pluck goose and stuff, but the hardest part I see young kids don't do is actually cutting up the goose or something if they're going to cook it like for soups. But lot of times if we're gathering somewhere or something, they'll say-- I don't know how to cut a goose, I don't know how to cut a rabbit and, you know, stuff like that. I just feel sorry for them. Cause how we taught our kids, is right there and we'd show them. They learn to cut fish. And my daughter -- we were all in camp before she went to work in [town]. I was cutting fish and, you know, every summer I have to always get used to it again. And I see her cutting fish and she's making them kind of big. Oh, you're cutting -- I tell her you're making them kind of big and then here she's just doing right. It's drying just right. And here mine was too little. (*Laughing*) So right there, I have to praise her. I say-- oh, yeah, remember other day I told you I think you're cutting your slice too big? Now I have to tell you, I have to admit, I was wrong and mine is too small. Mine's is dry. Okay, mom, great. Thank you for telling me that. Cause I'm really always telling them how to do things, how to do things, and finally, you know, yeah, they're teaching me again. So they were feeling proud in camp.

Eliza's statement about how her children would feel proud at camp, is further

evidence of the way that the indigenous emotional economy worked to keep people healthy, both physically and mentally long ago. Camp was not just a place to go to do certain things, it was a place where you would go to feel a certain way as well. Going to camp was essential for proper childhood development for Athabascans. Camp taught you all the things you needed to know to survive. You needed not only to acquire the basic skills such as proper knife technique; you needed also to *achieve the right feeling-state* to use these skills effectively.

The aboriginal social process that managed emotion in every day life was based in the relationships that produced the things needed to survive. Survival for Northern Athabascans has always been about the relationships that the people had with the land, the animals and with each other. The first two social processes, those relational attachments between the Athabaskan people and the land and animals have received much greater scholarly attention than the relationships that Athabascans formed with each other through their interactions on the land and with the animals. Survival, even “back then,” was not just based on the maintenance of these “economic” relationships alone. Rather the productive capacity of the human-animal relationship was based on the acquisition of certain skills *and* the achievement of certain feeling-states.

The elders in *Yookkene* all recall spending long periods of time out at subsistence camps. Families would go out together, parents with children and sometimes with grandparents, aunts or uncles and cousins, and spend weeks, sometimes months, alone together. People out at camp were protected from feeling lonesome because of the aboriginal reach of the Athabaskan emotional world. When families went out on the land they did so to resume their equally important and fulfilling relationships with the animals. These relationships were “real” relationships, in that, individuals and animals were emotionally as well as economically invested in them.

When families would go out they would, in many ways, leave certain aspects of their human social relationships behind. The way that elders talk about camp life it can be argued that relationships between family members out on the land were much more strictly managed than they were in the settlements. Survival out on the land necessitated

certain kinds of behavior to keep life going “good.” The human *drama* of every day social life including the jealousies, anger, fears and sadness were minimized on the land. At the same time, the essential relationships of doing subsistence right, which required behaving well to each other and the animals, were maximized. Eliza Sparrow’s story about taking her daughters out to fish camp demonstrates this point. Subsistence activities require the intensification of human and human-animal relationships. Cutting fish out at camp intensifies the mother-daughter relationship but channels the intensity of the emotions (here pride) through the human-animal one. Human social relationships out on the land find a narrower set of expression away from the emotional complexities characteristic of life in the village.

Moving away and leaving people behind was another important strategy for dealing with emotional intensity in aboriginal life (VanStone 1974; Wallis 2002). Sometimes groups would decide to leave an individual or individuals behind who had broken the rules or whose behaviors were associated with misfortune or bad luck by the group (also see Briggs 1970 for a discussion of this type of strategy), and sometimes individuals and family groups would leave on their own if their relationships had gone somehow bad. The threat of being removed from these relationships and from interaction with the social group was an effective way to enforce behavioral and emotional norms.

This physical distancing would allow for an emotional distancing where people may then even begin to feel lonesome for those relationships, and become motivated to resume them once again. Elders in *Yookkene* would talk about how much they would miss the village when they would go to camp for long periods of time. At the same time these elders would also talk about how hard it was to live in the village because there was not as much to do, the adults would drink more often, and fights would eventually erupt between people. In the village, after a while, going to camp was eagerly anticipated as a break from all the drama of village life. After a while in camp, though, people would begin to miss the village and the fun they had there. In this way distancing transforms the experience from *drama* to *fun*. Being out on the land allows individuals to achieve certain feeling-states that they may not be able to within the confines of the social group.

Today distancing is still an important survival strategy in the village but the aboriginal practice has been adapted to fit within the changed social context. For youth in *Yookkene* distancing is mainly accomplished through travel out of the village for sports or for school. Medical appointments are another way that young people get to travel out of the village to “town” and these are often highly anticipated. Getting out of the village, even if it is just for a few hours by snowgo, was generally described as the best way to deal with the problems of everyday life in the village.

Trips (23 years old)

SMR: Any other like major things that you guys as people your age deal with?

Trips: What we would deal with? We deal with a lot of alcohol and drugs and suicides and.

SMR: And what’s here that you can go to if you need to?

Trips: There’s the wilderness, start living up in the woods and doing whatever to take your anger out. Go hunting, trapping, whatnot. I don’t know how to trap yet, but I really want to because it looks like a lot of fun.

SMR: Didn’t you, you said your grandpa took you out and showed you?

Trips: I was young. I was a little boy is when we used to go around. Yeah, it was fun.

Captain (20 years old)

Captain: I knew even at that age when I was like 16, 17 and 18 I knew if I didn’t keep bouncing around from village to village every weekend, this town was just going to bring me down. Eventually it did for a while.

SMR: How did it bring you down?

Captain: Alcohol and drugs and being a young person I have to hang out with older people just to not really escape it, but get away from it and take a break from all the drama. It was mostly alcohol that was the main problem.

Leroy (19 years old)

SMR: What kind of hard times did you guys have growing up?

Leroy: It was during school, I guess. I guess the reason I don't go is just -- I

don't know. I mean, I know what it was, but it was like not the whole issue though of dropping out of school, but I guess it was just -- it was depression, basically. I don't know. I was about 17 when it was really serious, and it was like -- it was -- it was like so hard to actually -- it's like a great emotional breakdown. Everything inside of you is just like a gigantic burden and you have no way of taking care of it, but I don't know. But I don't know, nothing really bothers me recently, though, and when I went off to AmeriCorps, it was like -- it felt really good, because you're like around all these other people. See when you go to AmeriCorps, there's like people come from all over Alaska and all different types of people, and it's great to meet like all these extraordinary people, and you learn a lot, and people like see who you really are and stuff like that.

These passages demonstrate the critical importance of getting out of the village, particularly when there is drama or conflict. Getting out of the village is not always possible, especially for the youth who do not have the means for travel. The lack of opportunities to distance from the village during stressful times in childhood and youth may account for the emotional decision-making among youth that will result in their getting “sent out” of the village. Too much mischief, partying and going crazy can get young people sent out to correctional detention, treatment and boarding school. Some adults told me in their interviews that they chose to send their children to Nenana or Fairbanks for school because they were getting into too much mischief or were starting to get into partying.

Going crazy is another way to get sent out of the village. When young people go crazy they may get into a fight and get arrested, or they may threaten or attempt self-harm and get Title 47'd. Title 47 is the code that requires mandatory and involuntary commitment to a hospital or jail if an individual presents a threat to themselves or others. Young people who attempt suicide will get sent into Fairbanks for a mental health assessment at the hospital and then may get sent to the psychiatric hospital in Anchorage for stabilization. This is what happened to Tami (Chapter 4)

when she attempted suicide after her friends had gone against her. She was sent out to API, twice actually, and she says later on the interview that being at API did not help her at all. What helped was coming back to the village and being around her friends and family again. It could be argued that she was only able to get that help and support in the village by *being away from it* for long enough to transform both her own feelings and other people's feelings.

I have seen this transformation of feeling-states take place with people who are sent out after being arrested as well. At one point during the research several people started commenting about a young man in the village who had been partying too much and going crazy. The young man's mother was getting tired of his behavior and kept threatening to throw his clothes out of the house and not let him back in. Finally, the young man ended up getting into a fight with another young man and damaged his mother's house in the process. The young man's mother called the State Troopers to report the damage to her property, and the Troopers flew into the village and ended up arresting the young man for assault as well as disorderly conduct. The young man was taken into Fairbanks and charged with assault. At first the young man's mother was happy and relieved that he had been taken out of the village. By the second day though when she heard that he was going to get charged for assault and may have to spend up to 40 days in jail because it was not his first offense, she became angry at the other young man for fighting with her son and began to ignore his family in the village. Whenever I would see her she would tell me how much she missed her son and wished for him to be able to get out of jail and come back home. When her son got out of jail she paid his ticket home and had a dinner for his return.

Doing things to get sent out of the village, when there are no other means of social distancing available, is something that has been documented among indigenous youth in other remote communities as well. John O'Neil found that;

Escaping from the village may be an objective in vandalism; being sent to Yellowknife for a few weeks is an opportunity to escape village pressure... (Suicidal gestures must also be understood at least partially as a response to the community's ostracism). (O'Neil 1985: 203)

Distancing is an effective strategy for righting relationships. When people in the village today talk about the importance of getting out on the land they are also referring to this fundamental aspect. Young people that are getting sent out of the village may need to instead be getting out more often and for longer periods of time. It is not just creating the distance that is transformative or healing. When people leave the village they do not leave their feelings. In fact, the land, or the landscape, would serve as the aboriginal source of emotional memory and emotional meaning (Basso 1996; Cusack-McVeigh 2004). In an indigenous emotional economy leaving the settlement required a redirection of the intensity of social life into the relationships and activities that would sustain life out on the land *and* explain life back in the village.

Life out on the land was intense. It was maybe not entirely the “emotional break” from the intensity of settlement life that some have conceived it to be (Hughes 1960; Oswalt 1959). Instead it appears to be more of a *redirection* of intense emotions into other relationships and the activities meant to sustain those relationships. Being out on the land was an emotional experience. Elders in *Yookkene* would often tell me how lonesome they were for the land and for being out at camp and how much they “just miss it.” Sometimes when they talk about being out on the land their eyes would just mist over as if they were speaking about a lost lover, and with that tragic knowledge that there will never again be a chance for that kind of love in their lives. Anyone who has spent time talking with Alaska Natives has seen this emotional intensity come out when they are asked about life on the land hunting, fishing and berry picking. Even the Native youth will talk with emotional intensity about going out to camp and hunting.

The youth in *Yookkene* will also talk with the same kind of emotional intensity about basketball and snowgos. There are some gender differences here though that are worth mentioning. Girls in general do not get as emotionally worked-up over riding snowgos, while some of the male youth spend the majority of their interview describing their snowgos and talking about their experiences riding snowgos. Girls also do not place as much emotional emphasis on playing sports, but instead talk with great emotional intensity about the travel, tournaments and dances that are associated with sports. Male

youth would all talk about the actual basketball games and recount experiences on the court or in the field (softball). Female youth in general would talk with the most feeling about leaving the village, and that included childhood experiences such as going to camp or going to another village or into town as well as their current plans for getting out. For male youth, in the village at least, sports and snowgo riding represent contemporary indigenous activities for the redirection of intense emotional action. Condon and Stern (1993) also make this point for Inuit youth in Holman playing hockey/basketball.

Nearly all of the youth that I talked to in *Yookkene* talked with equivalent emotional force about the power of sports and subsistence to change people's behavior and help deal with the problems that young people experience growing up in the village.

Trips (23 years old)

SMR: Do you think that young people in *Yookkene* need help?

Trips: They need help?

SMR: Do you think they need help?

Trips: They need more activities- that's what they need.

SMR: Like what kind?

Trips: All kinds.

SMR: Like what?

Trips: Anything that's available.

SMR: But like what? Name something.

Trips: More sports.

SMR: But you guys already have basketball and baseball and volleyball.

Trips: More sports.

In one of the drawings done for the logo contest a younger boy illustrates the contemporary local connection made between sports and subsistence for maintaining the health of the young people. This generational distinction is important to make. Subsistence is thought of as good for everyone in the community, but is most essential for adults and elders. Sports are also thought of as good for everyone but particularly for the youth.



Figure 8: Sports-Subsistence Logo from Children's Mental Health Research Contest

Adults and elders are most active out on the land. It is the social expectation that they need to be so because they get lonesome for it more than the youth. Adults and elders will often say that the youth do not go out as much hunting, fishing or berry-picking because they are lazy, or do not want to, or are preoccupied with peers, TV, videogames, school, etc. Youth are allowed to do these other things because they are assumed to not miss being out on the land anyway. The more time spent out on the land, the more the person is assumed to miss it. With each successive generation, young people raised in the village are spending less time growing up on the land. The young people growing up in the village today are not spending enough time out on the land to develop emotional relationships within it, and consequently are not assumed to get lonesome for it. They are therefore assumed, rightly or not, to have less interest in getting out on it.

Social change has caused the emotional break-up of the human-animal relationship. People continue to hunt, fish and gather berries but the relationship has changed to become less motivating and in many ways less powerful. In the old way people could take things out on the land, and they did not have to directly intervene on each other's behavior in the social group. Other researchers have pointed out how hunting could serve as a way of expressing aggression and overcoming emotions including fear and anxiety (Brody 1982, 2001; Hallowell 1955). Hunting was another one of the ways

that Athabascans would right their relationships. Hunting realizes the love along with the fears, anxieties, aggressions and jealousies that were all part of the aboriginal emotional experience. When individuals were out at camp hunting or fishing or gathering they were intensely and fully engaging in their relationships. In this way the hunting-gathering strategy provided for the social and emotional needs of the people, by increasing the amount of productive relationships that individuals could potentially have and maintain.

It was through these relationships with the animals that people managed their emotional lives. For example, jealousy is one of the more maladaptive feeling-states in the emotion schemas of youth, and has always been such a problem in the social lives of Athabascans. Jealousies in the indigenous emotional economy were managed, in part, through the behavioral restrictions regarding male-female interaction that were part of the hunting complex. Sexual abstinence before and during a hunting expedition is a common practice in many indigenous cultures (Burch and Ellanna 1996; Ingold, Riches and Woodburn 1997). For Athabascans, sexual abstinence between spouses was strictly mandated during a woman's menses and while men were out hunting (Helm 1994; Honigmann 1981; Osgood 1937, 1958; McKennan 1959). Typically explanations for these types of sexual restrictions among hunter-gatherers have been discussed in terms of spiritual practice (purity and sacredness), adaptive process (energy, power) or ritual (superstition) (e.g. Jonaitis and Inglis 1999; Panter-Brick, Layton and Rowley-Conwy 2001; Schweitzer, Biesele and Hitchcock 2000). Restricting people's sexual behavior also contributes to the achievement and maintenance of potentially adaptive feeling-states. Men concentrating on hunting while out and away from their wives cannot be consumed with jealousy and lonesomeness for love and for sex. If men are preoccupied with jealousy and other anxieties over their women left back in the camp, they will not be as productively engaged in their relationship with the animal(s). Jealousy and lonesomeness are powerful emotions in social life that describe individuals in a state of hyper-arousal. Jealousy in male-female relationships can trigger certain types of intense emotional decision-making sometimes leading to maladaptive outcomes including going crazy and

fighting. Hunting requires a similar kind of hyper-arousal and emotional decision-making but with more often adaptive outcomes.

The aboriginal relationships that once provided for the survival of Athabascan groups out on the land changed fundamentally with contact. These adaptations occurred most rapidly during the first half of the 20th century in the interior of Alaska. The aboriginal groups during this time were faced with the ever increasing influences and pressures to settle and adopt ways of surviving that were consistent with the newcomer's ways of doing things. People in the villages found more limited options for engaging in relationships that fulfilled aboriginal emotional requirements for love, excitement, status and power. Athabascans lost an entire set of potential partners with the change from a subsistence way of life to a settlement way of life.

The human-animal relationship for Athabascans also provided an aboriginal context for *sharing* (e.g. Bodenhorn 1990). Sharing is an important survival strategy for Athabascans that involved not only the physical or material aspects of human relationships but the emotional ones as well. In the indigenous emotional economy there were many more contexts throughout the year for the collective sharing in emotional action. The winter time for Athabascans was a time for sharing in the emotional aspects of human social and animal relationships. The "Great Ceremonies" included, at its center, the nearly month long "Animal's Ceremony" (Osgood 1958: 96). Other ceremonies including the potlatch for the dead, the partner's potlatch, and the "hot dance" provided contexts for the intense collective coming together. Smaller ceremonies that occurred throughout the year such as the wolverine feast, wolf ceremony, bear party, first salmon ceremony and berry feast were all ways of sharing in such things as emotion, meat and power through the human-animal relationships. The aboriginal ceremonial complex that maintained the human-animal relationships provided the context for the social construction of emotion in aboriginal life. The ceremonies provided a formal context for social interaction where the animals continued to intervene on human relationships in the settlement.

The “Animal’s Ceremony” was the central social activity of winter settlement life (Osgood 1958) for Athabaskan groups in the central Yukon region. The Animal’s Ceremony would last from 17 to 21 days and would involve all members in the community collectively engaged in feasting, song and dance to maintain the good relationships with the “animal people” so that they would keep coming back to the people. The Potlatch for the Dead (now called the Memorial Potlatch) was the other main activity during the winter that provided a context for gathering together for the purposes of sharing feelings and maintaining good relationships with the spirits of the ancestors. Together with the other “lesser” ceremonies such as the wolverine feast, wolf party and berry parties that occurred year round these provided an aboriginal context for sharing in activities that allow individuals to achieve productive feeling-states.

When the indigenous economy shifted from a hunter-gatherer one the ceremonial complex was adapted to accommodate for the decreased power of the human-animal relationships for status and survival, and the increased emphasis on the human ones to do these same things for individuals. Today the ceremony that continues to have the most power and emotional efficacy for individuals is the Memorial Potlatch (or Stickdance for Athabascans downriver on the Yukon). The Animal’s Ceremony and other community-wide ceremonials that once were part of the indigenous emotional economy are no longer practiced. The primary importance of coming together and sharing in emotionally intense interaction remains central for maintaining Athabaskan mental health and wellbeing.

Solider (19 years old)

SMR: So do you remember when something happens here, do people come in? Do they try and get together after it and...

Solider: Well, usually when there’s something like [suicide] happens, yeah, there will be like a lot of people in town will go to that person’s house and, you know, help the families and stuff like that and get everything ready and stuff like that. I guess, yeah, a lot of people will come here and start helping. It’s been like that since I can remember, I

guess. Every time something like that happens, everybody will come in and put in a hand or stuff like that. Yeah.

Coming together and sharing in the emotional work of the group is how people survive hard times in the village. Survival is not something that you can do alone. In the aboriginal Athabaskan world individuals knew they were never alone no matter where they were. In an indigenous emotional economy the entire world is a feeling world. In the village emotional work is harder to do because there are fewer relationships through which it can be accomplished. Young people, in particular, have a much more limited means for emotional action, but those they do have they engage with intensity.

Stormy, 15 years old

Like right now I'm just trying to live life -- life to the fullest, even though I'm in the vill trying to keep myself busy with my friends, with my family, just like treasuring each and every moment that I have on Earth, just living it to the fullest, and even when I am in a bad mood or something, like I still try my best to have fun, because it's like, I don't know, every minute you waste, you don't get back. So I just try to go out and have fun and -- and like kind of watching my brothers, I'm just like you've got to have fun with them, try to teach them new things. (Stormy, 15 years old, *Yookkene*)

The emotion schemas of youth in Athabaskan villages reveal continuity with aboriginal feeling-states but with adaptations to aboriginal problem solving and intervention strategies. A striking example of how this change is being observed by elders and older adults in the village can be seen through this exchange I had with Anna and Soren Kingfisher in *Yookkene*. Anna and Soren are among the elders members of the community and have seen many and great changes to the culture and social life of the people in the village. Many of these changes have produced confounding outcomes to the elders. This struggle to make sense of the changes caused Anna and Soren to make the following profound observation.

Anna: We're sober all our life. That makes a big difference.

Soren: I drank, but very little. She don't want to put up with it, so we didn't need it.

Anna: I didn't want it for my kids. And, still, they all drink pretty much.

Soren: All our kids drink, yeah.

SMR: Because that's -- because that's probably what their peers were doing?

Soren: Uh-huh. You know, kids -- the parents that drink lots and mistreated their kids and everything, you know..... I saw that right here in the village when we were raising our kids. We were trying to raise them the best way we could, make sure they don't get late for school and everything. It's not right to get late, we always tell them, you know. And I see other kids get late and everything. You know, today, them kids that were mistreated, they're on top today. They're all in the office.....

Anna: Trained up in the office and everything.

Soren: They're all in the office and everything.

Anna: Teachers.

Soren: Yeah. Because they seen what is hard time. They went without things.

Uh-huh. And our kids never saw hard time, yeah.

Anna: We just made it too easy for them.

Soren: So every one, that's the way I saw it.

Anna: And then they're just -- another thing is they're just proud of their kids. I didn't know that help really lot. They need to be proud of, but it's -- it's against our belief. We're not supposed to be proud of our own kids because you never know what's ahead.

SMR: Right.

Anna: The devil is always listening, they used to say. And the drunks, just like my cousin, him and his wife used to drink lots and their kids just turn out good. And where our kids is just struggling. They're just -- they're scared to do anything just like. Well, that's where we got them. We never -- we didn't pay enough -- attention to them, one thing. Yeah.

Soren: So pretty much, kids that have hard time, *they think*, you know. Yeah.
They know they got to work, I guess. Yeah.

The “work” in the village that Anna is talking about is emotional work that is needed to survive in a drinking household. Today youth in the villages must learn how to survive on an emotional landscape that requires a very different type of work experience and skill set.

For example, in an interview with Jay, a 19-year-old male youth, he talks about how he has himself survived the village.

Jay (19 years old)

SMR: Was suicide something you thought about when you were younger?

Jay: Oh, when I was younger, I did. I thought about it lots. Then I started getting older and start maturing, and I just never thought about it that much.

SMR: When you were younger and thinking about it, did you ever like - did you ever try?

Jay: Yeah. A few times.

SMR: Did someone stop you each time?

Jay: No. No one was there.

SMR: Just the last minute you decided to.....

Jay: Yeah. When I was about to, I -- I thought about my family and thought about - what would they have without me, and how it would make them feel, stuff like that, you know, and I just never did it again. I -- I'm happy and I have a good family. But, yeah, it would hurt them lots if I wasn't around. It would hurt a lot of my friends, too, because when suicide will happen here, you -- you just see it in people's faces, you know. You see how -- the expression on their face, how sad they are, how -- how hurt they are. I was hurt lots. I didn't like it. If you commit suicide, it will hurt them more again, and you feel that same way, so I didn't do it no more.

SMR: So what kind of things do you do then to keep yourself like, you know, good?

Jay: Stay home.

SMR: Stay home?

Jay: No. Who knows. If I have nothing to do or I find something to do to keep myself moving, you know. Keep myself moving or find someone to help so -- if I find some work or something, help somebody out, and it will make them happy. When they're happy, I'm happy. When you get done, you see a smile on their face. Somebody's smile really helps out, you know. That's why whenever I walk by someone, I always wave and smile. Because you know if you have a grudge around here, it really hurts someone, you know. When you look at them -- when you look at somebody wrong then -- or say something wrong to them, then you can get hurt lots, and that's when you start really thinking about committing suicide. That's how I thought about it.

Jay survived his youth because of the skills he has achieved in navigating his emotional world. Jay lost his father when he was quite young and he has had to work harder than some of his peers by taking care of his younger sisters and brother. Because of this work Jay knows he is loved by his siblings and his mother, all of whom depend on him for their survival as well. Contemporary survival strategies in the village involve the adaptation of emotional work. To survive the village one must acquire the skills to navigate the emotional landscape. The emotional map of the village shows how young people coming of age must learn how to avoid boredom and lonesomeness, deal with loss, jealousy and drama and have fun, love and be loved. Identifying the emotion schemas reveals the social and cultural construction of the “problems of youth” in the villages. The schemas could very well represent population specific decision-trees and provide an area for further research and testing in the communities. If the emotion schemas hold up to this kind of testing the implications for local interventions among youth could be substantial.

Despite the clear need for intervention strategies that are tailored towards the culture of Native youth in the villages, young people in *Yookkene* today are surviving, and better than their parents did before them. Surviving youth in the village is still based

on having and keeping the relationships that will provide the love, control and power to live. Survival remains the defining feature of the aboriginal culture in Alaska. This was reinforced powerfully by one of the youth from *Yookkene* in answer to a question I asked about being Native today.

SMR: Are there things that you can think of that Natives, that Athabascans do that like makes them Athabascan?

Captain (20 years old): Yeah, they survived, like just how they survived from a long time ago up to today. Them old school people and our ancestors and the elders, I was going to call them ancient, but the way they had it compared to the way we have it today is so much easier. Dog mushing was fun back in the day, but my sled is a lot better than what they had. Being Athabascan the way our culture is I guess is just holding on by a thread, cause nobody is teaching our younger generation even the language. I don't know my own language, but I'd like to learn. Subsistence is going to keep growing and growing. If the moose keep coming, then it's going to grow and that's what I love about being a Native is survival in general mostly. You don't have to be a Native to survive; you just have to know how and make smart decisions and shoot if you have to. That's pretty much all I can think of as far as being a Native.

And that pretty much says enough.

Conclusion

The Athabascan world is a feeling world. Young people are socialized into the feeling world by learning how to achieve and maintain feeling-states that will provide them with the greatest access to things that give them the strength and power to survive. As I think about how to end this I consider that I may have said too much already. Or maybe it is that I have not said enough. But I think I have said at least something; and something, in the village at least, is much better than nothing. I believe quite strongly that things must change, as they always do, for life to continue on. This is true for indigenous peoples as much as it is for non-indigenous peoples (whoever they may be). What is tradition then in a world of change? Why does contemporary indigeneity require survival of *tradition* for the survival of the people? Athabascan economies may no longer be based on hunting-gathering entirely, but Athabascans are still *hunters* and *Natives* and this connection is still very much an emotional one. Native elders will often predict the end of the way things are and the return to the way things were. The Athabascan world is likewise full of beginnings and endings. Alaska Native youth in the village live in a world of constant change. Theirs is a life lived as if on the edge of both the very end and very beginning of the world.

Every time I go out to the village I experience this kind of emotional intensity and hyper-arousal. When I first went out to *Yookkene* I felt some excitement and some fear, but it was my own and it was private and manageable within that context. As the months went by and my relationships increased and my belonging in the community became more fundamental, my feelings in the village became more intense and unmanageable because they were not my own and were not as private. Everything was so much more exciting once I immersed into the feeling world in the village. I anticipated tournaments and community events as much as anyone else there. I spent hours on the phone with friends talking about who all had come down from the other village and who was out and what I heard or saw about what was going on. The house I rented in the village did not have DishTV, but I found after a few weeks that I did not need television at all for entertainment.

People in the village are completely enmeshed in the relationships they have in the community. I became just as enmeshed in the relationships I made while in the villages. It was quite difficult for me to leave the village when it came time to end the field research. My closest female friend in the village took me out to the airstrip to wait for the plane to come in that would take me out of the village as a fulltime resident. This was such a different experience than my coming in. My friend gave me a pair of potlatch earrings that she had been given a few years back. I got on the Navajo and watched her ride back to the village on her snowgo. I remember feeling so intensely loved at the moment that I nearly got off the plane and ran back to the village. I did not get off the plane. I sat and cried and I have cried many times for *Yookkene* but I knew that if I stayed the pain probably would be a lot worse. Because even as I sat on the plane and felt those first pains of lonesomeness; I also felt the first flush of relief. The relief came from knowing that I was about to get away from all the drama, all the gossip, all the jealousy that comes right along with all the fun, excitement and love and is just part of living in the vill.

Feelings in the village come from interactions. They do not, or rather *should not*, originate within the person. Thoughts are similarly attributed to interactions in the village. I was often told to “not think too much” by friends while I was in the village. As part of my researcher role, I required time alone to write fieldnotes and process data. As time went by in the village I began to experience less and less time alone. My friends would constantly stop by my house to visit or call on the phone to check in. It got to a point where my phone ringing was what I would hear right when I woke up and right before I went to bed each day and night. When I would try to limit the visiting or the calls, I would get hurt looks or curt replies from my friends. I would also get puzzlement – what could I possibly be doing in my house alone? Whatever it was it could not be that “great” or “exciting” and my friends could not understand why I would not be grateful for the calls or the visits.

It became clear after a while from my own interactions with people in the village that if you are thinking or feeling things on your own, outside of interactions within a

relationship you must not really value or need that relationship. My closest girlfriend would sometimes comment, if I told her that I had to do an interview or needed to stay in, that I seemed to be “having fun” on my own and didn’t need her to ride around or hang out with anymore. Another time when she saw me sitting next to another female friend at the gym she sat on the other side of the bleachers and did not really talk to me. When I called her that evening she said that she didn’t come over because it looked like I was having a lot of fun with the person sitting next to me. In the moment I understood this as a form of jealousy that happens within the context of village relationships; but thinking back on it now it fits more clearly with the way that feelings and thoughts for Athabascans are socially produced and are a measure of the power or status of the relationship, and consequently of those within the relationship. If I am having fun with another female friend, my best friend feels devalued because she is not the only one that I can experience fun with. In this way her status is lowered, much like any male lover’s would be if I was sitting holding hands with another man in public. Even when I would reassure her that I was not having as much fun with the other person as I would have been with her; she would never really believe it because she did not really believe that what I was feeling “inside” could be that much different from what I was projecting in social interactions with others.

I would experience this time and time again in many different types of relationships in the village. Feelings and thoughts about things just cannot *really* happen unless there is someone else there because nothing *good* (or very interesting) can really come out of feelings or thoughts that are experienced alone. Just as I was sitting here typing this conclusion I got a phone call from a friend in the village. When he asked me what I was doing I told him “writing about the village.” He said, “How can you be doing that? You even ain’t been here in like over a year.” His question about “how” I can be doing this is quite literal. He is not abstractly asking for me to justify my reasons for producing ethnography, and the ethics of writing about culture once removed. He is asking how I can have thoughts about the village on my own. It really does not seem very possible that I could be able to continue thinking about the village since I have been out

of it for so long. Sitting around thinking about things, like memories of past experiences, is something that people in the village do not really like to do when they are alone. Thinking too much about things from the past, particularly, can make you lonesome for those things. It is quite meaningful that reminiscing is one of the primary activities associated with drinking in the village. Drinking provides a social context for an otherwise strictly controlled activity in every day life.

Just as with any study such as this about youth, about culture, about people of a place at a certain time; there are parts that are no longer current, maybe not even as relevant, and possibly not at all “true” in the sense they once were. Some of the youth in this study have gone off to college and others have started families of their own. Some have moved out of the village for work and others have moved back from the city. Their lives will continue as will their culture. This study will have nothing really to do with their ability to survive their youth, or survive their feelings in the village. Instead what this study may do is serve as one of those events that get people feeling and thinking in a certain way that will motivate an action response to do something new, something great or just something about the problems of youth in Alaska.

This study provides a baseline follow-up about the Native youth in the villages in Alaska and reframes the problems of youth in rural Alaska from a local, indigenous perspective. Athabaskan survival has always required both technical skill to provide for the material necessities of life and emotional skills to support social life. In that sense the economy has also always been an emotional economy. As the balance between the need for technical and emotional survival skills shifted, the lives of youth people have become increasingly focused on their relationships in the village. Youth in the villages are not just abusing substances; attempting suicide, getting pregnant; getting arrested or dropping out of school. Instead most younger people in the village spend their time playing out, riding around, hanging out, working on meat, hunting, going out to camp, going to school, partying once in a while, hooking-up, breaking-up, falling in love, and in general, surviving.

I raise my hands to the people and thank you for listening to what has come from the heart. I give up the floor now to whoever, or whatever, may come next. Ana Bassee'

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Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska



Field Manual

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Part I: Introduction

Project Summary and Specific Aims

The mental health status of Alaska Native (AN) children and adolescents is significantly compromised relative to their non-Native counterparts (Alaska DHSS, 2002). The incidence of alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, community violence, and child maltreatment are significantly higher among Alaska Natives than the national average (Manson, Bechtold, Novins, & Beals, 1997). The majority of Alaska Natives live in isolated village communities and many adhere to traditional native cultural beliefs and practices. The problems most devastating to Alaska Native communities such as suicide, substance abuse, and childhood trauma are influenced largely by the social and cultural norms of the local group. To date, conventional Western approaches to mental health service delivery have been largely unsuccessful due to being: (1) culturally inappropriate, and (2) financially prohibitive in view of the remote isolation and small size of village communities in Alaska (University of Alaska, 2004).

The primary goal of this research project is to empirically study a culturally based intervention model termed “Wellness Teams” that has gained widespread acceptance and that is increasingly being implemented throughout Alaska Native villages in rural Alaska. The Wellness Teams to be examined within this proposal are a central aspect of Ch’eghutsen’, a program funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Circles of Care initiative that was designed to establish systems of care for children within Native communities. This proposal is consequently consistent with the aims of PA-04-019, Effectiveness, Practice, and Implementation in Children’s Mental Health Service Sites. The long-term research agenda is to determine whether Wellness Teams are an effective, culturally appropriate, and financially feasible approach to the delivery of children’s mental health services in rural Alaska. The specific aims of the R34 are twofold:

1. Aim I is to develop a culturally based operational definition of children’s mental health in Alaska Native villages based on Alaska Native values and culture. This will also include the identification of a set of measurable indicators of children’s mental health that can be used in subsequent research to determine outcomes of services.
2. Aim II is to articulate how Wellness Teams actually function. This will also include an examination of the congruence between articulated goals and actual working practice.

Tasks for Aim I include: (1) conduct focus groups with Wellness Teams, family, youth, and village leaders to develop an operational definition of children’s mental health based on Alaska Native, specifically Athabascan values; (2) conduct interviews and systematic observations in the community to elicit information on topics relevant to children’s mental health including parent-child relations, peer group formation, friendship, games and play activities, sexual activity, cognitive development, schooling, religious activities, rites of passage, work, daily activities and chores, and deviance; and (3) conduct a second

set of focus groups in the villages to identify a set of measurable indicators of wellness, utilizing the operational definition of children's mental health developed by the focus groups, interviews, and observations.

Tasks for Aim II include the ethnographic study of two Wellness Teams representative of different stages of development, specifically, 5 years post implementation and 10 years post implementation. There will be several areas of inquiry:

1. How do Wellness Teams develop over time?
2. Who is included in the Wellness Teams and what are their respective roles?
3. What are the tasks/functions of the Wellness Team?
4. Who does the Wellness Team serve?
5. Is there congruence between articulated values/goals regarding Wellness Teams and actual practice?

These findings will provide the basis for our long-term research plan to study the mechanism by which Wellness Teams work to improve children's mental health, and the effectiveness of Wellness Teams throughout rural Alaska. The findings of this study are a critical first step in moving forward the scientific knowledge on the development and implementation of culturally appropriate interventions for underserved minority populations in rural Alaska.

A Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) Design

In order to address many of the challenges to research in remote communities, we have selected a CBPR design. CBPR is defined "as a collaborative approach to research that equitably involves all partners in the process and recognizes the strengths that both bring" (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003, p. 12*). Because CBPR brings communities to the table as equal partners, the approach is able to address many of the pitfalls that have been encountered when utilizing the "outside expert" approach that has traditionally been used in addressing complex health and social problems such as HIV/AIDS, homelessness, and violence (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003). Awareness of the need to understand community dynamics and socio-cultural factors and their impact on health has grown dramatically as has the appreciation of the need for community driven research.

The research design proposed for this project emphasizes the collaborative involvement of community members in all phases of the research process using indigenous values and beliefs to form the core issues to be studied. The utilization of a collaborative model enables us to address the issues faced by researchers in rural and cross-cultural contexts. Given the cohesive nature of these communities, continuity between researchers and communities is critical in order for trust to develop and to be sustained. This continuity can be achieved through researcher participation, together with community members, in community events such as dances; pot latches; subsistence activities including fishing, hunting and gathering; cultural art forms such as beading; and community sporting

events. Interactions with village community members can not be restricted exclusively to the Western forum of research such as a research meeting structured around a conference table. It has been our experience in previous research (People Awakening, 1RO1 AA11446; Building a Center of Biomedical Research Excellence for Alaska Natives: P20 RR16430) that the village research participants and village-based research team members will be more comfortable providing key insights and input to the research when engaged in the context of a familiar activity in their community. Thus, we have developed a collaborative team approach to undertake the proposed research.

* Minkler, M. & Wallerstein, N. (2003). Introduction to community based participatory research. In M. Minkler & N. Wallerstein (Eds.), *Community Based Participatory Research for Health* (pp. 3-26). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Methods, Timeline and Roles

The methodology guiding this research is qualitative and participatory and will involve the local communities as co-investigators at all levels of the research process. Field-based ethnographic and qualitative methodologies, including participant observation, interviewing and focus groups, will be employed to elicit and gather conceptual and descriptive data to answer the questions posed by our research team. This research methodology will produce richly descriptive data in a way that is respectful and culturally consistent with traditional models of knowledge acquisition. An ethnographic approach requires an extended period of time living, working and interacting within the culture and community of study.

The project will entail two phases. The goals for Phase I include: (1) developing a culturally informed, operational definition of children's mental health that results in a set of measurable indicators, and (2) articulating how Wellness Teams function. Phase I activities will include: (1) a three-month period of preparation, (2) a four-month residence in each of the two villages, and (3) a two-month period of data coding, entering, and analysis in Fairbanks after the first village field stay.

The goals of Phase II include: (1) verification of the definition of children's mental health and indicators with each of the participant communities, and (2) examination of the concordance between stated practices of the Wellness Team and actual practices. Phase II will involve a brief ethnographic follow-up in each village to verify the indicators of wellness identified by the team and to provide a period for clarification and elaboration of key questions and processes described during the initial data collection. Preliminary research findings that arise from the initial data analysis and coding of the data during the first year will be brought back to the communities and "tested" with follow-up focus groups and interviews. Phase II will also include interview with Athabascan college students in Fairbanks whose primary residence is in the research villages. This period of follow-up is more flexible and can be spread evenly across time

to amount to two months in each of the participant villages or can be adjusted to allow for more time in a particular village and less in the others, if needed.

Projected Timeline. The following chart delineates the timeframe and grant activities proposed.

Phases	Phase I				Phase II	
	1-3	4-7	8-9	10-13	14-17	18-24
Months						
Field Preparation						
Field Work		Village A		Village B		
Focused data analysis						
Follow-up Field work					Village A and B (follow-up) UAF/FAI interviews	Village A (brief summer follow- up)
Final data analysis & write-up						
Quarterly team meetings	**		**		**	**

Research Team Roles

The primary research team will include:

Principle Investigator (PI), Dr. Catherine Koverola
 Collaborating Investigator (CI), Dr. Pam Deters
 Project Director (PD), Stacy M. Rasmus
 Village Research Assistant (VRA) for Yukon Village, Violet Burnham
 Village Research Assistant (VRA) for Koyukuk Village, Cesa Sam
 Fairbanks Research Assistant (RA), Liz Pawelko
 Consultant, Dr. Kim Hopper
 Consultant, Dr. Michael Kral
 Consultant, Dr. Gerald Mohatt
 Current Ch'eghutsen' partner representative, Anna Huntington-Kriska
 Former Ch'eghutsen' partner representative, Teisha Simmons

The PI will provide direct oversight and management of the entire project. The PD is the only team member employed 100% on the project. The PD will function as the project director and provide oversight to the village-based and Fairbanks RAs. The PD is responsible for planning and carrying out the majority of the data collection and will move to the research villages to conduct the ethnographic research and follow ups. The PI will make several visits to the research communities to co-facilitate focus groups, perform individual interviews, and observe and participate in community activities. The PD and PI, in close collaboration with the rest of the research team, will perform the majority of the data analysis. The CI will attend research team meetings and provide

insight and direction in some aspects of the research design and analysis. The responsibilities of the VRAs will include introducing the PD to community members, assisting in setting up focus groups and individual interviews, co-facilitating focus groups, completion of field diaries, assisting in field manual development, assisting in coding of data, and participating in interpretation of findings. The VRAs will participate in research meetings through audio conferencing for meetings held in Fairbanks. They will also participate in quarterly meetings of the entire team that will be held in Fairbanks. The responsibilities of the RA include assisting with data entry, data management, and literature reviews. The team will receive consultation from Kim Hopper, Michael Kral, Jerry Mohatt, and community members from the participating villages. Kim Hopper will provide mentorship to the PD. This mentoring will include review of sample field notes and transcripts electronically, phone meetings as needed during village stays, participation in quarterly team meetings by phone in Fairbanks during monthly debriefing/intensive data analysis period, and an annual visit to Fairbanks for intensive consultation/mentoring. The responsibilities of the Ch'eghutsen' partner representatives include monthly participation at the research team meetings, consultation on issues of mental health service delivery to children and youth in villages and cultural issues in the delivery of mental health services to Alaska Natives, and assistance with building trusting relationships with tribes in the Interior.

Using the Field Manual

This field manual represents the consensus of the research group concerning types of data to be collected and the manner of their collection. This field manual was developed to ensure the highest degree of comparability between the different field sites included in this study. This field manual includes detailed discussions of the research methodology (participant observation, interviewing, focus groups, field diaries), as well as discussions on topics including data analysis, informed consent and informed assent. After each discussion section there is a list of procedures that will be followed to carry out each specific task. At the end of each major section is a color-coded set of guides for each part of the data collection. This manual also includes a complete set of the informed consent and assent forms as well as sample fieldnotes, field diary entries and coded segments of text from related research projects undertaken by the Research Team.

Below is an outline of content areas and major research tasks covered in this Field Manual by task and team member primarily responsible.

Data Collection [PD, PI, VRAs – Core DC Team]

Participant Observation (including village mapping, daily field notes and activity reports) – S.M. Rasmus [PD]

Individual Interviews (including formal and informal with key informants and project participants) – S.M. Rasmus [PD]; with village sampling assistance from V. Burnham [VRA] and C. Sam [VRA]

Focus Groups – S.M. Rasmus [PD]; C. Koverola [PI] (co-facilitator for one focus group in each field site), V. Burnham [VRA] (for Wellness Team Focus Group) and C. Sam [VRA] (for Wellness Team Focus Group).

Field Diaries – Research Team; S.M. Rasmus [PD], V. Burnham [VRA] and C. Sam [VRA] will keep regular (1-5 entries weekly) field diaries when data collection is occurring in their respective communities. The rest of the research team will make field diary entries when they are visiting the field site or attending quarterly research team meeting.

Brief Village Follow-ups – S.M. Rasmus [PD] in collaboration with V. Burnham [VRA] and C. Sam [VRA].

College Student Interviews – S.M. Rasmus [PD] and L. Pawelko [RA].

Data Analysis and Publication [PI, PD, RA – Core DA Team]

Data Management – L. Pawelko [RA], S.M. Rasmus [PD]

Coding – SM Rasmus [PD], C. Koverola [PI] and L. Pawelko [RA] – [Core coding team]; Research Team will participate in consensus coding

Team Review - Research Team [quarterly meetings, monthly telephone conferences and as needed consultations with specific team members]

ATLAS.ti – S.M. Rasmus [PD] and L. Pawelko [RA]

Community Presentations and Reports – Research Team

Publication – Research Team

Grant Writing – Research Team

Procedures for using the Field Manual:

1. All Research Team members will receive a bound version of the Field Manual.
2. The Research Team will refer to the manual when there are questions regarding their own role in the project or the way in which data is being collected, analyzed and managed.
3. Each section of the Field Manual contains an introduction followed by a specific example or description of the process. Following the introduction and example there is a boxed list of procedures for carrying out the research task or activity. At the end of each major section is a colored-coded set of guides or forms to be used by all Research Team.
4. Research Team members can refer to the research team roles list included in the section above and then review that section in the Field Manual for a more detailed discussion.
5. The procedures box includes step-by-step instructions, describing “how-to” complete the task or activity and specifying the Research Team member who is primarily responsible for that part of the project. The procedures box will

also include those team members who may assist in the task or activity on a more periodic basis.

6. Research Team members can refer to the Research Team Roles list included in the section above and then review that section in the Field Manual for a more detailed discussion.
7. The Field Manual will be updated regularly to reflect changes to the ethnographic guides, data management procedures and coding process as the data begins to come back from the field.
8. The Research Team will be notified when there are significant changes made to the Field Manual and the new section, form or guide will be sent out electronically for replacement.

Part II: Phase I Data Collection

Participant Observation

Participant observation is a method of data collection that is non-obtrusive and is context (rather than content) oriented. Participant observation is the term used to describe how the researcher goes about collecting the data through two primary means, observing and participating. This methodology corrects for the problems inherent when only interviews are used to try to understand why people behave, interact or live as they do. Interview data provides the information but does not provide for us the “experience” of the event, process or activity described. By actively participating in or observing the stated activity or practice one can form a more complete understanding.

Participant observation takes place mainly within consensually defined public spaces including stores, community centers, offices, streets and outdoor areas, planes, and on the land. Participant observation can also occur within an interview or focus group and during community based research activities, meetings and events. Many “critical events” that are documented in field notes occur spontaneously, and thus participant observation is something the field researcher “does” on a full-time basis. Having tea with a friend, going to the store, or attending a wellness team meeting are all contexts for participant observation. Village maps and field notes are two types of primary data that will derive from participant observation within the research communities.

Village Maps

The creation of a village site map will be one of the initial tasks for the PD upon entering the village. This task will involve creating several different types of village maps, one generalized, one from an adult-use perspective and one from a youth-use perspective. The generalized map will entail plotting out the village on a grid, drawing in houses, buildings, honey-bucket dumps, graveyards, trash dump, airstrip and geographic features such as rivers, streams, trails and hills regularly accessed. A youth-centered map will then be constructed over a longer period of time based on multiple interactions and observations with young people in the village and the recording of their use of space in the village in their everyday lives. A similar map will be created from the local adult perspective compiled over time from formal and informal discussions and observations of daily rounds and subsistence activities.

These maps then can be referenced by the research team and superimposed to elicit generational uses of land, space and community resources. The creation of a village map will serve to immerse and familiarize the PD with the community and provide information on family and household structure, kinship and social organization, mobility, land use and demographics of the community.

Village Map Procedures:

1. Upon arrival in each of the research communities the PD will begin mapping the village.
2. Each day of the first week of fieldwork will be spent walking around the village and recording on a grid the general features and layout of the community.
3. The PD will also take photographs of the community and begin to create "site use" maps that indicate commonly used areas and public spaces.
4. The site use maps will be added to as the research progresses.
5. The general village map will be used with key informants to reference specific sites in the community, and will be used with elder participants to reference the ways in which the structure and composition of the village has changed over time.

Fieldnotes

Fieldnotes are, at their most basic, descriptions of what the researcher sees and hears while participating in, or observing, an event, activity, or interaction. Fieldnotes are descriptive statements provided without interpretive comment from the observer. They contain contextual information – action sequences, interaction, dialogues and characterizations. The fieldworker writes down what is concretely going on, not what they "think" is going on. They record actual behavior not what they think is motivating the behavior. Analytical or interpretive comment on observations is recorded separately.

Fieldnote Example #1

[These fieldnotes from PD's dissertation research on Youth Culture and Mental Health in a Yup'ik Community in Southwest Alaska]

Sketch

Pool Hall (6/04)

The Pool Hall (PH) is a long building uptown located on the river bank side of the main road two lots down from the AC store. The PH is owned and run by a middle-aged woman who moved to the village about three years ago from Bethel and who is originally from S. Korea ("Su"). Su lives in the village year round and lives in a small apt. attached to the rear-side of the pool hall. The PH building is old but large. There is one entrance into the building facing the road. The building is elevated about 6 feet off the ground and there are steps leading up to the "porch" and door into the building. The inside is dimly lit. To the front and left of the entrance is the one pool table. The pool table is of standard size with green felt. There is only one game that is played. It is called "moneyball."

[Sidebar on "Moneyball"]

To the left of the entrance are the tables for sitting. There approximately 13 tables with about 30 chairs. There is a jukebox that takes only quarters and plays mainly 1980s and early 1990s pop music. There are four video games in the rear-left section of the pool hall. The video game machines are the 1980s style- Pac Man era (Mrs. Pac Man is one

of the games). The video games take quarters and are 25 cents for one game. Younger youth (7-13) hang-out around the video games and will play all four video games regularly. Older youths will only play one of the four video games (a shooting game where you try to blast at floating bubbles) regularly. I have never observed an older youth play any of the other three video games, and in general older youths play moneyball or watch moneyball and sit at the tables closest to the pool table side of the hall. The younger kids will rarely sit at the tables, and if they do they will sit in sex segregated groups and will mainly sit to eat chips or fried rice or drink their pop. The food counter is immediately in front of the pool table and directly across from the front entrance. There is a large selection of candy and pop. Also offered are chips (but these run out often). Sunny also offers fried rice, hamburgers and sandwiches as "dinners" available by order. Older youths will frequently order fried rice and eat it at the tables. The only adults over the age of 30 that I have observed in the pool hall are those going to order or pick up an order of fried rice for dinner. The adults will generally come in and order and then leave quickly to return a short time later to pick up their order. They do not stay and do not usually socialize. They will say hello or will nod and smile at particular youths in the hall but they will move quickly in and out of the building. The Pool Hall is locally considered the "teen" hang-out and adults tend to avoid the building.

Younger youth (ages 7-12) will arrive at pool hall around 9pm and will leave a little before village curfew (summer 12am - winter 10pm). Youth 13-18 are allowed to stay out one hour longer in this village (1am in summer, 11pm winter). Youth 18 and older do not have a curfew, but cannot ride Honda or snowmachines around the village after 1am. Older youth 18+ will stay out at pool hall until 3-5am or when Sunny closes down.

Fieldnote Example #2

Episode

Pool Hall 7/04 [outside]

9pm

Three boys ages 10-12 ride up to the front of the pool hall. One boy gets off his bike and runs up to the door and goes inside. The other two boys sit on their bikes for a minute and then start to peddle around in circles outside the front of the pool hall. The boy inside peeks his head out until his friends see him. The two boys on the bikes peddle up to the door and yell "Who's in there?" The boy inside shrugs and goes back inside. The two boys on bikes get off them and go inside.

9:10pm

One girl and two boys (ages 87 and 10 and 11) walk up to the pool hall from the AC store. They check their pockets for money and then come and ask this observer for a couple dollars. They wonder why this observer is sitting on a Honda outside looking at the front of the pool hall. They try to start the Honda several times and climb up and jump off the back rack. The two boys ask repeatedly who is in the pool hall. They walk away. The girl (10 years) continues to sit on the Honda next to the observer and then goes inside to "check" the pool hall.

9:30pm

Two Hondas with older teenagers pull up outside pool hall. A girl (17-18?) is driving one Honda with two (younger?) girls on the back. The other Honda is driven by a boy (17-

18?) riding with his girlfriend (her sitting full on seat behind him with hand on one of his shoulders). They look over and go inside.

Small groups of younger kids are "coming up" from downtown by foot. Can't keep track of how many. They come in small groups of two or three. The younger kids (less than 13-15?) are mostly in same sex groups. The small groups of younger girls almost always stop by this observer's Honda to ask questions and talk.

...11:20pm

Groups of older youths (18-25) begin to arrive and the younger kids begin to come outside and hang around the front door and the stairs and will try to talk to the older youths as they arrive (almost always by Honda) and go inside.

11:45pm

Groups of younger kids (5 or more in a group - less than 15 years) begin to move from the front entrance of the pool hall to the back. The kids are louder than when they arrived - the boys yell out to each other, the girls will scream and laugh loudly.

12:10am

One VPO drives up on a Honda with an older youth on the back rack. The older youth jumps off the Honda and walks inside the pool hall. The VPO sits on his Honda and looks at the few younger kids remaining outside the front of the entrance. "Willy go home!" "It's not even late yet!" "Go home it's after 12." The boy begins to walk slowly (very slowly) away from the pool hall. The other two boys continue to stand and stare at the VPO. "How old are you now Randy?" "I dunno." "18?" "No" (boy smiles). VPO - "Come back when your 18". "Okay I'll be back tomorrow. Or maybe later" (smiles again). The two boys still don't move and the one that was walking away has stopped and is throwing rocks at a sign. "Go on, get home or I'll have to give you a ticket." "You won't" - the boys say but begin to now move slowly away from the entrance and down the street. The VPO stops his Honda and goes inside the pool hall.

12:35am

The VPO comes out with two boys (13-15?) following him. The VPO gets on his Honda and waits until the two boys are walking away from the pool hall. He guns the engine and drives around back to the group of boys and girls hanging around out back. A small group of boys run away and yell out to the VPO (can't hear what they are yelling). The girls draw together and smile and laugh as the VPO tell them to "go get home". They all slowly begin to walk away from the pool hall.

VPO drives back downtown and one of the groups of younger boys (three boys) stop walking away from pool hall and stand talking on the side of the road about 30 yards from the pool hall. They turn suddenly and run off the road and towards the river bank. They disappear down the bank

They reappear (12:25) back behind pool hall and move around to the front entrance. Two older male youths are smoking on the steps outside they go up to them and ask for a cigarette. The older youths don't answer and keep smoking their cigarettes. The younger boys continue to pester them. The older youths stub out their cigarettes and go inside (did they take their butts? - didn't see them toss). Younger boys go back around back.

12:45am

Older youths drive up on Honda's and some walk up by foot. Older youths come in twos and sometimes threes. Mixed sex groups more common with older youths. Older youths = ages 16-25.

[Male youths will come out alone to smoke- will talk to whoever is outside. Female youths will come out to smoke with another female youth (best friend?). Male and females who arrive together will not often come out to smoke together. Will sit at same table (sometimes not – depending on if the young male is playing moneyball and sitting at tables for moneyball players). Males and females who arrive together will usually leave together.]

1:30am

Small groups of young boys (same as above) still behind pool hall. Younger boys will come to front when older youths come out to smoke – will once or twice stick their head in the front door and "check" things inside. Do not go back inside.

2:10am

VPO drives up from river bank side (back side) of pool hall. Two of the younger boys run across the road (past observer) into the trees. Two others run up the street and yell out to VPO. The VPO drives around to the front of the hall. VPO sits on Honda staring at boys and smokes a cigarette. Four older youths (1 girl – 3 boys) come out and see VPO. Female youth goes back inside. One older youth walks away downtown. Two walk up to VPO and they smoke and talk. Two younger boys that ran up street have moved back towards pool hall and are picking up rocks. Two younger boys walk (quicker) towards river bank. VPO looks over at boys "Go on home or I'll bring you." "You won't". The boys run towards bank and cut off onto small back road (towards old school). The VPO sees them and starts Honda and speeds away. The boys split up and run fast. The VPO chases behind (staying a short distance behind).

Two older male youths watch the action and look over at observer and smile.

Observer – "Where do they always go?"

Male youth 1 – "Old school—all those busted down buildings"

Observer – "How come that way?"

Male youth 1 – "Good places to hide out from cops"

Observer – "Cops can't go in there?"

Male youth 1 – "Not by Honda"

Male youth 2 – "Just go where cops can't go by Honda. They won't follow you."

Observer – "How come?"

Male youth 1 – "Lazy."

[two boys from the trees pop back onto the road about 20 yards up the road and look around]

Observer – "Why do they keep doing that?"

Male youth 1 – "For fun. Just mischief I guess."

Male youth 1 – "Better run!" [says to two boys]

Two boys grin and walk towards river bank.

The older youths wander back inside.

(continues.. until 3am)

Field Note Procedures:

1. The PD will openly carry a notebook or digital recorder for recording fieldnotes when she is out in the community.
2. The PD will ask permission where necessary to record observations of community activities, events, gatherings, stories and histories and interactions.
3. The PD will ensure that names and identifying information pertaining to individuals in fieldnotes will be anonymized.
4. The PD will record field notes during the event or activity or immediately following the event or activity. Fieldnotes will be recorded daily and sent back to Fairbanks electronically on a weekly basis.

Participant Observation Activity Guides

Activity and Observations Guide: Children's Mental Health

Specific activities will supplement the ethnographic interviews with adults and youth, and provide interactive options for accessing the following domains.

1. General/self/everyday life

These are the open-ended "big-picture" questions that allow the participant to talk about their own experiences in a general way. These include childhood and youth experiences, everyday life and norms for children and youth.

Activities:

1. Youth daily record: Have a subset of young people keep a written log of their activities over a two or three day period. The youth will be given a grid with times down one column and will be asked to record general whereabouts and general context of activity. Example: 8am Went to school. 11am: went home from school to check on brother and get snack, 12pm went back to school, 3pm went home and took nap, 5pm ate dinner, 5:15pm watch TV, 6:30pm went out with friends, 9pm came home for snack, 9:30pm went out to friends house, 11pm came home, 1am went to bed, etc.

2. Adult daily record: Have subset of adult participants keep a written log of their daily activities for comparison purposes.

2. Kinship and family

Kinship and family includes the dynamics and make up of the participant's family. Who is/was around? What is/was going on? Includes comments on the quality of family relationships, interactions, engagements, etc. Family context includes both positive and negative information, history, ancestry, family expectations and responsibilities, adoption and fosterage.

Activities:

1. Genograms: Have a subset of participants construct genograms, using a pre-made genealogy chart, at the interview.
2. Draw a family: Have a subset of youths draw a picture of their family.

3. Rites of passage

Rites of passage are those practices, activities or events that serve as markers for developmental transition from one life stage to another. Rites of passage in a village context can include such practices, activities or events as a boy's first moose, a child's first dance, a girl's first menarche, a girl's first salmon cut properly, graduation from high school, etc.

Activities:

1. Observe community celebrations/gatherings/events.
2. Observe a high school/8th grade graduation ceremony.

4. Sexuality and gender identity development

Adolescence and youth corresponds to sexual development and formation of gender identity across all cultures with often specific types of gender-based activities engaged by young people and specific types of instructions about sexual development and gender identity. This domain includes learning about sexual development and gender identity; first menses for girls; learning what it means to be a boy or to be a girl; first romantic relationships, first sexual experiences and experimentation; dating, having boyfriends/girlfriends, marriage; being a good mother; being a good father; and teaching and disciplining for boys and girls.

Activities:

1. Observe DJ dance.
2. Observe gym activities after school.
3. Observe girls and boys in public, in the home, at school and with their friends.

5. Friendships and peer group

Peer groups are social groupings of individuals (sometimes as small as 2 to 5 people, sometimes larger with 10 to 20 people) in the village or community that the young person is with on a consistent and regular basis. They may be same-sex and/or mixed sex groups and usually are of same approximate age. Friendships are those relationships with distantly related kin or non-kin that are trusting, continuous, fun and meaningful for the person. Includes time spent with peers, peer group activities, being alone versus being with friends, choosing friends, best friends, etc.

Activities:

1. Draw/indicate on village map where young people go to play out or hang out.
2. Have adults indicate on village map where young people usually go to play out or hang out.

5. Leisure and fun

This domain encompasses things that young people do for fun in the village, ways that adolescents and youth relax and ways that adolescents and youth have fun both as part of a group or on their own. Includes hanging-out, walking around, staying up, hunting, berry picking, snowmachining, boating, dancing, talking, playing games, playing video games, watching television, sledding on hills, basketball, volleyball, other sports, emailing/Internet surfing, reading, etc.

Activities:

1. Draw/indicate "fun areas" on village map – where a person goes to "have fun"

5. Schooling/education

This domain encompasses all types of formal educational activities young people are involved with in the village and outside of the village. Includes involvement with formal institutions in village or outside of the village having to do with teaching and instruction of children. Includes boarding school experience, village school experience, college and technical training, ideas about education, role of

school in everyday life in the villages, teachers, learning at school, sports at school, completing school, etc.

Activities:

1. Observe at school-based activities.
2. Track youth from village who attend UAF or TVC in Fairbanks.

7. Work and chores

This domain encompasses productive activities engaged by young people. Includes household chores, paid employment, helping grandparents and elders, chopping wood, hauling water, cutting/hauling ice, putting away fish/meat/birds, going to the store, cooking, babysitting.

Activities:

1. Draw/indicate “work areas” on village map – where work is done in the community.

8. Social deviance/crime/misconduct

This domain encompasses unproductive activities engaged by young people that go against norms of the community. Includes stealing, vandalism, fighting, staying out all night, abusing substances (MCA or DUI), not listening, teasing, firing weapons in community, disrespecting people and animals, etc.

Activities:

1. Collect juvenile DOJ statistics for community and tribal region.

9. Substance use/abuse

This domain encompasses mentions of an individual’s experiences with alcohol and other drugs including inhalants, marijuana, pills, cocaine, methamphetamines, etc. Includes first time seeing it used, first time trying it, context and pattern of use (with whom, where, when), family history of use/abuse, feelings about use, and role substances have in life, family, community.

Activities:

1. Compile statistics (AST and DOJ) on MCAs, DUIs and other alcohol related charges involving youth.
2. Alcohol sales and importation rates.

10. Mental health

This domain encompasses emotional development and dealing with intense feelings. Includes identifying feelings, expressing emotion, love between parents and children, love between friends and peers, romantic love, anger, fear and aggression. Also includes references to health, wellness and illness, healing, traditional remedies, taking prescription medications, going to the clinic, going to the hospital, talking funny, etc.

Activities

1. Observe parent-child, grandparent/grandchild, and other relational interactions.

11. Death and trauma

This domain encompasses the experience of suffering or pain including collective, family and individual trauma. Includes abuse, neglect, loss, racism, epidemics, violence, accidents and disasters. Beliefs and practices surrounding process of death and dying fall in this domain. Also includes illness experiences, learning about illness, symptoms of illness, mental illness, suicide, aging, beliefs about death, first experience with death, grieving, tending to bodies, and funerals/memorials.

Activities:

1. Observe funeral preparations and services.

12. Religious/spiritual

This domain encompasses mentions of faith, religion or spirituality. Includes traditional spiritual references as well as Christian doctrine and teachings. In some places Christianity has been indigenized and is syncretic with pre-contact forms of spiritual expression. Includes: church attendance, Sunday school, Bible, prayer, spirits, ghosts, higher power, God, faith, reincarnation, sharing, giving thanks, and going out onto the land.

Activities:

1. Go to church weekly, alternating churches if there is more than one, and observe services.

13. Cultural identity and traditional knowledge

This domain encompasses beliefs, practices, events, values and ways of life that are associated with "being Athabaskan." Includes subsistence practices, hunting, fishing, getting berries, cutting fish, putting fish/meat away, eating Native foods, making clothing and beading, learning Native language, going out on the land, learning about relatives, going to stick dances, going to community gatherings, sharing, joking, storytelling, etc.

Activities:

1. Draw/indicate subsistence areas on the village map.

Activity and Observations Guide: Wellness Teams

Specific activities will supplement the ethnographic interviews with adults and youth, and provide interactive options for accessing the following domains.

1. Health and mental health

This domain includes references to physical and emotional health, wellness and wellbeing. This domain will access things that allow a person to be healthy and the characteristics, traits and features of a “healthy” and “mentally healthy” person, family and community. Primary focus will be given to issues of emotional development, and the relationship between mind and body and society and soma (e.g. “when one person is sick, everyone is sick”) and includes identifying feelings, expressing emotion, love between parents and children, love between friends and peers, and romantic love.

Activities

1. Observe children at play.
2. Observe families subsisting together.
3. Observe youth riding around and hanging out together.
4. Observe parent-child, grandparent/grandchild, and other relational interactions.
5. Grocery store map and observations. Map the grocery store (detailing items available for sale and locations). Compile observations of typical purchases in village store.
6. Observe clinic and clinic activity. Observe major uses of local clinic services by community members. Observations will be restricted to volume of clientele and if possible demographics of core client populations. Talk to health aide. Gather statistics of hospital referrals and primary health issues and leading causes of death and illness.

2. Illness, mental illness and social disruption

This domain includes references to physical, emotional and social problems or abnormality. This domain will focus on characteristics of individuals, families and communities that are unhealthy or problematic and potentially destructive. This domain will include references to illness and disease experiences, mental illness, social disruption, family violence and substance abuse.

Activities

1. Collect DOJ statistics, percentages of youth in treatment/rehabilitation programs, statistics of OCS contacts and children in foster care.
2. Collect/compile epidemiological data on death and disease.

3. Trauma and adversity

This domain encompasses the experience of suffering or pain including collective, family and individual trauma. Includes abuse, neglect, death, racism, epidemics, violence, accidents, disasters and suicide, and the local and cultural responses to these experiences.

Activities

1. Map of cemetery.
2. Kinship chart with mission school attendees.

4. Healing

This domain includes things that individuals, families and communities use to be or become healthy and well. Includes references to notions of healing, traditional remedies, medicines, prescription medications, going to the clinic, going to the hospital, talking and opening-up, expressing emotion, counseling, subsistence activities and involvement in community activities, spirituality, faith, recovery and resilience.

Activities:

1. Observe memorial feasts, stick dance, potlatches, church activities and funeral activities.
2. Seasonal map of disorders. Are the kinds of things that people in the communities get sent to or go to the health clinic or mental health clinic for different by season or time of the year (annual cycle)?

5. Healers and health service

This domain encompasses references to individuals that occupy an official or unofficial position in the community or region that involves helping or healing others. Includes traits and features of a healer, local healers, "medical" healers (doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists), itinerants, etc.

Activities

1. Map of health service providers (Map onto regional map of AK). Inserts will include, Galena, Fairbanks, Anchorage and "Outside" (e.g. Lower 48) and the services that are available in each, and the provider networks or service paths through which an individual travels to receive or gain access to the appropriate service.
2. Chart out a localized "trail of tears," a path someone can follow in the community if they are in trouble, in pain, or in need of help.

6. Wellness Teams*

This domain will cover areas related to general community knowledge and utilization of wellness teams.

*Members of the wellness team will be asked questions specific to their involvement on the wellness team as part of a WT member focus group and individual interview follow-up.

Activities

1. Wellness Team focus group and individual interview follow-up. See Focus Group section.
2. Observe the wellness team (e.g. attend a wellness team sponsored community gathering, training or prevention activity; observe wellness team's response to community crisis; and observe wellness team in planning and coordination process, etc.)

7. Social change and health

This domain attempts to access a longitudinal perspective on the health and wellness of the community, families and individuals from those who have witnessed social change over time. This domain is particularly relevant to the experience and knowledge of the community elders.

Activities

1. Review early ethnographic literature for references to youth through early contact and post-contact history.
2. Review oral traditions and personal narratives collected from Athabascan elders for references to sickness, illness, mental illness, social problems, healing and health.
3. Draw picture of the village a “long time ago.” Draw a picture of the village now. Draw picture of the village as it might look like in the “future.”

Individual Interviews

Interviewing will begin by the end of the first month of field work and will continue until the PD leaves the village and returns to Fairbanks. Individual interviews will also be conducted during the follow-up fieldwork in each of the communities. The first half of the fieldwork in each village will focus on collecting data related to the local understanding of children's mental health. The second half of the fieldwork will be focused more intensely on collecting data related to Wellness Teams and indigenous healing.

Formal interviews will be conducted with 20-25 individuals in each of the research communities. These interviews will be open-ended and semi-structured and will be based on the **Ethnographic Interview Guides (EIG)** developed by the PD and the research team. There are separate interview guides for youth and adults as well as separate guides for the Children's Mental Health and Wellness Teams parts of the research. The interview guides are designed to provide a broad range of questions that could be asked during the course of an individual interview to ensure that certain key domains are being addressed and that there is consistency in the types of questions posed to participants. The interview guides are not structured interviews and the questions do not need to be asked in the order they appear or in their totality. Several interviews with a single individual may be necessary to adequately cover all of the interview domains. The interview guides will be adjusted as the project progresses to refine the questioning to reflect the appropriate ways to access certain concepts or beliefs. Formal interviews will be recorded onto MP3 discs and burned onto CDs or DVDs, and then sent back to Fairbanks for transcription and entry into the database. Some transcribing of the interviews will also take place in the field by the PD.

Informal interviewing can occur spontaneously and may be activity-oriented. For example, going to fish camp could involve interviewing a key informant on subsistence practices including the role of youth and children in these activities. Informal interviewing can also follow an event or occurrence of significance to record reactions, thoughts or feelings. These interviews will often be recorded in note form but could also be recorded with the field dictation digital recorder.

Individual Interview Procedures:

1. The PD will begin to compile a list of potential interview participants from interactions in the village, through participant observation and through nomination.
2. The PD will contact the potential interview participant or parent and explain the project.
3. If the participant agrees to be interviewed an interview time and place will be scheduled.
4. At the interview meeting, the PD will review the project's goals and aims and the participant's role in the project. The PD will then begin the informed consent process and obtain written consent from each interview participant.
5. After the participant has provided their written informed consent and had a chance to ask questions, the recorder will be turned on and the interview will begin.
6. The interview will continue for 2-3 hours or until the participant is ready to break. An additional follow-up interview may be necessary.
7. After each interview session the participant will receive monetary compensation for their contribution to the project and will be asked if they would like to nominate anyone to participate in the interviews.

Ethnographic Interview Guides

Ethnographic Interview Guide: Children's Mental Health Children-Youth Questions

This section will provide ethnographic interview guidelines to assist the field researchers with data collection and provide areas to cover in interviews. The *Interview Domains* indicate, in a general way, the types of information that will be gathered systematically from all participants during the interview process. The Interview Domains are intentionally broad and there is some overlap between the domains. Specific areas for follow-up and elaboration will be organized under each Interview Domain. Each interview will begin with an open-ended, broadly based question concerning the major domain theme and will be followed up with a series of specific prompts. The interview questions are adapted for the following age-ranges:

Children: Includes young people in the pre-pubescent and early childhood stage and those who have few formal responsibilities and have no recognized status. Children are typically young people between the ages of 7-12.

Adolescents: Includes young people in the post-pubescent range and those who have passed through significant life stages (e.g. obtained first license; oldest in household and assumed childcare responsibilities, etc), and are recognized as "not little kids" anymore. Typically young people between the ages of 13-17.

Youth: Young people who have either graduated or left high school but who maintain a lifestyle of a young person in the village or who attend college in the city. Youth typically do not have regular fulltime jobs, are not married, do not have children of their own and continue to interact mainly with their own peer group in the village. Youth are typically young people between the ages of 18-24.

1. General/self/everyday life

These are the open-ended "big-picture" questions that allow the participant to talk about their own experiences in a general way. These include childhood and youth experiences, everyday life, and norms for children and youth.

1. Could you tell me about what it's like to be a young person in your community?
2. Describe a "normal" day for you in the summer (winter). So you get up, what time would that be and then what do you do?
3. Describe a "boring" time. How about an exciting one?
4. What are some of your best memories? What are some of your worst memories?
5. How would you describe yourself?
6. How would your best friend describe you? How about your worst enemy?

7. Who would you say are the people that know you the best?
8. What do you think is the biggest difference between growing up today and growing up when your parents or grandparents did?
 - What is better, to be a young person today or to be a young person a long time ago?

2. Kinship and family

This domain encompasses the dynamics and make up of the participant's family. Who is/was around? What is/was going on? Includes comments on the quality of family relationships, interactions, engagements, etc. Family context includes both positive and negative information, history, ancestry, family expectations and responsibilities, adoption and fosterage.

1. What is your family like? Who is raising you? Who lives in your house?
2. Who do you feel closest to in your family?
3. Who teaches you how to do things? What kinds of things do they teach you?
4. Who do you spend the most time with? What kinds of things do you always do together?
5. What kind of fun things do you do with your family?
6. What things would you change about your family?
7. What is the best thing about your family?
8. How is your family like other families in the community? How is it different?

3. Rites of passage

Rites of passage are those practices, activities or events that serve as markers for developmental transition from one life stage to another. Rites of passage in a village context can include such practices, activities or events as a boy's first moose, a child's first dance, a girl's first menarche, a girl's first salmon cut properly, graduation from high school, etc.

1. When you were younger were there things that you really looked forward to doing when you got older?
 - Did you ever think to yourself, "I can't wait until I get old enough to ride a snowmachine by myself"?
 - What other things did you wish you could do when you got old enough?
2. Are there things that teenagers get to do that younger children can't do?
3. Are there things that only adults can do? Are there things that young people can do that adults can't do?

4. What were you taught by your parents or other adults about growing up?
5. Did you have to do anything different or special when you got your first period?
6. What happened when you made your first catch?

4. Sexuality and gender identity development

Adolescence and youth corresponds to sexual development and formation of gender identity across all cultures with often specific types of gender-based activities engaged by young people and specific types of instructions about sexual development and gender identity. This domain includes learning about sexual development and gender identity; first menses for girls; learning what it means to be a boy or to be a girl; first romantic relationships, first sexual experiences and experimentation; dating, having boyfriends/girlfriends, marriage; being a good mother; being a good father; and teaching and disciplining for boys and girls.

1. What's better in your community, to be a boy or to be a girl? What makes it good to be a girl/boy? Is there anything bad about being a girl/boy? Have you ever wanted to be the opposite?
2. What were you taught by your parents or other adults about the ways that girls or boys should behave? Are there things that girls should or should not do? Are there things that boys should or should not do?
3. How did you first find out about sex? Who taught you or talked to you about sex?
4. When did you and your friends start having boyfriends and girlfriends? What kinds of things do you do together in your community?
5. What do you really like about your boyfriend/girlfriend? What things would you change about your boyfriend/girlfriend?
7. Are boys disciplined differently than girls?
8. What kind of girls do boys like? What kind of boys do girls like?

5. Friendships and peer group

Peer groups are social groupings of individuals (sometimes as small as 2 to 5 people, sometimes larger with 10 to 20 people) in the village or community that the young person is with on a consistent and regular basis. They may be same-sex and/or mixed sex groups and usually are of same approximate age. Friendships are those relationships with distantly related kin or non-kin that are trusting, continuous, fun and meaningful for the person. Includes time spent with peers, peer group activities, being alone versus being with friends, choosing friends, best friends, etc.

1. What kinds of things do you together with your friends?
2. Are there things that you like to do better by yourself?
3. Do you have a best friend? What makes this friend different from your other friends?
4. Are there people you can't get along with? What makes them different from your friends?
5. What kinds of things do you and your friends fight/argue about?

5. Leisure and fun

This domain encompasses things that young people do for fun in the village, ways that adolescents and youth relax and ways that adolescents and youth have fun both as part of a group or on their own. Includes hanging-out, walking around, staying up, hunting, berry picking, snowmachining, boating, dancing, talking, playing games, playing video games, watching television, sledding on hills, basketball, volleyball, other sports, emailing/Internet surfing, reading, etc.

1. What kinds of things do you do for fun in your community? [what about in the summer, winter, fall, spring]?
2. Where do you mostly play or hang-out? If your parents told you to stay inside, what would you do to have fun?
3. Describe something fun you do by yourself.
4. Are there things you like to do for fun that your parents or other older people don't like you to do?
5. If you had \$500 to spend on anything you wanted, how would you spend it?
6. What are some fun things that you could do with an older person (like a parent or grandparent)?

5. Schooling/education

This domain encompasses types of formal educational activities young people are involved with in the village and outside of the village. Includes involvement with formal institutions in village or outside of the village having to do with teaching and instruction of children. Includes boarding school experience, village school experience, college and technical training, ideas about education, role of school in everyday life in the villages, teachers, learning at school, sports at school, and completing school.

1. What are some things you like about school in your community? What are some things you don't like about school?

2. Tell me about some of your favorite teachers. Tell me about some teachers you didn't get along with.
3. What do young people in your community usually do after they graduate from high school? What do you want to do after you graduate?

7. Work and chores

This domain encompasses productive activities engaged by young people. Includes household chores, paid employment, helping grandparents and elders, chopping wood, hauling water, cutting/hauling ice, putting away fish/meat/birds, going to the store, cooking, and babysitting.

1. What kinds of chores or work do you usually do? Who asks you to do these things?
2. What are other things that younger people do for work or chores?

8. Social deviance/crime/misconduct

This domain encompasses unproductive activities engaged by young people that go against norms of the community. Includes stealing, vandalism, fighting, staying out all night, abusing substances (MCA or DUI), not listening, teasing, firing weapons in community, disrespecting people and animals, etc.

1. What kinds of things do young people get in trouble for in your community? What kinds of things do young people get arrested for?
2. Describe someone who is "mischief." Describe someone who is "bad."
3. What do you think lets youth begin causing trouble or mischief?
4. What do you think could stop youth from getting into mischief?
5. What does it mean to be "good" ? Like when your parents say "be good," what do they mean?
6. Can a young person who is considered "bad" change and become "good"?
7. What kinds of things do your parents tell you never to do?

9. Substance use/abuse

This domain includes mentions of an individual's experiences with alcohol and other drugs such as inhalants, marijuana, pills, cocaine, methamphetamines, etc. Includes first time seeing it used, first time trying it, context and pattern of use (with whom, where, when), family history of use/abuse, feelings about use, and role substances have in life, family, community.

1. How did you first learn about alcohol and drinking? What about other drugs (like pot or sniffing gas)?

2. Have you ever tried drinking? [What was it like?] What about other drugs like pot or cocaine? What was that like?
3. What have you been taught about alcohol by your parents or other adults? What about other drugs like pot or cocaine?
4. What's good about drinking? What's bad about it?
 - What's good about pot? Bad about it? What's good about cocaine, bad about it?

10. Mental health

This domain encompasses emotional development and dealing with intense feelings. Includes identifying feelings, expressing emotion, love between parents and children, love between friends and peers, romantic love, anger, fear and aggression. Also includes references to health, wellness and illness, healing, traditional remedies, taking prescription medications, going to the clinic, going to the hospital, talking funny, etc.

1. What kinds of things make you feel happy? What about angry/sad/bored/excited, etc?
2. How do your parents/grandparents show you they love you? How do you show someone that you love them?
3. What does it mean to be mentally ill? What about mentally well?
 - What does it mean to be "crazy" ?
 - What kinds of things would you say are "crazy" that people sometimes do?
4. What have you been taught by your parents or other adults about people who are mentally ill? Can someone like this get better?

11. Death and trauma

This domain encompasses the experience of suffering or pain including collective, family and individual trauma. Includes abuse, neglect, loss, racism, epidemics, violence, accidents and disasters. Beliefs and practices surrounding process of death and dying fall in this domain. Also includes illness experiences, learning about illness, symptoms of illness, mental illness, suicide, aging, beliefs about death, first experience with death, grieving, tending to bodies, and funerals/memorials.

1. What are some of the bad things that you have had to deal with in your life? How did you deal with it? Who helped you through it?
2. Have you ever had to deal with racism?

3. Do your parents or grandparents talk to you about what they have gone through in their own lives?
 - What kinds of bad things did your parents or grandparents experience?
4. What was your first experience with death?
5. What happens when someone in the community dies?
 - What kinds of activities go on in the community after a death? Who mostly goes to these activities?
6. What kinds of things do people die from in your community mostly? What about young people?
7. Have you ever lost a friend or family member to suicide?

12. Religious/Spiritual

This domain covers mentions of faith, religion or spirituality. Includes traditional spiritual references as well as Christian doctrine and teachings. In some places Christianity has been indigenized and is syncretic with pre-contact forms of spiritual expression. Includes church attendance, Sunday school, Bible, prayer, spirits, ghosts, higher power, God, faith, reincarnation, sharing, giving thanks, and going out onto the land.

1. How did you learn about God/religion/spirituality? What did your parents tell you about it?
2. What kinds of religious/spiritual activities happen in your community? Do young people go to any of these activities?
3. What do your parents or grandparents say about respect for the land and animals?
4. Do you talk about religion or spirituality with your friends?
 - What kinds of things come up about religion or spirituality when you are with your friends?
5. What do you think happens when we die?
6. Are there stories in the community about ghosts or spirits? Where did you hear them?

13. Cultural identity and traditional knowledge

This domain encompasses beliefs, practices, events, values and ways of life that are associated with "being Athabaskan." Includes subsistence practices, hunting, fishing, getting berries, cutting fish, putting fish/meat away, eating Native foods, making clothing and beading; learning Native language, going out on the land, learning about relatives, going to stick dances, going to community gatherings, sharing, joking, storytelling, etc.

1. What things have you been taught about being Athabascan?
2. What kinds of things do Athabascans do or believe that other people (Non-Athabascan) don't?
3. Are there Athabascan foods? Clothes? Activities?
4. Can you speak in Athabascan or understand?

Ethnographic Interview Guide: Children's Mental Health Adult-Elder Questions

This section will provide ethnographic interview guidelines to assist the field researchers with data collection and provide areas to cover in interviews. The *Interview Domains* indicate, in a general way, the types of information that will be gathered systematically from all participants during the interview process. The Interview Domains are intentionally broad and there is some overlap between the domains. Specific areas for follow-up and elaboration will be organized under each Interview Domain. Each Interview Domain begins with an open-ended, broadly-based question concerning the major domain theme, followed-up with a series of specific prompts. The interview questions will be adapted for the following age-ranges:

Adults: Includes individuals with recognized status as an “adult” member of the community. Adults have typically reached their full productive and reproductive potential, are married, have children, have completed their education, have regular and regular seasonal employment, have recognized competence in subsistence, spend less time with peers and are more involved in the community. Adults are typically people between the ages of 25-55.

Elders: Includes individuals with recognized status as an “elder” in the community or family. Elders typically have adult children, have grandchildren, may or may not have adopted grandchildren or other young children in the home, have recognized knowledge and skills, have role of teacher and mentor, may go out on the land less than the adults, and have earned certain social privileges. Elders are typically people over the age of 55.

1. General/self/everyday life

These are the open-ended “big-picture” questions that allow the participant to talk about their own experiences in a general way. These include childhood and youth experiences, everyday life and norms for children and youth.

How would you describe yourself?

1. Could you tell me about what it was like to be a young person in your village when you were growing up?
2. What are some of your best memories of growing up? What are some of your worst memories?
3. Who would you say were the people that knew you best growing up?
4. What is it like to be a young person in your community today?
5. What do you think is the biggest difference between growing up today and growing up when you were a child or when your parents were children?
 - What is better, to be a young person today or to be a young person a long time ago?

2. Kinship and family

This domain encompasses the dynamics and make up of the participant's family. Who is/was around? What is/was going on? Includes comments on the quality of family relationships, interactions, engagements, etc. Family context includes both positive and negative information, history, ancestry, family expectations and responsibilities, adoption and fosterage.

1. What was your family like when you were growing up?
2. Who raised you?
3. Who did you spend the most time with when you were growing up? What kinds of things did you do together?
4. Who taught you how to do important things when you were young? What kinds of things were you taught?
5. What kinds of things did you do for fun when you were growing up?
6. What things did you really like about your family growing up? What kind of things would you have changed about your family?
7. What kind of things would you have changed about your family?
8. How was your family like other families in your community? How was it different?
9. What things do you really try to teach your children?

3. Rites of passage

Rites of passage are those practices, activities or events that serve as markers for developmental transition from one life stage to another. Rites of passage in a village context can include such practices, activities or events as a boy's first moose, a child's first dance, a girl's first menarche, a girl's first salmon cut properly, graduation from high school, etc.

1. What are some of the major events in a young person's life? Examples could include cooked for the first time, plucked first bird, washing dishes/doing chores on own, served food at potlatch/gathering for first time, began sitting in chairs at gatherings, got driver's license, first snowmachine, learning to drive boat, baptism, confirmation, confession, first gun, etc.
2. When you were younger were there things that you really looked forward to doing when you got older?
 - Did you ever think to yourself, "I can't wait until I get old enough to ride a snowmachine by myself"?
 - What other things did you wish you could do when you got old enough?

3. Are there things that teenagers get to do that younger children can't do?
4. Are there things that only adults can do? Are there things that young people can do that adults can't do?
5. What were you taught by your parents or other adults about growing up?
6. Did you have to do anything different or special when you got your first period?
7. What happened when you made your first catch?

4. Sexuality and gender identity development

Adolescence and youth corresponds to sexual development and formation of gender identity across all cultures with often specific types of gender-based activities engaged by young people and specific types of instructions about sexual development and gender identity. This domain includes learning about sexual development and gender identity; first menses for girls; learning what it means to be a boy or to be a girl; first romantic relationships, first sexual experiences and experimentation; dating, having boyfriends/girlfriends, marriage; being a good mother; being a good father; and teaching and disciplining for boys and girls.

1. What's better in your community, to be a man or to be a woman? What makes it good to be a man/woman? Is there anything bad about being a man/woman? Have you ever wanted to be the opposite?
2. What were you taught by your parents or other adults about the ways that girls or boys should behave? Are there things that girls should always or should never do? Are there things that boys should always or should never do?
3. How did you first find out about sex? Who taught you or talked to you about sex?
4. When did you and your friends start having boyfriends and girlfriends? What kinds of things do you do together in your community?
5. Are boys disciplined differently than girls?
6. What kind of women do men like? What kind of men do women like?
7. What do you tell your children about sex and relationships?

5. Friendships and peer group

Peer groups are social groupings of individuals (sometimes as small as 2 to 5 people, sometimes larger with 10 to 20 people) in the village or community that the young person is with on a consistent and regular basis. They may be same-sex and/or mixed sex groups and usually are of same approximate age. Friendships are those relationships with distantly related kin or non-kin that are trusting, continuous, fun and meaningful for the person. Includes time spend with peers,

peer group activities, being alone versus being with friends, choosing friends, best friends, etc.

1. What kinds of things did you do together with your friends when you were growing up?
2. Were there things you preferred to do by yourself?
3. Did you have a best friend? What made this friend different?
4. Were there people you just couldn't get along with?
5. What kinds of things did you and your friends fight/argue about?
6. How much time do your children spend with their friends?

5. Leisure and fun

This domain encompasses things that young people do for fun in the village, ways that adolescents and youth relax, and ways that adolescents and youth have fun, both as part of a group or on their own. Includes hanging-out, walking around, staying up, hunting, berry picking, snowmachining, boating, dancing, talking, playing games, playing video games, watching television, sledding on hills, basketball, volleyball, other sports, emailing/Internet surfing, reading, etc.

1. What kinds of things did you use to do for fun in your community when you were growing up?
2. Where did you mostly play or hang-out?
3. Describe something fun you use to do by yourself.
4. Were there things you liked to do for fun that your parents didn't like you to do?
5. What are some fun things that use to do with an adult/elder?
6. What do you do for fun now?

5. Schooling/education

This domain encompasses types of formal educational activities young people are involved with in the village and outside of the village. Includes involvement with formal institutions in village or outside of the village having to do with teaching and instruction of children. Includes boarding school experience, village school experience, college and technical training, ideas about education, role of school in everyday life in the villages, teachers, learning at school, sports at school, and completing school.

1. What was school like for you when you were growing up?

2. What are some things you liked about school in your community? What are some things you didn't like about school?
3. Tell me about some of your favorite teachers. Tell me about some teachers you didn't like/didn't get along with.
4. What do young people in your community usually do after they graduate from high school?

7. Work and chores

This domain encompasses productive activities engaged by young people. Includes household chores, paid employment, helping grandparents and elders, chopping wood, hauling water, cutting/hauling ice, putting away fish/meat/birds, going to the store, cooking, and babysitting.

1. What kinds of chores did you do growing up? Who asked you to do these chores?
2. What are other kinds of things did younger people do for work or chores in your community?
3. What kinds of chores do your children do?

8. Social deviance/crime/misconduct

This domain encompasses unproductive activities engaged by young people that go against norms of the community. Includes stealing, vandalism, fighting, staying out all night, abusing substances (MCA or DUI), not listening, teasing, firing weapons in community, disrespecting people and animals, etc.

1. What kinds of things did young people get in trouble for in Kaltag/Huslia when you were growing up? What kinds of things did young people get arrested for? What about today?
2. Describe someone who is "mischief." Describe someone who is "bad."
3. What do you think lets youth begin causing trouble or mischief?
4. What do you think could stop youth from getting into mischief?
5. What does it mean to be "good"? Like when you say to your children, "be good," what do you mean?
6. Can a young person who is considered "bad" change and become "good"?
7. What kind of things do you tell your children never to do?

9. Substance use/abuse

This domain includes mentions of an individual's experiences with alcohol and other drugs such as inhalants, marijuana, pills, cocaine, methamphetamines, etc. Includes first time seeing it used, first time trying it, context and pattern of use (with whom, where, when), family history of use/abuse, feelings about use, and role substances have in life, family, community.

1. How did you first learn about alcohol and drinking? What about other drugs (like pot or sniffing gas)?
2. Did young people ever get into alcohol or drinking when you were growing up? What about other drugs (like marijuana)?
3. Have you ever tried drinking? (What about other drugs like pot or cocaine?)
-When did you first try it? What was it like?
4. What were you taught about alcohol by your parents or other adults? What about other drugs like pot or cocaine?
5. What's good about drinking? What's bad about it? (What's good about pot? Bad about it? What's good about cocaine, bad about it?)
6. What do you tell your children about drinking? What about doing other drugs?

10. Mental health

This domain encompasses emotional development and dealing with intense feelings. Includes identifying feelings, expressing emotion, love between parents and children, love between friends and peers, romantic love, anger, fear and aggression. Also includes references to health, wellness and illness, healing, traditional remedies, taking prescription medications, going to the clinic, going to the hospital, talking funny, etc.

1. When you were a child what kinds of things made you felt happy? What about angry/sad/bored/excited, etc? What about now?
2. When you were growing you how did your parents/grandparents show you they loved you? How did you show someone that you loved them?
3. What does it mean to be mentally ill? What about mentally well?
- What does it mean to be "crazy"?
- What kinds of things would you say are "crazy" that people sometimes do?
4. What were you been taught by your parents or other adults about people who are mentally ill? Can someone like this get better?
5. What do you tell you tell your children about mental illness?

11. Death and trauma

This domain encompasses the experience of suffering or pain including collective, family and individual trauma. Includes abuse, neglect, loss, racism, epidemics, violence, accidents and disasters. Beliefs and practices surrounding process of death and dying fall in this domain. Includes illness experiences; learning about illness, symptoms of illness, mental illness, suicide, aging, beliefs about death, first experience with death, grieving, tending to bodies, and funerals/memorials.

1. What are some of the bad things that you have had to deal with in your life? How did you deal with it? Who helped you through it?
2. What types of things do children sometimes suffer from today in the villages?
-How are they dealing with it? Who is helping them?
3. Have you ever had to deal with racism?
4. What kinds of bad things did your parents or grandparents experience?
5. What was your first experience with death?
6. What happens when someone in the community dies?
-What kinds of activities go on in the community after a death? Who mostly goes to these activities?
7. What kinds of things do people die from in your community mostly? What about young people?
8. Have you ever lost a friend or family member to suicide?
9. Have you ever had anyone in your family attend mission school or boarding school?
-What do you know about their experience?

12. Religious/spiritual

This domain includes mentions of faith, religion or spirituality. Includes traditional spiritual references as well as Christian doctrine and teachings. In some places Christianity has been indigenized and is syncretic with pre-contact forms of spiritual expression. Includes: church attendance, Sunday school, Bible, prayer, spirits, ghosts, higher power, God, faith, reincarnation, sharing, giving thanks, and going out onto the land.

1. How did you learn about God/religion/spirituality? What did your parents tell you about it when you were growing up?
-What do you teach your children about religion or spirituality?

2. What kinds of religious/spiritual activities happen in your community? Do young people go to any of these activities?
3. What did your parents or grandparents say about respect for the land and animals?
-What do you teach your children about respect for the land and animals?
4. What were you taught about what happens when we die?
5. Are there stories in the community about ghosts or spirits? Where did you hear them?
6. What do you know about traditional medicine or traditional spirituality?

13. Cultural identity and traditional knowledge

This domain encompasses beliefs, practices, events, values and ways of life that are associated with “being Athabaskan.” Includes subsistence practices, hunting, fishing, getting berries, cutting fish, putting fish/meat away, eating Native foods, making clothing and beading, learning Native language, going out on the land, learning about relatives, going to stick dances, going to community gatherings, sharing, joking, storytelling, etc.

1. How were you taught about being Athabaskan when you were growing up?
2. What kinds of things do Athabascans do or believe that other people (non-Athabaskan) don't?
3. Are there Athabaskan foods? Clothes? Activities?
4. Can you speak in Athabaskan or understand?
5. How do you teach your own children or grandchildren about their Athabaskan culture?

Ethnographic Interview Guide: Wellness Teams and Local Healing Child-Youth Version

This section will provide ethnographic interview guidelines to assist the field researchers with data collection and provide areas to cover in interviews. The *Interview Domains* indicate, in a general way, the types of information that will be gathered systematically from all participants during the interview process. The Interview Domains are intentionally broad and there is some overlap between the domains. Specific areas for follow-up and elaboration will be organized under each Interview Domain. Each Interview Domain begins with an open-ended, broadly-based question concerning the major domain theme, followed-up with a series of specific prompts. The interview questions will be adapted for the following age-ranges:

Children: Includes young people in the pre-pubescent and early childhood stage and those who have few formal responsibilities and have no recognized status. Children are typically young people between the ages of 7-12.

Adolescents: Includes young people in the post-pubescent range and those who have passed through significant life stages (e.g. obtained first moose; oldest in household and assumed childcare responsibilities, etc), and are recognized as “not little kids” anymore. Typically young people between the ages of 13-17.

Youth: Young people who have either graduated or left high school but who maintain a lifestyle of a young person in the village or who attend college in the city. Youth typically do not have regular fulltime jobs, are not married, do not have children of their own and continue to interact mainly with their own peer group in the village. Youth are typically young people between the ages of 18-24.

1. Health and mental health

This domain includes references to physical and emotional health, wellness and wellbeing. This domain will access things that allow a person to be healthy and the characteristics, traits and features of a “healthy” and “mentally healthy” person, family and community. Primary focus will be given to issues of emotional development, and the relationship between mind and body and society and soma (e.g. “when one person is sick, everyone is sick”) and includes; identifying feelings, expressing emotion, love between parents and children, love between friends and peers, and romantic love.

1. How would you describe a young person who is “healthy”? What about a healthy family? What about a healthy community?
 - What kinds of things let a person stay healthy?
 - What kinds of things let a family stay healthy?
 - What kinds of things let a community stay healthy?

2. How would you describe someone who is just “normal”? How about a normal family? How about a normal community?

3. Are young people healthier than adults?
 - Who is most healthy?
 - Who is the least?
4. Do you feel that your community is healthier today or healthier a long time ago?
5. How would you describe someone who is mentally healthy?
 - What kinds of things let a person stay mentally healthy?
6. What things have you been taught by your parents or grandparents about being healthy?
7. What kinds of things make you feel good?
 - What kinds of things make you feel happy?
 - What about angry... sad... bored... excited?
8. How do other people show you they love you?
 - How do you show someone that you love them?

2. Illness, mental illness and social disruption

This domain includes references to physical, emotional and social problems or abnormality. This domain will focus on characteristics of individuals, families and communities that are unhealthy or problematic and potentially destructive. This domain will include references to illness and disease experiences, mental illness, social disruption, family violence and substance abuse.

1. What kinds of thing can make a person become "unhealthy"?
 - What kinds of things could help them?
 - How would you describe a family that is unhealthy? What about a community that is unhealthy?
2. How would you describe a person who is mentally ill?
 - How do you know when someone has a mental illness?
 - [Use the following probes if "mental illness" needs to be described:]
 - How would you describe someone who is "not right" or "not normal"?
 - What kinds of things make someone "act crazy"?
3. What are some of the scariest things that you've seen?
4. What are the some of the major problems that you and your friends have to deal with?
 - How are you dealing with them?

3. Trauma and adversity

The experience of suffering or pain including collective, family and individual trauma. Includes abuse, neglect, death, racism, epidemics, violence, accidents, disasters and suicide, and the local and cultural responses to these experiences.

1. What are some of the bad or painful things that you have had to deal with in your life?
-How did you deal with it? Who helped you through it?
2. Have you ever had to deal with racism?
3. Do your parents or grandparents talk to you about what they have gone through in their own lives?
-What kinds of bad things did your parents or grandparents experience?
4. What was your first experience with death?
5. What kinds of things do people die from in your community mostly? What about young people?
6. Have you ever lost a friend or family member to suicide?
7. Have you ever had anyone in your family attend mission school or boarding school?
-What do you know about their experience?

4. Healing

Includes things that individuals, families and communities use to be or become healthy and well. Includes references to notions of healing, traditional remedies, medicines, prescription medications, going to the clinic, going to the hospital, talking and opening-up, expressing emotion, counseling, subsistence activities and involvement in community activities, spirituality, faith, recovery and resilience.

1. What kinds of things can help someone get healthy if they are unhealthy?
2. What kinds of things can help a person if they have problems or are in trouble?
3. When you are feeling bad what do you do to make yourself feel better?
4. If there were problems in your family what kinds of things would happen to solve them?
-What other kinds of things or people are available to help families?
5. If there were problems in your community what kinds of things would happen to solve them?

6. What happens in your community when there is a death?
 - What kinds of activities go on in the community after a death? Who mostly goes to these activities?
7. Do you know anyone who has healed or recovered from a major sickness or serious problem? How did they do it?

5. Healers and health service delivery

Includes references to individuals that occupy an official or unofficial position in the community or region that involves helping or healing others. Includes traits and features of a healer, local healers, "medical" healers (doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists), itinerants, etc.

1. Are there people in your community that everyone usually goes to for help when they have problems?
 - What kinds of things make these people good to go see when you have a problem?
 - Where do people if they keep having problems?
2. Who do people go see when they get hurt or ill?
3. Who do people go see when they are depressed or having problems in their life?
4. What are the qualities of a good doctor?
 - What about a good health aide?
5. What are the qualities of a good counselor?

6. Wellness Teams* (for all community members)

This domain will cover areas related to general community knowledge and utilization of wellness teams.

*Members of the wellness team will be asked questions specific to their involvement on the wellness team as part of a WT member focus group and individual interview follow-up.

1. Who is on your community's wellness team?
2. What kind of things does your wellness team help with?
3. What other things do you think your wellness team could do?
4. Would you go to your wellness team for help with problems in your life?
5. Would you send a friend or family member to the wellness team?
6. What kinds of things have you learned from Wellness Teams?

7. What kinds of activities do Wellness Teams do?

7. Social change and health

This domain attempts to access a longitudinal perspective on the health and wellness of the community, families and individuals from those who have witnessed social change over time.

1. What are the biggest problems that young people have to deal with today?
2. What are some of the biggest problems your parents or grandparents had to deal with when they were growing up?
3. What's available today to help young people with their problems?
-What was around a long time ago to help people?
4. What do you think is better to be a young person today or a long time ago?

Ethnographic Interview Guide: Wellness Teams and Local Healing Adults-Elders Version

This section will provide ethnographic interview guidelines to assist the field researchers with data collection and provide areas to cover in interviews. The *Interview Domains* indicate, in a general way, the types of information that will be gathered systematically from all participants during the interview process. The Interview Domains are intentionally broad and there is some overlap between the domains. Specific areas for follow-up and elaboration will be organized under each Interview Domain. Each Interview Domain begins with an open-ended, broadly based question concerning the major domain theme, followed-up with a series of specific prompts. The interview questions will be adapted for the following age-ranges:

Adults: Includes individuals with recognized status as an “adult” member of the community. Adults have typically reached their full productive and reproductive potential, are married, have children, have completed their education, have regular and regular seasonal employment, have recognized competence in subsistence, spend less time with peers and are more involved in the community. Adults are typically people between the ages of 25-55.

Elders: Includes individuals with recognized status as an “elder” in the community or family. Elders typically have adult children, have grandchildren, may or may not have adopted grandchildren or other young children in the home, have recognized knowledge and skills, have role of teacher and mentor, may go out on the land less than the adults, and have earned certain social privileges. Elders are typically people over the age of 55.

1. Health and mental health

This domain includes references to physical and emotional health, wellness and wellbeing. This domain will access things that allow a person to be healthy and the characteristics, traits and features of a “healthy” and “mentally healthy” person, family and community. Primary focus will be given to issues of emotional development, and the relationship between mind and body and society and soma (e.g. “when one person is sick, everyone is sick”) and includes; identifying feelings, expressing emotion, love between parents and children; love between friends and peers and romantic love.

1. How would you describe a “healthy child”? What about a healthy family?
What about a healthy community?
 - What kinds of things let a person stay healthy?
 - What kinds of things let a family stay healthy?
 - What kinds of things let a community stay healthy?
2. How would you describe a “normal child” or “normal teenager”? What about a normal family? What about a normal community?
3. Are young people healthier than older people?

- Who is most healthy?
- Who is the least?

4. Do you feel that your community is healthier today or healthier when you were growing up or when your parents were growing up?
5. How would you describe someone who is mentally healthy?
 - What kinds of things let a person stay mentally healthy?
6. What things were you taught by your parents or grandparents about being healthy?
 - What do you teach your children (or grandchildren) today about being healthy?
7. How were you shown love when you were growing up?
 - How do show your children love?

2. Illness, mental illness and social disruption

This domain includes references to physical, emotional and social problems or abnormality. This domain will focus on characteristics of individuals, families and communities that are unhealthy or problematic and potentially destructive. This domain will include references to illness and disease experiences, mental illness, social disruption, family violence and substance abuse.

1. What kinds of thing can make a person become “unhealthy”?
 - What kinds of things could help them?
 - How would you describe a family that is unhealthy? What about a community that is unhealthy?
2. How would you describe a person who is mentally ill?
 - How do you know when someone has a mental illness?
 - What were you taught about mental illness when you were growing up?
 - What do you teach your children or grandchildren about mental illness?
 - [Use the following probes if “mental illness” needs to be described:]
 - How would you describe someone who is “not right” or “not normal”?
 - What kinds of things make someone “act crazy”?
3. What kinds of problems do you remember having when you were growing up?
 - What did you do about them?
4. What kinds of problems do young people deal with most today?
 - What kinds of things could help them?

3. Trauma and adversity

The experience of suffering or pain including collective, family and individual trauma. Includes abuse, neglect, death, racism, epidemics, violence, accidents, disasters and suicide; and the local and cultural responses to these experiences.

1. What are some of the painful things that you have had to deal with in your life growing up?
-How did you deal with it? Who helped you through it?
2. What types of things do children sometimes suffer from today in the villages?
-How are they dealing with it? Who is helping them?
3. Have you ever had to deal with racism?
4. What kinds of bad things did your parents or grandparents experience?
5. What was your first experience with death?
6. What happens when someone in the community dies?
7. What kinds of things do people die from in your community mostly? What about young people?
8. Have you ever lost a friend or family member to suicide?
9. Have you ever had anyone in your family attend mission school or boarding school?
-What do you know about their experience?

4. Healing

Includes things that individuals, families and communities use to be or become healthy and well. Includes references to notions of healing, traditional remedies, medicines, prescription medications, going to the clinic, going to the hospital, talking and opening-up, expressing emotion, counseling, subsistence activities and involvement in community activities, spirituality, faith, recovery and resilience.

1. What kinds of things can help someone get healthy if they are unhealthy?
2. What kinds of things can help a person if they have problems or are in trouble?
3. When you are feeling bad what do you do to make yourself feel better?
4. If there were problems in your family what kinds of things would happen to solve them?
-What other kinds of things or people are available to help families?
5. If there were problems in your community what kinds of things would happen to solve them?
6. What happens in your community when there is a death?

-Is it different if the death is accidental or intentional? What about if it's a young person?

-What kinds of activities go on in the community after a death? Who mostly goes to these activities?

7. Do you know anyone who has healed or recovered from a major sickness or serious problem? How did they do it?

5. Healers and health service delivery

Includes references to individuals that occupy an official or unofficial position in the community or region that involves helping or healing others. Includes traits and features of a healer, local healers, "medical" healers (doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists), itinerants, etc.

1. When you were growing up, who did people go see when they were having problems?
 - Where did people go when their problems couldn't be solved in the community?
2. Are there people in your community today that everyone usually goes to for help when they have problems?
 - What kinds of things make these people good to go see when you have a problem?
 - What happens to people today if they keep having problems?
3. Who do people go see when they get hurt or ill?
4. Who do people go see when they are depressed or having problems in their life?
5. What are the qualities of a good doctor?
 - What about a good health aide?
6. What are the qualities of a good counselor?

6. Wellness Teams* (for all community members)

This domain will cover areas related to general community knowledge and utilization of wellness teams.

*Members of the wellness team will be asked questions specific to their involvement on the wellness team as part of a WT member focus group and individual interview follow-up.

1. Who is on your community's wellness team?
2. What kind of things does your wellness team help with?
3. What other things do you think your wellness team could do?

4. Would you go to your wellness team for help with problems in your life?
5. Would you send a friend or family member to the wellness team?
6. What kinds of things have you learned from Wellness Teams?
7. What kinds of activities do Wellness Teams do?

7. Social change and health

This domain attempts to access a longitudinal perspective on the health and wellness of the community, families and individuals from those who have witnessed social change over time. This domain is particularly relevant to the experience and knowledge of the community elders.

1. What were the major problems that young people had to deal with when you were growing up? What about a long time ago or in your grandparents or great-grandparents time?
 - What are the major problems that young people in the community are dealing with today?
2. How were problems with youth dealt with a long time ago?
3. How were people treated for sickness a long time ago?
4. How were problems in the family or community dealt with a long time ago?
 - How was suicide dealt with a long time ago?
 - How was serious drinking dealt with a long time ago?
 - How was violence in the community or family dealt with a long time ago?
5. What's being done today to help the youth with their problems?

Focus Groups

Focus groups are intended to provide an avenue for community-based discourse on issues of Children's Mental Health and Wellness Teams. Focus groups have the advantage of capturing diversity and allowing multiple perspectives to be shared in a common space. Focus groups can be more difficult to manage and at times may require more than one researcher present to make sure the group is productive, and to provide additional follow-up support if needed. Participants for focus groups will be recruited through advertising by VHF, posters and invitation. Focus groups can be community events with door prizes and snacks that provide a context for knowledge sharing and a place to have fun and socialize.

Focus Group Procedures:

1. One focus group will be conducted each month of the PD's fieldwork in each of the research communities.
2. One week prior to each focus group meeting the PD will post flyers and make announcements in the community.
3. The project PI, RA or VRA will assist in planning, organizing and facilitating the focus groups with the PD.
4. Door prizes and refreshments will be provided at each focus group and individual participants will also receive monetary compensation for their contribution.
5. Prior to the start of each focus group the PD will explain the project and go over the expectations for the focus group. The PD will then distribute the informed consent forms and ask participants to read them over carefully. After the participants have had a chance to read the consent forms they will be asked if they have any questions. The participants will then be asked to sign the consent form and will be provided with copies for their records.
6. After the consent process, the recorders will be started and the focus group will begin.
7. The focus group participants will be asked to respond to a set of questions and then complete one group activity.
8. There will be one intermission during the focus group and breaks can be taken when needed.
9. Focus groups will last between 2-3 hours.
10. Compensation and door prize drawings will occur at the close of the focus group, but participants who cannot stay for the entire duration will still receive compensation.

Focus Group Guides

Elders Focus Group

This focus group attempts to access a longitudinal perspective on the health and wellness of the community, families and individuals from those who have witnessed social change over time. This domain is particularly relevant to the experience and knowledge of the community elders.

Questions

1. What was it like in the village when you were growing up?
 - What did you do for fun when you were a child?
 - Who did you spend the most time with?
 - Who taught you how to do things?
 - What did you spend most of your time doing when you were a child?

2. What were you taught by your parents and/or grandparents when you were growing up?
 - What did they teach you about values or what's right and what's wrong?
 - What did they teach you about respect for the land and animals?
 - What did they teach you about drinking or drugs?
 - What did they teach you about love and relationships?
 - What did they teach you about your culture?

3. What were the major problems that young people had to deal with when you were growing up?
 - What about a long time ago, in your grandparents or great-grandparents time, what kinds of things did they have to deal with?

4. How were problems in the family or community dealt with a long time ago?
 - How was suicide dealt with a long time ago?
 - How was serious drinking dealt with a long time ago?
 - How was violence in the community or family dealt with a long time ago?
 - How were problems with youth dealt with a long time ago?

5. What are the major problems that young people in the community are dealing with today?

6. What's being done today to help the youth with their problems?

7. What do you try and teach your children or grandchildren today?

8. What do you know about Wellness Teams?
 - Who is on your community Wellness Team?
 - What kinds of things does the Wellness Team in your community do?
 - What kinds of things do you learn from Wellness Teams?
 - What could be improved about your community Wellness Team?
 - How are elders part of the Wellness Team?

Youth Focus Group

This focus group will be conducted with young people in the community between the ages of 14-19. Youth participants will be asked to talk about their everyday lives in the community and to reconstruct a picture of “how it was”, and create a group picture of “how it is now.” They will also be asked to discuss the major problems or difficulties they have encountered or are currently dealing with and the services and resources available to them in their community.

Questions

1. What is it like to be a young person in your community?
2. Describe a “normal” day for someone your age in the summer (and then winter).
 - What’s an example of something exciting?
 - What’s an example of something that’s boring?
3. What do you think is the biggest difference between growing up today and growing up when your parents or grandparents did?
4. What are the biggest problems that young people have to deal with today?
 - What kinds of things do young people get in trouble for?
5. What are some of the biggest problems your parents or grandparents had to deal with when they were growing up?
6. What’s available today to help young people with their problems?
 - What was around a long time ago to help people?
7. What do you think is better to be a young person today or a long time ago?
8. What kinds of things do your parents or grandparents teach you?
 - What did they teach you about values or what’s right and what’s wrong?
 - What did they teach you about respect for the land and animals?
 - What did they teach you about drinking or drugs?
 - What did they teach you about love and relationships?
 - What did they teach you about your culture?
9. What do you wish your parents or others had told you more about?
10. What do you know about Wellness Teams?
 - Who is on your Wellness Team?
 - What do they do in your community?
 - Who do they help?
 - What have you learned from the Wellness Team?

Community Focus Group

This focus group is open to all community members and will cover areas including:

- The changing experiences of children and youth in the community;
- The strengths and importance of young people in the community;
- The most urgent problems that children and youth are experiencing in the villages;
- The resources available for young people in their own communities and
- Other things that could be done to improve the lives of young people in the community.

All community members, from youth to elders, are encouraged to attend and participate in this discussion.

Questions

1. What is it like to be a young person in the village today?
 - What is a normal day for a younger person (say 8-13 years old)?
 - What is a normal day for a teenager (14-19)?
 - What do young people do for fun in the village?
 - Who are they with mostly?
 - What are they learning from their parents/grandparents?
 - About values and right living?
 - About respect for the land and animals?
 - About drinking or drugs?
 - About love and relationships?
 - About culture and who they are?
2. In what ways do you think that growing up is different today than it was a few generations back?
 - Is it better to be a young person today or a long time ago?
3. What are some of the good things about growing up in your community today?
4. What are some of the challenges or hardships that young people experience growing up?
5. What are some of the primary strengths of young people today?
6. What are some of the most urgent or difficult problems that young people are experiencing in the village today?
7. What kinds of things are available in your community for young people who need help with these problems?
8. What happens in your community when there is a tragedy or serious disturbance?
9. What is the role of the Wellness Team in your community?
 - What kinds of things do they do? Activities? Education? Groups? Presentations? Counseling? Referral?
 - Who do they help?

- What kinds of things do you learn from a Wellness Team?
- What do you expect of your Wellness Team and its members?
- What else could your Wellness Team be doing in your community?

Wellness Team Members Focus Group/Interview

The topic of this focus group (or individual interview follow-up) is on issues related to the development and function of the wellness team in the community, including who the wellness team helps, and the ways in which the wellness team, and its individual members, helps and heals. Members of the wellness team in each community will be asked to talk about their role as a wellness team member, including how they came to be on the wellness team, their role in helping others as a wellness team member, their experiences with self-care and personal healing, and their thoughts on improving, expanding or maintaining the wellness team in the community.

Questions

1. What do you remember or what were you taught by the elders about how community, family or individual problems were solved a long time ago?
 - What kinds of problems did people experience mostly a long time ago?
 - What kinds of problems are people in the community experiencing mostly now?
2. What types of services or resources were available for people in the community before the wellness team?
3. How did the wellness team first begin?
4. What types of problems or issues does the wellness team address?
 - How does the team decide what problems to address?
5. What kinds of things does the Wellness Team do in the community? Activities? Groups? Trainings? Counseling? Presentations? Care Coordination?
6. How does someone become a wellness team member?
7. Have there been any changes to the Wellness Team since it began?
 - What changes have you seen to the Wellness Team?
8. What do people in the community expect of a wellness team member?
9. How do members of the wellness team maintain or achieve their own health and wellbeing?
10. What are some of the challenges facing the wellness team in your community?
11. What are some of the greatest success stories from the wellness team in your community?

Field Diaries

Field diaries serve as commentaries that can be used to create a record of the researcher's own experiences, interpretations and reactions during fieldwork. All research team members will keep a field diary when they are engaged in the research process. The PD and VRAs will keep a field diary during the field-based data collection. Field diaries will be part of the preliminary analysis, and will be used to guide the questions for future analyses. Field diaries will be an important part of documenting the CBPR process from the perspectives of the entire research team. Field diaries will be the primary data for researching and reporting on how CBPR works with an interdisciplinary and multicultural team of researchers, community partners, mental health professionals, and local community representatives. Due to the personal nature of field diaries they will initially be analyzed collaboratively by the PD and VRA. An edited version will be created for analysis by the entire team.

Field Diary Entry Example

7/04 – On Pool Hall

Sat outside of pool hall last night and watched the comings and goings from the back of a friend's Honda (friend was in pool hall). Really long night – weather good. Saw some of what I expected. Younger youth outside mainly, especially after curfew. Younger youth hang out in the back of the pool hall. Why back? Front entrance open to main road. Main road patrolled by cops and adults (possibly parents among those). Behind the pool hall is a small side trail and the river bank. Fish and game have trailers back behind there and cops tell me kids like to throw rocks at the FG trailers. Didn't see this but I was sitting right there in plain view. Not many girls out last night – where were they? Young girls approached me most easily and openly. Younger boys second and then older male youth. Older female youth did not approach or talk – some would smile and make brief eye contact – many not at all. Depended if I knew them from another context. Seems to be typical of my interactions with older female youth – described by many adult female informants as "shy" (positive value). Most restricted/controlled behavior associated with older female youth in villages (15-22 or married) – makes intuitive sense (protection for unmarried reproductive females)? Ask more about this? Still felt a bit "undercover" – even though sitting in plain view taking notes openly. Younger kids joked re: names – concern showing though humor and teasing? Kids would come up and say hey do you want to know his name over there, it's "X", and then would run away laughing. Most other kids would remark "it's so boring out here tonight" and would proceed to tell me about some other night when "exciting stuff" would happen. The exciting stuff would almost always include the cops (running from, yelling at, tricking and outsmarting, etc). Explore further this relationship between younger youth and cops. I was still surprised with total lack of adults. Adults always on main road but would not stop or even glance over. Did not see any other adults intervene on youth except for two VPOs. Saw one or two older adults go into PH but only for food. Why such strict avoidance? Adults consider it "place for kids" but a necessary and acceptable one. It is considered a "safe" place for youth to be at night. Prefer to have them at PH then "roaming around" village.

Qu – What youth do not go to pool hall?
Qu – What are female youth doing if not at PH?
Qu – Where do kids get money for PH?
Qu – PH as positive community outlet for youth?
Qu – PH contributing to generational segregation?

Field Diary Procedures:

1. All team members will receive a notebook and/or minicassette recorder to record their thoughts and impressions of the research process.
2. The PD will add a new entry into her field diary daily while in the field conducting the primary data collection.
3. The VRAs will record a new entry into their field dairies once a week or more often depending on the level of their involvement with the project and its team members. When the PD is in the VRAs community, there may be more opportunity to add new field diary entries.
4. All team members will record entries on the research process after team meetings, during visits to the research communities and during research team retreats.

Part III: Phase II Data Collection

Brief Ethnographic Follow-ups

The goals of Phase II include: (1) verification of the definition of children's mental health and indicators with each of the participant communities, and (2) examination of the concordance between stated practices of the Wellness Team and actual practices. Phase II will involve an intensive period of follow-up in each of the study villages. The goals of Phase II are to clarify the indicators of children's mental health identified by the team and to provide a period for verification and elaboration on key questions and processes described during initial data collection. Additionally, we will examine the issue of concordance between stated practice and actual practice of the Wellness Team through ethnographic means. Preliminary research findings that arise from the initial data analysis and coding of the data during the first year will be brought back to the communities and "tested" with follow-up focus groups and interviews. Phase II will be more directed and the interviews will tend to be more structured and specific to answering questions that followed from the Phase I data. Phase II will also include sharing theories and ideas with community members to verify the cultural consistency of our preliminary analysis with local concepts. It should be noted that we anticipate that Phase I will have illuminated existing tensions and points of dissonance that may, for example, be related to intergenerational differences or gender. We therefore anticipate that there may be considerable variation on what is deemed "culturally consistent."

Two months of follow-up have been allotted for each of the two villages. The PD will conduct follow-up interviews with key informants and project participants in each of the villages and the PI and PD will travel to each of the villages for two days to present preliminary findings to one focus group and one general community meeting. These meetings will serve to facilitate a general community consensus on the research findings and serve as initial avenues for dissemination of the research findings back to the community. These meetings will be taped and transcribed and the results will be incorporated into the data analysis.

Brief Ethnographic Follow-Up Procedures:

1. The PD and PI will travel to each of the participant communities to present preliminary findings from the Phase I data collection.
2. The research team will create village specific follow-up plans that are designed to fill in areas of significance that may have been overlooked or underdeveloped in the Phase I data collection.
3. A Phase II field manual will be developed following these communities presentations, and will include an interview guide for the PD to utilize in each of the participant villages that is more focused to the specific areas that need more elaboration or explication.
4. The PD will schedule return visits to each of the participant communities. The return visit may be broken out into two or three return trips of shorter duration or a consecutive one longer term duration depending on the circumstances in the community and the specified needs for follow-up by the research team. Two months have been allotted for follow-up.
5. The PD will attempt to conduct return visits to the participant communities in the opposite season from the original field stay.
6. The PD will conduct focused interviews with participants where needed and will observe key activities or events not witnessed in the initial visit.

College Student Interviews

Interviews will be conducted with 5-10 young students whose primary residence is in one of the research communities, but who are in Fairbanks for the purposes of attending UAF. These interviews will be a modified version of the Ethnographic interviews on Children's Mental Health that were conducted in the communities. The purpose of interviewing youth while they are in Fairbanks is twofold. First these interviews will provide a strengths-based perspective from those young people who have continued or advanced their education beyond high school. The second purpose is to triangulate our data set by interviewing young people in a different context where they may find greater freedom to speak openly and honestly about their lives in the villages. The PD has experience with interviewing young people in the village and interviewing them in Fairbanks and has found that the shift in context from local/private to urban/public makes a difference in the types of information provided in during an interview. What may not be appropriate for discussion in the local community context may be allowed in an urban/college community context. These interviews may also serve to validate hypotheses and interpretations from the data gathered during Phase I. College students from the participant communities will be identified by UAF Rural Student Services and by the PD during the Phase I fieldwork.

College Student Interview Procedures:

1. The PI and PD will revise and submit an IRB application for the college student interviews to be conducted as part of the Phase II follow-up research.
2. The PD, in collaboration with the research team, will revise the ethnographic interview guides for use in the college student interviews in Fairbanks.
3. The PD and RA will begin to recruit participants for the college student interviews.
4. The PD and RA will collect 5-10 formal interviews with young college students from the participant communities or closely neighboring communities.
5. The interviews will be recorded, transcribed, coded and entered into ATLAS.ti for data analysis.

Part IV: Data Analysis

Data Management

Due to the large amount of raw data that will be generated in remote field sites there is a need for a multilevel system of data management to ensure the protection, confidentiality and integrity of the data. The PD will have the primary responsibility of managing the data that is collected in the field. The PD will store electronic files (digital audio recordings and text documents) on a password protected laptop computer while in the village and will send electronic files by secure email attachment to the RA in Fairbanks. MP3 recordings and a CD/DVD copy will be sent in by mail once a month to the RA for proper storage and transcription. The PD will keep one CD copy of the original MP3 recording for backup purposes in case of failure of the mail delivery system and to use for transcription if needed. The MP3 and CD copies will be kept in a locked watertight case in the village. When the PD laptop computer is not in use, it will also be stored in a locked case in the village. The PD will back-up the data onto an external flashdrive and store the flashdrive in a secure location in her primary residence in the village. The Fairbanks-based RA will download the electronic files upon receipt to the ATLAS.ti workstation, and will back up the files on a separate flashdrive, stored in a secure locked cabinet in the research office. The MP3 minidiscs and CD copies will be filed into a locked file cabinet in the research office. The RA will make an extra CD copy to send to the transcriber. Hard copies of all interview transcripts will be kept in another file in a locked cabinet in the research office.

Data Management Procedures:

1. Data collected in the field will be stored on a password protected computer. When the computer is not in active use, it will be stored in a combination locked steel-case briefcase.
2. All electronic files, both text and digital audio, will be sent by secure email to the RA in Fairbanks once a week.
3. The RA will download these file upon receipt and back up the files onto an external flashdrive. All project data will be stored on the ATLAS.ti work station and backed up on the CANHR shared drive in a secure folder accessible only to R34 project team members.
4. MP3 recordings will be transferred onto CDs or DVDs. The original MP3 minidisc and one of the CD copies will be sent by Express Mail back to Fairbanks.
5. The RA will make an extra CD copy to send out to the transcriber. The MP3 minidisc and CD copies will be labeled and filed in a locked file cabinet in the research office.
6. The RA will create files for hard copies of the transcripts as they come back from the transcriber or are sent in from the PD in the field.
7. The RA will assign the incoming data as Primary Documents in ATLAS.ti.
8. The RA will enter the codes from fieldnotes and transcripts sent in by the PD and PI into ATLAS.ti.

9. The RA will ensure that all the data is routinely backed up on multiple mediums (flashdrive, CANHR server, hard-drive) and hard copies are made of critical documents (interview and focus group transcripts).

Coding

Ethnographic coding involves line-by-line categorization of specific notes (in the case of field notes) and segments of text (in the case of interviews and focus groups). Qualitative analytic coding usually proceeds in two different phases. *Open coding* is the initial phase in the analysis of a qualitative data set. In opening coding the researcher reads the notes or text segments line-by-line to identify and formulate all ideas, themes or issues they suggest. At this stage of analysis the researcher is allowing the data to speak for itself and pulls codes directly from the data. For our project we will open code a subset of the data by highlighting all the key terms, words, phrases and quotations in the note or interview/focus group segment. The PI, PD and RA will open code every seventh transcript and every tenth fieldnote together to calculate a reliability kappa with a score of $>.81$. During the opening coding of the primary documents each researcher will begin to compile a set of ideas, insights and connections from the data. The researcher will note these in *memos* that will be attached to certain notes or segments of text. These *memos* will be added into the ATLAS.ti database along with the coded primary documents. Opening coding will produce a set of themes or *domains* that tend to recur within the data and/or have particular relevance and significance to the project's guiding questions. These themes or domains will be associated with particular notes or segments of text through the process of *focused coding*. Focused coding is when the researcher or research team re-approaches the data with specific questions and pulls for themes and connections that speak to the research question. In focused coding the researcher or research team uses a smaller set of ideas or concepts that have arisen from the open coding to analyze the data. Open coding for themes, concepts, connections and ideas most relevant to the research project and its aims will begin as soon as the data collection starts. Focused coding will occur after the initial research team coding consensus meeting and will continue throughout the duration of the project as new questions and areas of significance are discovered.

Example of a coded segment from a Primary Document (PD)

Section 11	Domain Codes/Themes
<p>R. The [REDACTED] that had the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] for us as a [REDACTED] in that group of the [REDACTED] (<i>inaudible</i>). December 23, 1993, the day I moved into my house, two days before [REDACTED]. They took his [REDACTED] out and didn't bring him back until December 30 or January 1. So we didn't have Christmas. We didn't have [REDACTED]. We had a [REDACTED] for nine days. And the [REDACTED] it as a suicide and they [REDACTED]. And they [REDACTED].</p>	<p>Suicide Wellness Teams Holidays Death rituals Grief/grieving Response to suicide – community Response to suicide – family Talk – “they talked about it”</p>

*Highlighted words are open codes.

Coding Procedures:

1. Open coding of the data (notes and interviews) will begin upon its collection in the field.
2. The PD will code a subset of the notes and interviews and the PI and RA will code another subset of the notes and interviews.
3. The coding team (PI, PD, RA) will open code every seventh transcript and every tenth field note together.
4. The coding team will identify a smaller set of themes, concepts or ideas that will be compiled and presented to the entire research team as a preliminary set of themes (or focused codes).
5. The entire research team will meet quarterly to review the coding and findings and to suggest possible interpretations and other areas of inquiry.
6. After the team has reviewed the preliminary set of themes, focused coding will begin.
7. A small set of research foci or questions will be proposed by the research team, and the data will be analyzed using the smaller set of themes, concepts and ideas in a focused way that addresses more specifically the researcher team's primary interests and questions.
8. Focused coding of the data will produce the thick descriptions, meaningful connections, thematic structures and theoretical models for more general dissemination in scholarly publications, reports and presentations.
9. The research team will convene to review the findings from the focused coding prior to dissemination.

Team Review

The CBPR design of the research project entails regular team meetings to meet and discuss the research at all levels of the process. The entire research team will meet quarterly in Fairbanks to review the research project's progress and participate in each phase of the project, from the planning to the data collection and to data analysis and dissemination. In view of our use of the CBPR approach, we anticipate that our research team's interpretation of the data will be validated by community interpretations. The CBPR approach contrasts using the "outsider expert" approach. The "outsider approach" has proven particularly problematic among small, diverse and interconnected communities in that at times it has resulted in highly divergent interpretations of the findings based on whether one was an "insider" or "outsider" and essentially a rejection of their findings by the "insiders." Nonetheless, researchers promoting the CBPR approach are not immune from data interpretation dilemmas that ensue from a community that is deeply divided on a controversial issue. We will endeavor to work through any interpretative dilemmas respectfully and with the full participation of a broad range of community members in concert with our research team. Further, we will report unresolved differences of opinion and/or interpretation. Team review of the research findings will become particularly important as the coding of the data progresses and the predominant and recurring themes, connections and ideas begin to emerge. At each quarterly meeting the team will consensus code several notes and segments of interview and focus group text. This process of team consensus coding will ensure that our findings and analyses are based on the collective interpretation of the team and not only on a smaller subset of primary coders. The research team was introduced to the concept of data coding at the initial full research team meeting. The entire team was then asked to code two sections of focus group text. Each individual took some time to open code the segment of text and then each person read their codes and a master code list was compiled. The team then spent some time discussing interpretations and promising connections between some of the themes in the text.

Example of data segment consensus coded by the Research Team [8/2005]

Section 21	Codes
M: Who provides the support?	
R: Here. [REDACTED]	Wellness Team-support
R: People are [REDACTED] about it too. Even [REDACTED], [REDACTED]. They [REDACTED] it any more.	Wellness Team- how it began
R: With the [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] But I think it was the [REDACTED]. People [REDACTED] [REDACTED] about any of these things if it wasn't somebody who [REDACTED]. I mean we started because we [REDACTED] and all the [REDACTED] and the [REDACTED] going to school [REDACTED]; that was the reason why we got together. And so then people started saying I remember saying at that time that this was [REDACTED]. I thought they're right; it is normal. [REDACTED] so who am I to say that it wasn't the normal thing? So that's when we [REDACTED].	Domestic violence Talk/talking about it/not talking Law enforcement Community Child neglect* [Children not being taken care of]
R: It wasn't healthy. It was [REDACTED] but it [REDACTED]!	Drinking
R: Right!	Normal parents teaching**
R: It was the [REDACTED].	

* This code was assigned by several of the Research Team members but was changed in the process of consensual coding with the full team present. Our consultant and VRAs thought the code carries Western legal and social implications that may not apply in an Athabaskan context. Some of the team members were using criteria standardized within a Western psychological and biomedical frame to indicate "child neglect" that includes such things as children not going to school, not getting enough to eat and not getting enough sleep. Assigning this code is premature at this stage of coding before we have a clear understanding of the standards, terms and meanings used within the local community. The code was reassigned to "Children not being take care of." Further analysis of this PD segment supports the code change to reflect that fact that "Children not being taken care of" may be normal but not healthy.

“Child neglect” reflects a behavior that is clearly outside of the socially accepted norm.

** This code was suggested by several research team members, and the team decided collectively that this theme represented the key concept for this PD segment. The village-based research team members provided insight and understanding into the concept of “normal but not healthy,” and this theme or concept was flagged by the research team for further investigation and analysis. The team collectively chose the most promising analytical concept that arose from this piece of primary data.

Team Review Procedures:

1. The primary coding team (PI, PD and RA) will begin open coding of the data as it is collected.
2. The coding team will begin to set aside particularly rich, important, unexpected or challenging pieces of data for the team to review and consensus code collectively at the next quarterly meeting.
3. The coding team will compile a preliminary set of themes, concepts and ideas (domains) to be presented to the team at each quarterly meeting.
4. At the second quarterly meeting the CBPR team will consensus code several notes and segments of interview and focus group text.
5. The team will review a preliminary set of themes compiled by the primary coding team.
6. The CBPR team will suggest other important themes and connections from the data they coded.
7. The CBPR team will suggest promising areas and questions for focused coding.
8. At the third and fourth quarterly meetings, the CBPR team will focus code several sections of data.
9. The CBPR team will suggest possible meanings, interpretations and connections from the data.
10. At the fifth quarterly meeting the CBPR team will code parts of the follow-up data (notes and interviews/focus groups).
11. The CBPR team will review models, theories and interpretations proposed by the core researchers (PI, Co-PI and PD) and will suggest areas for further analysis and alternative interpretation.
12. The CBPR team will decide upon the most appropriate places and mediums for dissemination of the team findings.

ATLAS.ti

This section will discuss the purpose of using a data management software program to organize and manage the data for the project. Qualitative data management systems allow for large amounts of data to be stored, coded and accessed efficiently by all members of the research team. Our research team has chosen to use ATLAS.ti as the data management software system because it has been proven reliable, is user-friendly and the field research coordinator has had formal training using this program. All team members will be instructed on how to access data using the ATLAS.ti program, but only two members of the research team, the RA and PD, will be trained on how to enter data into the program and code data within the program. The ATLAS.ti workstation will be located in the research office in Fairbanks. Data sent in from the villages will be entered into ATLAS.ti and coded in ATLAS.ti by the RA or the undergraduate assistant. The PD will oversee the data entry and will conduct queries and searches in ATLAS.ti as part of the analysis phase.

ATLAS.ti uses the *Hermeneutic Unit (HU)*, as the data structure for each project created within ATLAS.ti. For each project HU there can be an almost unlimited number of *Primary Documents (PD)* assigned. Primary Documents include transcripts of interviews and focus groups, audio recordings, field notes, memos, diary entries, maps and photographs. The PDs will be read or reviewed carefully by the team to discover and extract the particularly rich and relevant passages (segments). These will then be coded, and consensus coded by the PI, PD and RA, with a reliability kappa of $>.81$. The data will also be subject to quarterly team review. The coded PDs will be entered into ATLAS.ti and from the process of coding and team review we will begin to build our theories by making the connections between the larger domains or themes that arise from the data and find resonance and meaning for the team. ATLAS.ti will assist in creating visual representations of these networks of themes that run through the HU.

Atlas.ti Procedures:

1. The ATLAS.ti work station will be set up in the research office.
2. Three HUs will be created prior to the PD's departure to the field, one for "Children's Mental Health in Cross-Culture Perspective," the other for "Wellness Teams and Local Healing," and the last on "CBPR in Alaska Native Communities."
3. The PD and RA will add the initial PDs to each HU to begin the database (e.g. Pathways focus group data, field notes from research team meetings and relevant documents from grant application).
4. The PD will send in PDs from the field either by mail or electronically for the RA to download or upload into ATLAS.ti.
5. The PD will code fieldnotes and transcripts in the field and mail in the data for the RA to enter into ATLAS.ti.
6. The RA and PI will also code fieldnotes and transcripts from Fairbanks and RA will enter these as PDs into ATLAS.ti.

7. On the PD's return trips to Fairbanks she will assist the RA in running queries in ATLAS.ti to begin preliminary analysis of the data and locate areas that have not been coded and may need further follow-up.
8. Once a week the RA will backup ATLAS.ti onto a password protected server and external flashdrive.

Part V: Sharing the Knowledge

Community Presentations and Reports

In months 18-24 of Phase II, the research team will convene to discuss options for sharing the knowledge and data with the participating communities. It is a high priority within this Research Team to ensure that major findings are made accessible to the participating communities and are given back in a way that is most appropriate and consistent with local norms of learning and understanding. We will endeavor to communicate findings back to the communities in multiple ways. The two participating communities will be provided with a final report of findings from the project written for a general audience, and will be provided with the option of having the report presented orally to the community by key Research Team members. Copies of the final report from the project will also be sent to all tribes and villages within the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) region. At this time the Research Team will also discuss other options for sharing findings and data with the communities, including newsletters, PSAs, pamphlets and other community-based presentation venues.

Community Presentations and Reports Procedures:

1. Major findings from the project will be included in a final report that will be given to the participating communities, surrounding Athabascan communities and organizations, and the grant-funding agency.
2. The PI and PD will present the final report to the two participating communities in a closing celebration for this piece of the project.
3. The Research Team will compile a list of options for communicating results and findings within the Alaska Native communities and to youth.
4. The Research Team will choose two other informal options for sharing the knowledge with community members and youth in Alaska and will prepare a schedule for producing these materials in a timely way.

Publications

Throughout the research project, team members will focus on producing publications that document the project's progress throughout the research process. These publications will contribute in a significant and meaningful way to the general and cross-cultural knowledge of children's mental health, wellness teams and mental health service delivery in rural and remote locales. These publications will share the project's results with a broad audience that includes mental health professionals and other researchers. These types of publications will include journal articles, book chapters and books. The research team will produce articles, chapters and books for publication in peer-reviewed journals in the psychological and anthropological disciplines. To date, the research team has submitted one article for publication (*Koverola et al., Impact of Trauma on Alaska Native Youth: Searching for Solutions. Submitted: Trauma, Violence and Abuse: A Review Journal*); and is in the process of preparing another for submission (*Koverola et al., Community-based Participatory Research in Alaska Native Villages*). Articles prepared for publication are sent out to the research team for review before they are submitted. All research team members will be encouraged to take the lead on a publication or make significant contributions to the development or preparation of the manuscript.

Publications Procedures:

1. The individual team member or the entire team will identify a meaningful and important area for analysis and/or review.
2. One research team member will take the lead to draft the paper and other team members will contribute in significant ways to the development and interpretation of the data.
3. When the paper is ready for submission, the research team will have the chance to review it and make comments or suggestions.
4. The lead author can then make changes and edits and submit the paper.

Grant Writing

The empirically based description of Wellness Teams will provide a foundation from which to pose the next two research questions, namely: (1) What is the mechanism by which Wellness Teams effect a change in children's mental health? and (2) Are Wellness Teams an effective approach to improving children's mental health in Alaska villages? The ROI that will be produced as a result of this project will utilize the indicators of children's mental health as a primary outcome measure. The first step will be to investigate the mechanism by which the Wellness Teams impact children's mental health as measured by the indicators, ideally in two or more regions of Alaska. The next step will be to investigate the effectiveness of Wellness Teams in several regions of Alaska. The final step will be to investigate the effectiveness of Wellness Teams throughout Alaska.

The research will also contribute data that tribes and tribal organizations can use to write their own grants to help support wellness teams or promote programs designed to increase children's mental health and well-being.

Grant Writing Procedures:

1. In month 18-24, the Project PI will have the primary role of developing and writing an NIMH R01 and/or other R-series grants that build on what was learned through the R34 research.
2. The other research team members will assist the Project PI in reporting the major findings, gathering permissions from other tribes or regional corporations interested in participating in a follow-up, and developing a CBPR team with members from the new regions or villages.
3. The PD will write a minority supplement or her own grant from the project under the mentorship of the Project PI.

Part VI: Informed Consent

Informed Consent

The process of obtaining consent from participants is meant to be an empowering experience and will be explained to each participant as such. We want community members to know that we respect their knowledge and value their time and their willingness to share a piece of their lives with us. Ensuring that the consent to participate in the project is truly informed is a priority in the project. Consent forms will be used for all individuals who participate in formal interviewing, both on an individual basis and as part of a focus group. The research team will seek tribal consent to conduct participant observation in the communities. This will involve detailing the process of recording observations and anonymizing the data collected. The process of obtaining consent from participants is meant to be an empowering experience and will be explained to each participant as such. We will use separate consent forms for the interviews and for the focus groups detailing the process of recording observations and anonymizing the data collected. The consent and assent forms will also include a detailed description of the potential risks and benefits to participating in the project and the individual protections and safety procedures in place.

Informed Consent Procedures :

Adults

1. Potential interview and focus group participants will be contacted and the project will be explained to them verbally. If the participant agrees to participate in an interview or a focus group, a meeting time and place will be decided.
2. Each individual interview and focus group will begin with a review of the project aims and goals. The participant will be asked again if they are willing to be interviewed. The participants will then be provided with a copy of the informed consent form and asked to read it over carefully.
3. After the participant has read the entire consent form they will be asked if they have any questions.
4. Important points regarding the participants rights in the project will be reviewed verbally to ensure complete understanding.
5. The participant will then be asked to sign and date the consent form. The participant will be provided with a copy of the consent form for their reference should they have questions concerning the project or their participation.
6. The interview will then proceed and the recording will begin.

Informed Consent and Assent Procedures:

Children and Underage Youth

1. The parents of potential interview and focus group participants will be contacted and the project and their child's potential role in the project will be explained to them verbally. If the parent agrees to have their child participate in an individual interview or focus group, they will be asked to come to the first part of the meeting to give consent for their child to participate.
2. Each individual interview and focus group will begin with a review of the project aims and goals for both the parents and the youth. The parents will then be provided with a consent form and the youth will be provided with an assent form. They will be asked to read the documents carefully.
3. After the parent and youth have finished reading the consent and assent form they will be asked if they have any questions.
4. Important points regarding the youth participant's rights in the project will be reviewed verbally to ensure that their complete understanding.
5. The parent will then be asked to sign the consent form if they agree to have their child participate and the youth will be asked to sign the assent form to show that they also agree to participate. The parent will be provided with a copy of the consent form for their reference should they have questions concerning the project or their child's participation.
6. The parent will then be excused, and the youth interview or focus group will proceed and the recording will begin.

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska
Participant Consent Form
(Interview, page 1)

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska is a two-year community-based research project that has two specific goals. The first goal is to develop a cultural definition of children's mental health in three Alaska Native villages, based on Athabascan values and culture. The second goal is to understand how local "Wellness Teams" in these villages actually function to address children's mental health needs.

You were nominated or have volunteered to participate in this interview and we are now asking you if you would be willing to tell us about your own personal experiences growing up and your knowledge of what makes a healthy child, family and community. We will also ask you to share your experiences with hardship and trauma and your knowledge of local healing or helping resources such as Wellness Teams. The interview process may take as long as 2-3 hours, and you will receive a stipend of \$25.00 for your contribution. During the interview, you will be asked to tell us life stories about being a child or raising a child and how children keep healthy in the village. We will also ask you to talk about your experiences with problems encountered in childhood, including things like abuse, problems with drinking or drugs, domestic violence, suicide, or the death of a loved one and how you have coped with these issues in your life. We will also ask you to talk about those resources available to you in your village that have helped you stay healthy, such as Wellness Teams. This will help us understand how the children in your family or village have become and remained healthy after traumatic things have happened and the role that Wellness Teams may play in this process.

The interview will be conducted in a place that is convenient and comfortable for you. We will be taping the interview so that we can transcribe it. After we have transcribed your interview, we will then meet with you to share the transcript and the tape recording with you. We will ask you if the transcript is complete and accurate. If you are willing, we will meet with you again after we have collected all the life story interviews and have examined them for common events and themes so that you can give us your thoughts about our analysis.

Although you will not benefit personally from your participation in this project, we hope that there will be some benefits to this research. The most important is that your participation may help the project team identify important strategies to developing health and wellness in children, and we will share this information with village and corporation leaders, leaders of mental health and treatment programs, and the communities themselves. We hope that such results may lead to more support for children's mental health and local Wellness Teams.

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska
Participant Consent Form
(Interview, page 2)

It is important for you to know that if you agree to participate in this project:

1. You have the right to not answer any question that you feel uncomfortable with during the interview.
2. You can end your participation at any time.
3. Your answers to our questions will be kept confidential.
4. We do not anticipate that there will be significant risk to you as a result of your participation. There are no physical risks to you. The risks that we have identified are:
 - a. Participating in the interviews may bring up painful memories,
 - b. Some of the questions may be upsetting to you,
 - c. We are responsible to report to designated authorities if you are a danger to yourself or to others, or if in the course of the interview you reveal new or unreported information that a child has been abused.

Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you will not be penalized or lose benefits if you refuse to participate or decide to stop. Participating in the interview process may bring up painful memories. We will provide you with a list of counselors and other supports that you can contact to help you deal with these thoughts and feelings. If at any time you feel uncomfortable, you can ask to be excused from the interview and return at a later time or not return. If you agree to participate, you will be given a copy of this document and a written summary of the research when the project is completed. In the event that we do further follow-up research in connection with this project, we ask for your permission to contact you in the future, as a potential research volunteer.

You may contact Dr. Catherine Koverola at any time if you have questions about the research. You can reach her at:

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska Project

University of Alaska Fairbanks
Psychology Department, P. O. Box 756480
Fairbanks, AK 99775-6480
or by phone at 907-474-2614, or e-mail at ffack@uaf.edu.

You may contact the Research Coordinator in the Office of Research Integrity, at (907) 474-7800 (Fairbanks area), or 1-866-876-7800 (outside the Fairbanks area), or by e-mail at fyirb@uaf.edu, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant or what to do if you are injured because of your participation in this research.

We want to thank you for your help in this project.

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska
Participant Consent Form
(Interview, page 3)

Signing this document means that the research study, including the above information, has been described to you orally or you have read it yourself and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

I have read the above statement (or have had it read to me) and I understand my rights with regard to participating in this research project.

_____ I agree to participate in this project

_____ I do not want to participate in this project.

Participant Signature Date

Signature of Witness Date

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska
Parent Consent Form
(Interview, page 1)

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska is a two-year community-based research project that has two specific goals. The first goal is to develop a cultural definition of children's mental health in three Alaska Native villages, based on Athabascan values and culture. The second goal is to understand how local "Wellness Teams" in these villages actually function to address children's mental health needs.

Your child was nominated or has volunteered to participate in this interview and we are now asking you if you would be willing to allow them to tell us about their own personal experiences growing up and their knowledge of what makes a healthy child, family and community. We will also ask them to share their experiences with hardship and trauma and their knowledge of local healing or helping resources such as Wellness Teams. The interview process may take as long as 2-3 hours, and your child will receive a stipend of \$25.00 for their contribution. During the interview, they will be asked to tell us life stories about being a child and how children keep healthy in the village. We will also ask them to talk about their experiences with problems encountered in childhood, including things like abuse, problems with drinking or drugs, domestic violence, suicide, or the death of a loved one and how they have coped with these issues in their life. We will also ask them to talk about those resources available to them in their village that have helped them keep healthy, such as Wellness Teams. This will help us understand how the children in your family or village have become and remained healthy after traumatic things have happened and the role that Wellness Teams may play in this process.

The interview will be conducted in a place that is convenient and comfortable for your child. We will be taping the interview so that we can transcribe it. After we have transcribed the interview, we will then meet with your child to share the transcript and the tape recording with them. We will ask them if the transcript is complete and accurate. If they are willing, we will meet with them again after we have collected all the life story interviews and have examined them for common events and themes so that they can give us their thoughts about our analysis.

Although your child will not benefit personally from their participation in this project, we hope that there will be some benefits to this research. The most important is that your child's participation may help the project team identify important strategies to developing health and wellness in children, and we will share this information with village and corporation leaders, leaders of mental health and treatment programs, and the communities themselves. We hope that such results may lead to more support for children's mental health and local Wellness Teams.

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska
Parent Consent Form
(Interview, page 2)

It is important for you to know that if you agree for your child to participate in this project:

5. They have the right to not answer any question that they feel uncomfortable with during the interview.
6. They can end their participation at any time.
7. Their answers to our questions will be kept confidential.
8. We do not anticipate that there will be significant risk to your child as a result of their participation. There are no physical risks to your child. The risks that we have identified are:
 - d. Participating in the interviews may bring up painful memories,
 - e. Some of the questions may be upsetting to your child,
 - f. We are responsible to report to designated authorities if your child expresses that they are a danger to themselves or to others, or if in the course of the interview they reveal new or unreported information that a child has been abused.

Your child's participation in this research is voluntary, and they will not be penalized or lose benefits if they refuse to participate or decide to stop. Participating in the interview process may bring up painful memories. We will provide them with a list of counselors and other supports that they can contact to help deal with these thoughts and feelings. If at any time your child feels uncomfortable, they can ask to be excused from the interview and return at a later time or not return. If your child agrees to participate, you will be given a copy of this document and a written summary of the research when the project is completed. In the event that we do further follow-up research in connection with this project, we ask for your permission to contact your child in the future, as a potential research volunteer.

You may contact Dr. Catherine Koverola at any time if you have questions about the research. You can reach her at:

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University of Alaska Fairbanks
Psychology Department, P. O. Box 756480
Fairbanks, AK 99775-6480
or by phone at 907-474-2614, or e-mail at ffack@uaf.edu.

You may contact the Research Coordinator in the Office of Research Integrity, at (907) 474-7800 (Fairbanks area), or 1-866-876-7800 (outside the Fairbanks area), or by e-mail at fyirb@uaf.edu, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant or what to do if you are injured because of your participation in this research.

We want to thank you for your help in this project.

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska
Parent Consent Form
(Interview, page 3)

Signing this document means that the research study, including the above information, has been described to you orally or you have read it yourself and that you voluntarily agree that your minor child can participate.

I have read the above statement (or have had it read to me) and I understand my rights and my child's rights with regard to participating in this research project.

_____ I agree to have my child participate in this project

_____ I do not want my child to participate in this project.

Name of minor child

Parent Signature

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska
Participant Consent Form
(Focus Groups, page 1)

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska is a two-year community-based research project that has two specific goals. The first goal is to develop a cultural definition of children's mental health in three Alaska Native villages, based on Athabascan values and culture. The second goal is to understand how local "Wellness Teams" in these villages actually function to address children's mental health needs.

There will be several areas of focus including but not limited to the following: (1) What makes a healthy Athabascan child? (2) How are children taught about rules for "right" living? (3) What were your experiences growing up in the village and how have things changed? (4) What is a "Wellness Team"? (5) How do Wellness Teams develop over time? (6) Who is included in the Wellness Teams and what are their respective roles? (7) What are the tasks/functions of the Wellness Team? (8) Who does the Wellness Team serve? (9) What are the benefits to having a Wellness Team in the community?

You have been identified or have volunteered as a potential participant in one or more of these focus groups. We are now seeking your permission and informed consent to participate in this project and share your knowledge and experience with us so that we can together work towards an understanding of what makes healthy children in your community.

Three to five focus group meetings will be held at various times within the community and will be announced at least one week prior to being conducted. At least two community-based focus groups will be conducted and will be open to all community members. One focus group will be conducted with only Wellness Team members and one focus group will be conducted with only youth. The focus groups will last approximately two hours. Participants will each receive a small gift for their contribution and will also be eligible for door prizes.

During the focus group meetings you will be asked to share your knowledge and experience regarding wellness teams and children's mental health. You may also be asked to share your knowledge and expertise of your culture and language to help us understand how culture is related to the experience of health and wellness. You may also be asked to nominate other members of your community who have demonstrated significant knowledge in the areas of children's mental health and wellness, who might be interested in participating in an interview to tell us their stories and the stories of children and families in your village. We will be taping the meetings so that we can listen to them later if we have any questions.

Although you will not benefit personally from participation in this project, we hope that there will be some benefits to this research. The most important is that your participation

may help the project team identify important strategies to developing health and wellness in children, and we will share this information with village and corporation leaders, leaders of mental health and treatment programs, and the communities

**Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska
Participant Consent Form
(Focus Groups, page 2)**

themselves. We hope that such results may lead to more support for children's mental health and local Wellness Teams.

It is important for you to know that if you agree to participate in this project:

9. You have the right to not answer any question that you feel uncomfortable with during the focus group meeting.
10. You can end your participation at any time.
11. Your answers to our questions will be kept confidential.
12. You will be asked to maintain the confidentiality of other members of the focus group and not share what you heard with anyone outside of the focus group.
13. We do not anticipate that there will be significant risk to you as a result of your participation. There are no physical risks to you. The risks that we have identified are:
 - g. Participating in the focus group may bring up painful memories,
 - h. Some of the questions may be upsetting to you,
 - i. We are responsible to report to designated authorities if you are a danger to yourself or to others, or if in the course of the interview you reveal new or unreported information that a child has been abused.

Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you will not be penalized or lose benefits if you refuse to participate or decide to stop. If at any time you feel uncomfortable, you can ask to be excused from the meeting and return at a later time or not return. If you agree to participate, you will be given a copy of this document and a written summary of the research when the project is completed. In the event that we do further follow-up research in connection with this project, we ask for your permission to contact you in the future, as a potential research volunteer.

You may contact Dr. Catherine Koverola at any time if you have questions about the research. You can reach her at:

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We want to thank you for your help in this project.

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska
Participant Consent Form
(Focus Groups, page 3)

Signing this document means that the research study, including the above information, has been described to you orally or you have read it yourself and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

I have read the above statement (or have had it read to me). I understand my rights with regard to participating in this research project, and I agree to participate in the project.

_____ I agree to participate in this project

_____ I do not want to participate in this project.

Participant Signature

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska
Parent Consent Form
(Focus Groups, page 1)

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska is a two-year community-based research project that has two specific goals. The first goal is to develop a cultural definition of children's mental health in three Alaska Native villages, based on Athabascan values and culture. The second goal is to understand how local "Wellness Teams" in these villages actually function to address children's mental health needs.

There will be several areas of focus including but not limited to the following: (1) What makes a healthy Athabascan child? (2) How are children taught about rules for "right" living? (3) What were your experiences growing up in the village and how have things changed? (4) What is a "Wellness Team"? (5) How do Wellness Teams develop over time? (6) Who is included in the Wellness Teams and what are their respective roles? (7) What are the tasks/functions of the Wellness Team? (8) Who does the Wellness Team serve? (9) What are the benefits to having a Wellness Team in the community?

Your child has been identified or has volunteered as a potential participant in one or more of these focus groups. We are now seeking your permission and informed consent for your child to participate in this project and share their knowledge and experience with us so that we can together work towards an understanding of what makes healthy children in your community.

Three to five focus group meetings will be held at various times within the community and will be announced at least one week prior to being conducted. At least two community-based focus groups will be conducted and will be open to all community members. One focus group will be conducted with only Wellness Team members and one focus group will be conducted with only youth. The focus groups will last approximately two hours. Participants will each receive a small gift for their contribution and will also be eligible for door prizes.

During the focus group meetings your child will be asked to share their knowledge and experience regarding wellness teams and children's mental health. They may also be asked to share their knowledge and expertise of their culture and language to help us understand how culture is related to their experience of health and wellness. Your child may also be asked to nominate other members of your community who have demonstrated significant knowledge in the areas of children's mental health and wellness, who might be interested in participating in an interview to tell us their stories and the stories of children and families in your village. We will be taping the meetings so that we can listen to them later if we have any questions.

Although your child will not benefit personally from participation in this project, we hope that there will be some benefits to this research. The most important is that your child's participation may help the project team identify important strategies to developing health

and wellness in children, and we will share this information with village and corporation leaders, leaders of mental health and treatment programs, and the communities

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska
Parent Consent Form
(Focus Groups, page 2)

themselves. We hope that such results may lead to more support for children's mental health and local Wellness Teams.

It is important for you to know that if you agree to have your child participate in this project:

14. They have the right to not answer any question that they feel uncomfortable with during the focus group meeting.
15. They can end their participation at any time.
16. Their answers to our questions will be kept confidential.
17. They will be asked to maintain the confidentiality of other members of the focus group and not share what they heard with anyone outside of the focus group.
18. We do not anticipate that there will be significant risk to them as a result of your child's participation. There are no physical risks to him/her. The risks that we have identified are:
 - j. Participating in the focus group may bring up painful memories,
 - k. Some of the questions may be upsetting to your child,
 - l. We are responsible to report to designated authorities if your child reveals that they are a danger to themselves or to others, or if in the course of the interview your child reveals new or unreported information that a child has been abused.

Your child's participation in this research is voluntary, and they will not be penalized or lose benefits if they refuse to participate or decide to stop. Participating in the focus group process may bring up painful memories. We will provide your child with a list of counselors and other supports that they can contact to help them deal with these thoughts and feelings. If at any time your child feels uncomfortable, they can ask to be excused from the meeting and return at a later time or not return. If you agree for your child to participate, you will be given a copy of this document and a written summary of the research when the project is completed. In the event that we do further follow-up research in connection with this project, we ask for your permission to contact your child in the future, as a potential research volunteer.

You may contact Dr. Catherine Koverola at any time if you have questions about the research. You can reach her at:

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska Project

University of Alaska Fairbanks
Psychology Department, P. O. Box 756480
Fairbanks, AK 99775-6480
or by phone at 907-474-2614, or e-mail at ffack@uaf.edu.

You may contact the Research Coordinator in the Office of Research Integrity, at (907) 474-7800 (Fairbanks area), or 1-866-876-7800 (outside the Fairbanks area), or by e-mail at fyirb@uaf.edu, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant or what to do if you are injured because of your participation in this research.

We want to thank you for your help in this project.

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska
Parent Consent Form
(Focus Groups, page 3)

Signing this document means that the research study, including the above information, has been described to you orally or you have read it yourself and that you voluntarily agree that your minor child can participate.

I have read the above statement (or have had it read to me) and I understand my rights and my child's rights with regard to participating in this research project.

_____ I agree to have my child participate in this project

_____ I do not want my child to participate in this project.

Name of minor child

Parent Signature Date

Signature of Witness Date

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska
Key Informant Participant Consent Form
(Interview, page 1)

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska is a two-year community-based research project that has two specific goals. The first goal is to develop a cultural definition of children's mental health in three Alaska Native villages, based on Athabascan values and culture. The second goal is to understand how local "Wellness Teams" in these villages actually function to address children's mental health needs.

You were nominated or have volunteered to participate as a key informant and we are now asking you if you would be willing to tell us about your own personal experiences growing up and your knowledge of what makes a healthy child, family and community. We will also ask you to share your experiences with hardship and trauma and your knowledge of local healing or helping resources such as Wellness Teams. We would also like to observe you as you participate in a variety of community activities and we will make notes on this. The interview process may take as long as 2-3 hours. You will receive a stipend of \$50.00 for your contribution to the project. During the interview, you will be asked to tell us life stories about being a child or raising a child and how children keep healthy in the village. We will also ask you to talk about your experiences with problems encountered in childhood, including things like abuse, problems with drinking or drugs, domestic violence, suicide, or the death of a loved one and how you have coped with these issues in your life. We will also ask you to talk about those resources available to you in your village that have helped you stay healthy, such as Wellness Teams. This will help us understand how the children in your family or village have become and remained healthy after traumatic things have happened and the role that Wellness Teams may play in this process.

The interview will be conducted in a place that is convenient and comfortable for you. We will be taping the interview so that we can transcribe it. After we have transcribed your interview, we will then meet with you to share the transcript and the tape recording with you. We will ask you if the transcript is complete and accurate. If you are willing, we will meet with you again after we have collected all the life story interviews and have examined them for common events and themes so that you can give us your thoughts about our analysis.

Although you will not benefit personally from your participation in this project, we hope that there will be some benefits to this research. The most important is that your participation may help the project team identify important strategies to developing health and wellness in children, and we will share this information with village and corporation leaders, leaders of mental health and treatment programs, and the communities themselves. We hope that such results may lead to more support for children's mental health and local Wellness Teams.

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska
Key Informant Participant Consent Form
(Interview, page 2)

It is important for you to know that if you agree to participate in this project:

19. You have the right to not answer any question that you feel uncomfortable with during the interview.
20. You can end your participation at any time.
21. Your answers to our questions will be kept confidential.
22. We do not anticipate that there will be significant risk to you as a result of your participation. There are no physical risks to you. The risks that we have identified are:
 - m. Participating in the interviews may bring up painful memories,
 - n. Some of the questions may be upsetting to you,
 - o. We are responsible to report to designated authorities if you are a danger to yourself or to others, or if in the course of the interview you reveal new or unreported information that a child has been abused.

Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you will not be penalized or lose benefits if you refuse to participate or decide to stop. Participating in the interview process may bring up painful memories. We will provide you with a list of counselors and other supports that you can contact to help you deal with these thoughts and feelings. If at any time you feel uncomfortable, you can ask to be excused from the interview and return at a later time or not return. If you agree to participate, you will be given a copy of this document and a written summary of the research when the project is completed. In the event that we do further follow-up research in connection with this project, we ask for your permission to contact you in the future, as a potential research volunteer.

You may contact Dr. Catherine Koverola at any time if you have questions about the research. You can reach her at:

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We want to thank you for your help in this project.

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska
Key Informant Participant Consent Form
(Interview, page 3)

Signing this document means that the research study, including the above information, has been described to you orally or you have read it yourself and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

I have read the above statement (or have had it read to me) and I understand my rights with regard to participating in this research project.

_____ I agree to participate in this project

_____ I do not want to participate in this project.

Participant Signature

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

Assent Forms

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska
Participant Assent Form for Youth
(Interview, page 1)

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska is a research project in your community that will last two years. We have two goals. The first goal is to find out how your community describes kids who are doing well, feeling good and making safe choices. The second goal is to find out what the Wellness Team in your community is doing and whether it is helping the kids.

You were nominated or have volunteered to participate in this interview. We are wondering if you would be willing to tell us about your own personal experiences growing up in the village. We would like to know what things keep you feeling good and safe and what things have been or could be harmful or dangerous to you and the people around you. We are also interested in knowing what types of things are available that keep kids healthy and safe in your community. We will also ask you questions about what you know about the Wellness Team. The interview process may take as long as 2-3 hours, and you will receive a stipend of \$25.00 for your contribution.

The interview will be conducted in a place that you choose. We will be taping the interview so that afterwards we can listen to it and write it down. After we have done this, we will then meet with you and you will have a chance to look at the written version of the interview and let us know if we got it down correctly. If you are willing, we would also like to meet with you again after we have done all the interviews in your community and reviewed them. We would like to get your ideas on whether you agree with what we found out.

Although you will not personally benefit from your participation in this project, we hope that there will be some benefits to this research. The most important is that your participation may help the project team help find out how things can be made better for kids in your community.

It is important for you to know that if you agree to participate in this project:

23. You don't have to answer any questions you don't want to.
24. You can stop at any time.
25. Your answers to our questions will be kept confidential.
26. We do not think there are any major risks to you if you participate but there are a few things that might be uncomfortable and a worry for you.
 - a. The interview might remind you of sad memories
 - b. Some of the questions may be upsetting to you,
 - c. Everything you tell us is private and confidential, except if you tell us that you are thinking of hurting yourself or someone else. We need to be sure you are safe and we will tell the appropriate people in the community. The same is true if you tell us you or another child has been abused, if

this has never been reported before. The reason for this is that as researchers we need to be sure that kids are safe.

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska
Participant Assent Form for Youth
(Interview, page 2)

If you agree to participate, you will be given a copy of this document and a written summary of the research when the project is completed. If we do any further follow up research in connection with this project, we ask for your permission to contact you in the future, as someone who might volunteer again.

You may contact Dr. Catherine Koverola at any time if you have questions about the research. You can reach her at:

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We want to thank you for your help in this project.

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska
Participant Assent Form for Youth
(Interview, page 3)

Signing this document means that the research study, including the above information, has been described to you and that you are freely choosing to participate.

I have read the above statement (or have had it read to me) and I understand my rights with regard to participating in this research project.

_____ I agree to participate in this project

_____ I do not want to participate in this project.

Participant Signature

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska
Participant Assent Form for Youth
 (Focus Groups, page 1)

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska is a research project in your community that will last two years. We have two goals. The first goal is to find out how your community describes kids who are doing well, feeling good, and making safe choices. The second goal is to find out what the Wellness Team in your community is doing and whether it is helping the kids.

We are going to be asking questions such as: (1) What makes kids "healthy" in the village? (2) How were you taught about being Athabascan? (3) What were your experiences growing up in the village (4) What makes you feel good about yourself? (5) What do kids in your village do for fun? (6) What do you know about Wellness Teams? (7) How have Wellness Teams helped you in your life?

You have been identified or have volunteered as a potential participant in a focus group. We are asking if you want to participate in this project and share your thoughts and ideas with us. You may also be asked to nominate other members of your village who you think it would be important for us to talk to about these things. The focus group will last approximately two hours. Participants will each receive a small gift for their contribution and will also be eligible for door prizes.

We will be taping the meetings so that we can listen to them later if we have any questions.

Although you will not personally benefit from your participation in this project, we hope that there will be some benefits from this research. The most important is that we will be able to find out things that make life better for kids in your village.

It is important for you to know that if you agree to participate in this project:

27. You don't have to answer any questions you don't want to.
28. You can stop at any time.
29. Your answers to our questions will be kept confidential.
30. You will be asked to keep everything you hear in the group confidential and not talk about it with anyone else.
31. We do not think there are any major risks to you if you participate but there are a few things that might be uncomfortable and a worry for you.
 - a. The interview might remind you of sad memories
 - d. Some of the questions may be upsetting to you,
 - e. Everything you tell us is private and confidential, except if you tell us that you are thinking of hurting yourself or someone else. We need to be sure you are safe and we will tell the appropriate people in the community. The same is true if you tell us you or another child has been abused, if

this has never been reported before. The reason for this is that as researchers we need to be sure that kids are safe.

Wellness Teams and Children's Mental Health in Alaska
Participant Assent Form for Youth
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Participant Assent Form for Youth
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_____ I do not want to participate in this project.

Participant Signature

Date

Signature of Witness

Date