

# CHANGING TIMES IN RURAL ALASKA

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A Project

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Master of Arts

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by

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I would also like to thank my parents and family, without whom this project would not have been possible.

## ABSTRACT

In rural Alaska, bush pilots play a vital role – transporting people, cargo, and goods from cities to far-flung villages. In the past, they’ve also taken newspapers. But that all changed when the Internet came to town, in ways not always beneficial to local media outlets. Villagers near the town of Kodiak discuss how the Internet transformed how – and from where – they get their news. In general, villagers report that the Internet allows them to bypass Kodiak’s local media for state, national, and international news. They also use the Internet to create village-level information forums. The Internet provides a service that local media did not, and gives villagers the ability to choose alternative information sources they feel are more relevant to their lives, as they say they cannot rely on Kodiak’s local news outlets for information about their communities. The end of this analysis offers recommendations for local news outlets to better use the Internet to grow their audience in the market’s outlying communities.

## INTRODUCTION

My five years at the Missouri School of Journalism – having completed the undergraduate sequence in Convergence – are primarily what have laid the foundations for my ability to successfully complete this project, when it comes to the journalistic skills. The Convergence sequence leaves students with the technical abilities to produce all kinds of journalism – writing, photography, video, audio, infographics, etc. The classes in this sequence (in particular, Convergence Reporting and Convergence Producing) have enabled me to successfully complete internships at a wide variety of news outlets, including radio stations and text-based organizations. I am confident in my ability to produce high quality journalism using these skills. The sequence also left me with a critical approach to journalistic practices -- always thinking about which medium is best suited to tell a certain story – as well as a keen news judgment.

Additionally – and perhaps most importantly – I have focused my professional development on building an eye for good content. My first internship four years ago was with the *St. Louis Beacon*, founded by longtime, seasoned *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* editors and reporters. The *Beacon*'s slogan was “News that Matters,” and avoided frivolous, entertainment-driven news that is so common in the industry these days. My time at the *Beacon* had a profound affect on my news judgment that carries on to this day. I have built my career – albeit a short one – on telling underreported, substantive stories that are not diluted by the processes of deadline-driven newsrooms. Examples of successful stories I have produced include the story of the United States' first mosque in Cedar Rapids, the economic conflict between private paddlefish caviar producers and

Oklahoma's state-run operation, and the open-ended renaissance of Sarajevo's Jewish community after the Bosnian War.

In addition to the content of my work, I try to prioritize geographic areas that are also underreported. Having been born and raised in Missouri, I am familiar with the "flyover country" stigma that is applied to most American communities by the costal-centered media. Seeking out stories in the Midwest, South, and Western regions of the United States has allowed me to build successful professional relationships with major news organizations through freelance work, most notably with Al Jazeera. There are lots of stories to be told in "flyover country," but journalists just need to go and find them. Working with Al Jazeera to produce journalism out of these regions has further developed my skills and news judgment, leaving me a better journalist.

Regarding future goals, I hope to continue making a career out of telling substantive, important stories from underreported regions in the United States and the world. I have come to find a passion for feature journalism using multimedia tools, and hope to continue that in the future. This project – spending the summer producing multimedia journalism in southern Alaska, while also analyzing how the introduction of the Internet affects the flow of information in geographically dispersed communities – would be an incredibly relevant experience when it comes to achieving my long term goals. Not only would this project allow me to further practice the type of journalism I am seeking to build a career from, but the research would help me to better understand how news consumers access and experience the type of work that I produce – work that is largely

online. I am confident that this is the perfect time to take on such an important, developmental, and career-building opportunity.

## **SCHEDULE AND FIELD NOTES**

The schedule of my time in Alaska is below. Following that are the weekly emails sent to committee members to update them on my progress and work while in Alaska.

**Week 1 (June 1):** Kodiak; journalistic work and research interviews\*

**Week 2 (June 8):** Kodiak; journalistic work and research interviews

**Week 3 (June 15):** Kodiak; journalistic work and research interviews. Return to St. Louis ahead of sister's wedding.

**Week 4 (June 22):** St. Louis for sister's wedding. Initial interview transcription and remote work as needed.

**Week 5 (June 29):** Anchorage, en route to Adak, Alaska. Begin journalistic work in Adak.

**Week 6 (July 6):** Journalistic work in Adak

**Week 7 (July 13):** Travel to Dutch Harbor/Unalaska. Begin journalistic work there.

**Week 8 (July 20):** Dutch Harbor/Unalaska. Continue journalistic work in region.

**Week 9 (July 27):** Return to Kodiak. Continue research interviews and journalistic work.

**Week 10 (August 3):** Kodiak; journalistic work and research interviews

**Week 11 (August 10):** Kodiak; journalistic work and research interviews

**Week 12 (August 17):** Kodiak; journalistic work and research interviews

**Week 13 (August 24):** Kodiak; journalistic work and research interviews. Tie up any loose ends. Return to St. Louis.



**Week 14 (August 31):** St. Louis. Interview transcription and finish any outstanding journalistic work. Finish project in preparation of September defense.

\*Initial travel to Kodiak was delayed a few days, slightly altering the original proposed schedule.

## **June 4, 2015**

Hello, all. I hope you've been well. After an initial hiccup, I'm settled into Kodiak and have started work on my project. I got here Monday afternoon.

Things are going smoothly so far, and I'm working on making initial contacts to get things rolling. On the journalism front, I'm fleshing out several story ideas. I spent the week focusing on a feature on Kodiak's switch to a 100% renewable electrical grid, and how the island's utility can be an example for other companies in Alaska and the US. While the price of electricity has risen in the US and Alaska, it has continue to drop in Kodiak. As usual, the process of pitching the story to my editors is hampered by their slow response time, so there's not much to report on that front. Al Jazeera has shown an interest but had some more questions, and my backup will probably be my contact at the Washington Post's environmental blog.

I've also spent some time with the staff of KMXT, Kodiak's public radio affiliate.

The news director and one reporter are the only news staff at the station, and are interested in any time I can give to them to help out. I'll probably end up spending some time doing reporting there and helping to voice things from time to time.

On the research front, I'm working on making contacts in the village of Old Harbor, hoping to get out there for a couple days next week to start my interviews. I'm concerned about the potential financial barriers of this aspect. Air taxis across the island aren't cheap, and it seems a lot of these towns only have "wilderness adventure" lodges available for hundreds-of-dollars a night. Old Harbor will probably work out, because I talked to the tribal administrator who is going to request to the tribal council, on my behalf, that I stay on the couch of the village's senior center. While this has worked out, I'm concerned about what will happen if similar arrangements can't be made in other villages. I'll cross that bridge when I come to it, I suppose.

It's a beautiful place! Attaching a couple pictures. Let me know if you have any questions, feedback, etc.

Best,

Ryan

**June 11, 2015**

Hello, all. Sending you my second weekly update today, because I may be heading out to a remote village for the weekend and likely wouldn't be able to send you one from there. Everything is moving along well.

On the journalism front, I got two pitches to Al Jazeera approved on Monday, and have already completed one. It is set to run on Sunday. I'll attach my final draft to this email, should you want to read it. The second piece is going to be held off for a bit, because my main source is on vacation. I'm planning to get in touch with him by phone when I'm back in Missouri for my sister's wedding. I also found out there is something called Alaska Fish Radio, which is just fishery/fish news. It's the nerd job of my dreams, and based in Kodiak. Still working on getting in touch with them to see if I can do any work over there. I'm still working on beefing up a lot of story ideas, but it was nice to have an assignment to work on this week.

On the research front, I've completed my first set of interviews this week.

Wednesday, I flew out to the village of Port Lions (fun fact, it's named after the Lions Club, who built the village for the native people of Afognak after their village was destroyed by a tsunami in 1964). I conducted five interviews, and most of the interviewees expressed thoughts that align with the theories outlined in my proposal. I'm hoping to get out to the town of Old Harbor this weekend or early next week, and have already made a contact there. Ideally, I will have ten

interviews by the time I'm heading home for the wedding, and am going to spend my time in Missouri starting to transcribe. In meeting some locals in the community and talking about what I'm doing here, there is talk of having me give a presentation of my preliminary findings before my departure in August. A lot of people here seem interested in the questions I'm asking, which is good to hear.

As a reminder, I'll be heading back to Missouri mid-next week, leading up to my sister's wedding the following weekend. I'm planning to keep working on assignments and transcribing my research interviews during my time in St. Louis, as well as making arrangements for July, where I'll be traveling down the Aleutian chain before heading back to Kodiak to finish my research in August. I'll be in Columbia at the end of next week, should anyone want to meet in person.

I'll attach some photos I took from around Port Lions, as well as the final draft of the piece I wrote for Al Jazeera this week. Also attaching a picture from the Kodiak Brewery I thought you all would enjoy..."Sarah Pale Ale" is available for bottled purchase. Happy to bring some back! Oh — and I saw a bear! It was hanging out on the air strip as we were landing in Port Lions, having flown in what I'm fairly certain was a cardboard box with wings.

Thank you again for your time and support. Let me know if there are any questions, comments, etc.

Ryan

## **June 18, 2015**

Hello, all. I am back in Missouri for my sister's wedding, but was able to get a lot of work done in Kodiak since my last update.

On the journalism portion, the article I mentioned last week was published on Sunday. [Here is the link.](#) I also did two interviews over the weekend, working on the second assignment I have for Al Jazeera. I have put together three more pitches, one of which has tentatively been approved by Al Jazeera. I am still considering where I am going to pitch the other two to. Once I'm back in Alaska, I'll be heading to Adak (way out at the end of the Aleutian chain). I'm hoping I will be able to write two pieces out there, at least, one of them being some sort of travel article. I'm still looking for a news hook out there, but I imagine that will be much easier once I am on the ground.

On the research front, I was able to make it to the village of Old Harbor before I flew back home. I managed to conduct six interviews in Old Harbor, bringing my total interview count to 11. That is well on the way to the number I was originally aiming for (15). The interviews are turning out to be a bit shorter than I had anticipated, so I am confident that I'll be able to do at least 20 before my time

here is done. Since I'll be traveling outside of Kodiak in July, I won't be returning to this effort until I return to Kodiak in August. By then, I will have the 11 existing interviews transcribed and will be spending those last weeks focusing primarily on the research portion of the project.

Attaching some photos of Old Harbor. The air taxi pilot taking me out there let me fly the plane for a few minutes, which was neat. These villages are very interesting, and those I interview continue to express thoughts that align with my theories on the media relationship between Kodiak and the outlying villages. I'm starting to think about what form(s) my final research project is going to take. I think part of it might be a consultant-type report/presentation about Kodiak island's rural media consumers, to be presented to Kodiak's media. Having met with the public radio station news director several times, I know this is something at least the station would be interested in. Any thoughts you have on what the final project might look like will be much appreciated.

Best,

Ryan

**June 26, 2015**

Hello, all. I am back in Missouri for my sister's wedding, but have continued to

work on my projects remotely.

On the journalism front, I conducted interviews over the phone and finished an article. I am attaching a draft of that piece to this email — it is on Kodiak's renewable electric grid. I also have had several new pieces approved for my coming days in Adak and Unalaska, and continue to work on developing more pitches.

On the research front, I have spent my time this week starting to transcribe the 11 interviews I have already conducted. I will attach a couple of those to this email as well.

I am flying back to Alaska on Monday, and will be in Anchorage for most of the week before continuing on to Adak for 10 days. I am not sure if I will have Internet access in Adak, so I may be delayed in updating you. I will continue to do so as soon as possible.

Best,

Ryan

**July 1, 2015**

Hello, all. I am back in Alaska and have been in Anchorage the past two days finalizing my plans for the coming month, which, as I wrote before, will be heavy on the professional work and less on the research (as I will not be back in Kodiak for a few weeks). I'm continuing to transcribe the interviews I've conducted.

Tomorrow I'll be flying out to Adak for at least ten days (assuming my flights go as scheduled, which isn't always certain out here). I am assuming I will not have access to Internet or cell service, so I will likely roll my Week 6 and 7 updates into one, and send that once I am in Unalaska.

I have continued to flesh out and pitch stories, most of which have been accepted. Below I'll put a brief description of everything I'll be working on. Any ideas or suggestions you have are always appreciated. Let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

As always, thank you!

Ryan

**Fourth of July on the edge of America** (for Al Jazeera) -- a community profile on the town of Adak, possibly the most remote town in the United States. This feature will center around the people of Adak as they celebrate the United States'



national holiday amongst the decaying ruins of an American military base. The meat of the story will focus on how the people here are clinging to a community, and what the future holds for the people of Adak. I'll be using both writing and photography for this project.

**Getting online at the end of the world** (pitched to Wired) -- a look at how the people of Adak have come to depend on the Internet for modern goods and a connection to the outside world, but how that dependency also comes at a steep cost, upwards of \$1,400 a month. The piece will look at how some of the United States' most remote residents try to stay connected to the rest of the world, and how the Internet -- while normal -- is anything but "normal" in Adak.

**Alaska's Unangan recall WWII internment** (pitched to Al Jazeera) -- After the Japanese invasion and attack on Alaska's Aleutian islands during WWII, the U.S. government "evacuated" the indigenous Unangan people to dismal internment camps near Juneau, where dozens (out of a population of mere hundreds) died of disease. Seventy years after the end of WWII, I'm going to interview the few remaining survivors of this quiet piece of American history. I have also been in touch with the granddaughter of the man who was the last survivor of Attu, the Alaskan village captured by the Japanese and its people taken back to Japan, most of whom were never seen again. He died in 2012, but his granddaughter recorded his story, and can speak to his experience better than anyone.

**Nikolski, a dying village** (for Al Jazeera) -- In 1999, Alaska's legislature passed a law that cut off state funding to Alaskan schools if enrollment dropped below 10 students. This had devastating affects on dozens of Alaskan villages, many of which are indigenous communities. Every year, schools continue to close as the population of villages continue to drop. Nikolski was one such village, and the school there closed in 2009 after student number 10 graduated. I'll be spending four days in Nikolski, which now has a population of just 20 people (opposed to near 50 before the school closed), looking at how school closures in rural Alaska impact villages years later.

**Unalaska housing crisis** (not pitched anywhere yet) -- Unalaska/Dutch Harbor are famous for the reality show "Deadliest Catch" and have a long history of fishing and crabbing. Now, the controversial arctic oil rig is in town, waiting for a decision as to whether or not oil drilling will move forward farther north. As a result, transient workers have flooded into Unalaska looking for work, and there is not enough housing for them. The high cost of getting in and out of town means many get stuck there, overwhelming the four local churches and housing authority. The only hotel in town is nearly booked months ahead of time. The ongoing debate over arctic oil drilling in the Lower 48 has left Unalaska in a stage of limbo, struggling to deal with the influx of people looking for work.

**Cleaning up Alaska's WWII trash** (not pitched anywhere yet) -- probably the least developed pitch so far. I'm considering submitting it to National Geographic News. I had heard that the Navy is finally starting to clean up WWII debris in Kodiak, that there are unexploded bombs all over Adak, and that the leftovers of Alaska's little-known WWII battlefields remain, in some cases as a danger to the people who live there. Still need to work this one out more.

**July 9, 2015**

Hello, from Adak! Turns out there is Internet access here if the weather is good.

Adak is a very strange, lonely place. I've had a lot of time to work on finishing up my transcribing as well as the "fourth of July from the end of the world" piece I've been working on. The Internet piece I had mentioned last week didn't pan out, sadly. I'll attach the draft of the piece I've been working on here. I've been struggling with it for a bit, and Judd has been helping me, and I think I'm getting close. Will also attach a few photos.

I'm preparing to head to Unalaska next, where I have at least three confirmed assignments. Two for Al Jazeera, and one for The Washington Post, which is exciting. I'm looking forward to getting out of Adak. It was an interesting place to visit, for sure, but ten days now seems like a bit much.

I finally got the edits back on the Kodiak electric piece I had been worked on a few weeks ago. I'll have to revise that a bit once I have reliable cell and Internet service.

On a professional note, I got word that Al Jazeera is cutting their freelance commissions by 20 percent, which will make freelancing as a way to offset my costs here a bit more challenging. Also has me thinking how anyone can freelance full time and still get by in an place with a high cost of living. I had been considering doing that once I was done with this project, but now am not sure.

Anyway, hope yall are well. Thanks, as always.

Ryan

**July 16, 2015**

Hello from Unalaska! I got here on Monday after leaving Sunday evening. My piece on Adak was published late last week. It didn't have much meat to it, I don't think, but took more of a human interest angle. Thanks to Judd for coaching me through a rough patch on that one. Link

here: <http://america.aljazeera.com/multimedia/2015/7/fourth-of-july-from-the->

[edge-of-america.html](#)

I've already gotten to work on my three freelance assignments I have going here, and am considering bringing another into the mix if I have time. Here is a quick summary and update on each of them.

**Unalaska housing:** For the Washington Post, if I can pull it together. Shell's controversial oil rig that is doing exploratory drilling in the arctic is currently based in Unalaska, as it is the northernmost deep port that is ice free year round. Locals have long struggled with a housing shortage that keeps property and rental prices high, but many are now worried that it could get a lot worse if Shell finds oil. If the company comes to town and no additional housing is built, many locals may get priced out of their own hometown. In progress, and struggling to find good sources. Will attach the very rough draft I have so far to this email.

**Unungan internment:** For Al Jazeera — Alaskas indigenous Unungan recall WWII internment. I've located a few survivors of a little-known chapter of WWII history, where the native people of the Aleutian islands were forced into internment camps in southeastern Alaska. I'm writing up a piece that brings these survivors voices out — if they agree to talk to me — and discusses the ongoing struggle for the Unungan people to rebuild their culture, which was heavily damaged by the internment.

**Alaskan schools:** For Al Jazeera. I'll be spending most of next week in the village of Nikolski writing about what happens to Alaskan villages years after the school closes. A 1999 law in the state cuts off state funding to schools if enrollment drops below 10 students. More than 30 schools have closed as a result, which does a massive blow to villages already struggling to survive. Nikolski is one such town — also one of the longest continuously inhabited sites on earth — that has had its demise hastened by this law. I'll be calling other villages in the state that have had their schools close when I am back from Nikolski.

I am also working on putting together a piece that discusses the need and effort to restore and save rural Alaska's historic Russian churches, which tend to be located in low-income communities that cannot afford their upkeep, and also are subject to some of the harshest weather conditions on earth. Unsuccessfully pitched this piece to National Geographic News, though the editor there was not clear as to why. He said it was a fine story, but did not fit their focus, but couldn't give me much insight into what that focus was. Hopefully I can find a place for this to go.

As always, feedback and advice is much appreciated. I hope my progress is keeping you all happy?

Best and thank you!

Ryan

## **July 21, 2015**

Hello from Unalaska — unfortunately I'm not feel very good about the days since my last update.

I don't think I've ever encountered such a reporter-skpetical town — ever. I have been hitting the pavement and phones since I have been here, and have only gotten seven people to talk to me for my three assignments combined, and nobody will let me photograph them. I'm feeling very discouraged and worried about how these projects are going to turn out, and whether or not they will be publishable.

To add to that, I was supposed to be in Nikolski for the closing schools story on Monday. Weather grounded the plane on Monday, and today a volcano erupted, so we couldn't leave, either. I'm now considering calling the days in Nikolski off all together, because I'm worried I'll get stuck there (which, it would seem, happens all the time) and miss my flight back to Anchorage and connection to Kodiak. I would have to buy new tickets, which would put me out of a lot of

money. I'm not really sure what to do at this point, but I guess I will have to decide in the next few hours. It's a really cool story, but I'm not sure if it's worth the potential losses, and if I'm late to Kodiak I'll miss my parents who are going out of their way on their vacation to spend a couple days there.

I'll attach the drafts of the two pieces I'm trying to work on. I got some faint interest from World War II magazine (which I didn't know existed until I found a copy here) about publishing some of the photos of Adak's old military base. Still waiting to hear back from them.

Could use some words of advice, if you have any! As always, thank you.

Ryan

**July 29, 2015**

Hello from Anchorage! We had a big earthquake here last night. 6.3 on the scale.

That was weird.

Anyway, I got out of Unalaska fine and have been working on some assignments.

I'm flying back to Kodiak today and will put the focus more on the research again.

Planning to finish up my interviews, transcribe those, and get to the analysis. I



have a few more ideas for articles to do there, but am going to power through and prioritize the research.

I'll attach everything I'm working on right now. I have the Kodiak electric article running on Al Jazeera tomorrow. I also picked up another last minute assignment with the Washington Post, and am expecting for that to run in a day or two. The US/Russian governments update an agreement that allows indigenous Yup'ik people to travel across the border without a visa.

I also heard of another story that I threw together for Al Jazeera on a toxic algae bloom spreading across the Pacific, that had just arrived in Unalaska. Not sure when that is running. The Unungax internment piece (Al Jazeera) and Unalaska housing shortage (Washington Post) pieces are also done, and I'll attach those, too. Im' not sure when the housing shortage piece is going to run. My editor on that one hasn't replied to anything I've sent her for two weeks.

And, I saw a whale! Picture attached of that, too.

Let me know if there are any questions or comments. Thanks!

Ryan

**August 4, 2015**

Hello from Kodiak, where I am in the final stretch of my work here. Since I last wrote you all, I've had three articles published -- two in Al Jazeera, one in the Washington Post. Links are below:

<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/8/1/scientists-fear-toxic-algae-bloom-continues-to-spread.html>

<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/7/30/in-alaska-an-island-goes-renewable-amid-rising-electricity-prices.html>

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/small-thaw-in-us-russian-relations-at-the-alaska-frontier/2015/07/30/03c3867c-360a-11e5-9739-170df8af8eb9\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/small-thaw-in-us-russian-relations-at-the-alaska-frontier/2015/07/30/03c3867c-360a-11e5-9739-170df8af8eb9_story.html)

I have one more article for Al Jazeera in editing, and have also picked up two more assignments. One will be for Public Radio Internationals show *The World*, and the other for The Guardian U.S. I'm looking forward to the chance to build new professional relationships there.

On the research side, I'm planning to visit two more villages in Kodiak. I'll be in Ouzinkie this coming Thursday, and Karluk next Wednesday. Once those trips

are done, I will have completed the interview portion of the project, will quickly transcribe those remaining interviews, and power on to write up my final product. I'm still working on piecing together what that will look like.

Thank you, as always, and let me know if there are any questions or concerns.

Ryan

**August 11, 2015**

Hello from Kodiak --

Things are going well. Still a bit frustrating as far as getting people to talk to me, but I'm making progress. I'm in the process of producing a radio piece about a Russian Orthodox pilgrimage for *The World*, which is exciting. I'll attach my draft scrip and some photos to this email. It was refreshing to do something else besides straight writing, and I enjoyed the opportunity.

I'm also finishing up another assignment for Al Jazeera, further looking into how deteriorating Russia-U.S. relations are getting in the way of indigenous Unanagax efforts to reconnect communities across the border. Will attach the partial draft to this email as well.

I am concerned about my assignment for The Guardian -- which overlaps with my final round of research interviews in the village of Karluk. My contacts there have done a complete 180 on being cooperative and available, and I'm not wanting to spend the money to fly all the way out there if nothing will turn up. We'll see.

My housing shortage piece fell through with The Post. They said they just don't have the time for it, and so did the Guardian when I sent it to them. Hoping Al Jazeera will be interested, as I think it's an important story.

Still working on nailing down a focus for my final research product, but I'm not concerned on a timely finish. I'm aiming for an early-September defense, if things go smoothly!

Let me know if you have any questions or concerns. Thanks!

Ryan

**August 18, 2015**

Hello from Kodiak!

Since I last wrote you, I've had two articles published -- one in Al Jazeera

America, and the other in High Country News, an independent news magazine that focuses on the American west. Links below:

<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/8/16/alaskas-unangax-work-to-preserve-culture-quashed-by-wwii-internment.html>

<https://www.hcn.org/articles/housing-shortage-plagues-alaskan-port-town-where-shell-set-up-shop>

Sadly, my pieces for The World and The Guardian were both cut. It happens, I guess. The editor at The World cut my radio feature once she read the script. She had been under the impression the pilgrimage was entirely composed of Russians, not Russian Orthodox Christians in Alaska. Sad that didn't work out.

For the Guardian, my main source on that story -- who was my contact in the village -- vanished. I finally go through to his wife, who told me "We're not talking and he's not coming back," before hanging up on me. So that didn't work out, either.

I'm bummed, but am trying to come up with at least one more story to put together. I may try to write something up about the pilgrimage and send it somewhere, but we'll see. There's not much to the "this pilgrimage exists" angle,

and I get that.

I did file another story for Al Jazeera today, on how Russian/US relations are getting in the way of Alaska/Russia Native efforts to reconnect across the border. I'm really proud of this one, and am attaching the draft.

I'm also putting together my final analysis component, which I spoke with Fritz about last week. Things are winding down, and I'm ready to be back home. I'll be aiming for a defense sometime in September, and will keep you posted.

Also, I've taken up canning. I have a dozen jars of salmonberry and blueberry jam I picked/made, if anyone wants any?

Take care and thanks again!

Ryan

**August 24, 2015**

Hello, all. Wrapping up my final days in Alaska. Will be flying back to Missouri on Wednesday.

Since I last wrote you, I've had another article published in The Washington Post.

Link below. Still have a piece in editing at Al Jazeera.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2015/08/24/concerns-mount-over-whale-deaths-in-gulf-of-alaska/?postshare=2821440433411524>

I've also completed a first draft of my analysis. I'm attaching the file to this email.

Any feedback you have before my defense would be much appreciated.

Speaking of, I'm hoping to defend in September ahead of an October move to Chicago. I'll be sending a Doodle out shortly with a couple days/times in mind.

Are there any concerns about this?

Thanks, as always.

Ryan

## EVALUATION

Overall, I am pleased with the quality of the work I produced in Alaska. The number of articles I produced was not quite as many as I would have hoped, however. Regardless, I am proud of the quality of the work, the diverse subjects it covered, and the outlets in which my articles were published.

There were a number of challenges that proved to be learning experiences. Mainly, the culture of rural Alaska proved to be somewhat cold to outsiders at first. Many times, I found myself struggling to find sources that would give me the time of day – let alone talk to me for a published article. This is, of course, understandable on many fronts. I found myself frustrated with the fact that by the time I was having to leave a town or village, the people were only just starting to warm up to me. This was particularly true during my time in Unalaska, and I wish I had had the foresight to plan more time there.

Furthermore, I found my work running up against the idea of a “story.” Mainly indigenous Alutiiq or Unangan people populated many of the communities in which I spent time. I found that individuals were very protective of stories, so much so the stories seemed like a tangible, material object to be given as a gift, not just retold to a stranger. This was particularly true with older individuals. In one instance, while interviewing a survivor of the Unangax internment during WWII, a man in his 90s was very hesitant to speak with me, saying “are you going to make money off my story?” I told him I would be paid if I found somewhere that would publish my article, and he would not speak with



me. Only when his daughter intervened and explained that I was a journalist who just wanted to tell her father's story to other people would he speak with me.

Reporting in geographically isolated communities with small populations also proved to be a learning experience. More often than not, it only took an introduction with one individual for the whole community to know my name and why I was there – or at least some version of those reasons. Sometimes this worked to my advantage, when people excited to speak to me would approach me voluntarily. Other times it would not work out, as people who did not want to speak to me would avoid me all together.

On a technical level, I took this opportunity to try and grow my photography skills. I made a point to shoot only in manual so I could come to better grasp how the different settings on the camera worked together. While I still have a long way to go when it comes to photography, I am generally pleased with the quality of the images I produced – even if they were not published.

Another observation I had was how the very nature of reporting from Alaska seemed to interest the editors I worked with in New York and Washington. The perceived geographic obscurity of Alaska from the view of the east coast is undoubtedly what lead to the successful commissioning of some articles I wrote. I found this to be somewhat distasteful, but will admit that I benefited from it. For example, had I pitched a story about people living in an abandoned military base in Nebraska, I doubt that Al Jazeera would have paid me for a 1,000 word feature and photographs. However, I feel that,

because I pitched this story from an island 1,200 miles from the Alaskan mainland, this pitch was successful.

This line of thought is in line with the frustration that many Alaskans told me they feel when it comes to how they are portrayed. Alaskan reality television shows abound on cable television, but hardly reflect the reality of life in the state. Residents told me they feel the shows are dramatizations or constructed to make Alaska look like a barren, wild land inhabited by bizarre people. It's almost voyeuristic. In reality, many of the communities featured on these shows have world-class schools, Internet and satellite television, modern transportation, and some of the largest economies in the country. The "middle of nowhere" or "last frontier" narrative almost seems like an outside construction, and I can understand why Alaskans would be skeptical of outsiders coming to write their stories.

While this experience was not easy – both professionally and personally – I am glad I followed through to the end. My months in Alaska were a memorable, eye-opening experience that left me with numerous lessons about journalism and reporting, as well as clips and experience that will undoubtedly benefit me in the early days of my career.

## PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

My work in Alaska resulted in nine original articles published at various news outlets, covering a variety of topics. While there were only nine published, several other articles were commissioned by news organizations though ultimately proved to be unsuccessful endeavors for reasons out of my own control – which, of course, is expected to happen in journalism. I also produced quite a large number of photographs, some of which was also published. Below I will paste links to the published pieces, followed by photographs and texts of selected published work.

Finally, I will include transcriptions of the interviews conducted for the analysis portion of this project.

**AL JAZEERA AMERICA:** Alaska Natives, Fishermen Protest Navy Training  
<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/6/14/alaska-natives-fishermen-protest-navy-training.html>

**AL JAZEERA AMERICA:** Fourth of July from the Edge of America  
<http://america.aljazeera.com/multimedia/2015/7/fourth-of-july-from-the-edge-of-america.html>

**AL JAZEERA AMERICA:** Alaska Island Goes Renewable Amid Rising Electricity Prices  
<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/7/30/in-alaska-an-island-goes-renewable-amid-rising-electricity-prices.html>

**AL JAZEERA AMERICA:** Scientists Fear Toxic Algae Bloom Continues to Spread in Pacific  
<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/8/1/scientists-fear-toxic-algae-bloom-continues-to-spread.html>

**THE WASHINGTON POST:** Small Thaw in US-Russian Relations at Alaska Frontier  
[http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/small-thaw-in-us-russian-relations-at-the-alaska-frontier/2015/07/30/03c3867c-360a-11e5-9739-170df8af8eb9\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/small-thaw-in-us-russian-relations-at-the-alaska-frontier/2015/07/30/03c3867c-360a-11e5-9739-170df8af8eb9_story.html)

**HIGH COUNTRY NEWS:** Housing Shortage Plagues Alaskan Port Town Where Shell Set Up Shop  
<https://www.hcn.org/articles/housing-shortage-plagues-alaskan-port-town-where-shell-set-up-shop>

**AL JAZEERA AMERICA:** Alaska's Unangax Work to Preserve Culture Quashed by WWII Internment  
<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/8/16/alaskas-unangax-work-to-preserve-culture-quashed-by-wwii-internment.html>

**THE WASHINGTON POST:** Concerns Mount over Whale Deaths in Gulf of Alaska  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2015/08/24/concerns-mount-over-whale-deaths-in-gulf-of-alaska/>

**AL JAZEERA AMERICA:** Amid US-Russia chill, Natives struggle to connect across maritime border  
<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/9/8/amid-us-russia-chill-natives-struggle-to-connect-across-arctic-border.html>

# Scientists fear toxic algae bloom spreading on Pacific coast

*Stretching from southern California to Alaska, this year's blooms thought to be the largest ever recorded*

August 1, 2015 5:00AM ET

by [Ryan Schuessler @RyanSchuessler1](#)

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — The toxic algae blooms in the Pacific Ocean stretching from southern California to Alaska — already the largest ever recorded — appear to have reached as far as the Aleutian Islands, scientists say.

“The anecdotal evidence suggests we’re having a major event,” said Bruce Wright, a scientist with the Aleutian Pribilof Island Association, the federally recognized tribal organization of Alaska’s native Aleuts. “All the populations [of marine mammals] are way down in the Aleutians.”

While algal blooms are not uncommon in the Pacific, 2015’s blooms appear to be the largest on record, scientists say.

Stretching from Southern California to Alaska, the blooms are responsible for unprecedented closures of fisheries and unusual deaths of marine life up and down the Pacific coast.

Pseudo-nitzschia is one species of algae that produces domoic acid, a neurotoxin that can be lethal to humans and wildlife. The toxin is ingested by shellfish and krill that, when consumed, pass the toxin onto the predator — in some cases, people.

Raphael Kudela, a professor of ocean sciences at the University of California, Santa Cruz, said climate change may be a factor enabling the blooms to thrive. “I think, personally, it’s quite possible that these warm conditions just set up the ideal incubator conditions for this organism. It’s doing really well and lasting a lot longer than usual.”

In California, [researchers in Monterey Bay](#) observed some of the highest levels of the toxin ever seen. Oregon’s Department of Agriculture has [shut down recreational harvest of razor clams](#) along much of its coast. In Washington, authorities instituted an unprecedented [closure of the state’s lucrative Dungeness crab fisheries](#). [A fishery near Vancouver was closed](#) in June over concerns of the algae’s toxin, which can cause seizures and death if consumed by humans.

“In Monterey, things have kind of calmed down a bit,” said Kudela. “We have been monitoring several times a week now. We still see toxin, so it hasn’t gone away.”

He added that the bloom may have moved further offshore and deeper in the ocean.

The algae were [detected in southeastern Alaska](#) in June. The discovery of nearly a [dozen dead whales](#) in the Gulf of Alaska near Kodiak also raised suspicion.

A dead sea lion that washed up near Unalaska in the Aleutian Islands is what prompted the most recent round of testing, Unalaska's community broadcast network [KUCB reported](#). Other die-offs of species have been reported along the Aleutian chain, stretching nearly 1,500 miles across the north Pacific, 2,000 miles north of Seattle.

"The best thing to keep an eye on is if they keeping seeing it in Alaska," Kudela said. "And that would be a pretty clear indication of if the bloom has extended."

"There's just not a lot of resources going into understanding these big algal blooms," Wright said. "The government doesn't spend a lot of money on it, and I think that's a big mistake. And in the future I think that's going to be a big mistake as waters continue to warm in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea."

Wright added: "[Algal blooms] have the potential of taking out fisheries."

Late last month, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [gave the state of Washington nearly \\$100,000](#) to continue to monitor the bloom.

Vera Trainer, a University of Washington researcher and manager of NOAA's Harmful Algal Blooms Program, said expeditions are underway to try to map the bloom. What remains to be seen is whether or not there is one contiguous bloom, or several large ones.

"It does appear to be rather contiguous," Trainer said. "What we've seen in past years is that we'll have a bloom in California, and a little bit later in the year we'll have a bloom in Washington. This one seemed to happen all at the same time."

Kudela said researchers have found the toxin in anchovies and other fish. "We know that can happen, but generally the blooms don't last long enough to see that transfer occur."

Trainer said that sea lions had never before been seen having seizures off the coast of Washington, a symptom of poisoning from the algae.

Research expeditions are underway along the Pacific coast and into the Gulf of Alaska to try to map the bloom. The last ship is due back in September, and Trainer expects a clearer picture of what exactly is happening by the end of the year.

Kudela said whether or not this year's bloom is the "new normal" is "the million dollar question," said.

"We could go into three years in a row of having really toxic algae out there and it getting

into the food web,” he said.

Shellfish and other seafood are a staple in the diet of coastal communities up and down the Pacific coast, including many Native communities.

Wright, who has been studying toxic algal blooms since the 1970s, said many elders in Alaska Native communities have been alarmed by the increasing frequency of the toxic algae blooms, which threaten their traditional way of life.

“But those are the kinds of changes we’re going to see with climate change,” Wright said. “We’re going to have to change and adapt and we’re going to have to lose some of our traditions, and that’s just the way it is.”

# Amid US-Russia chill, Natives struggle to connect across Maritime border

*The 'Ice Curtain' fell in 1989, but Natives say renewed political tensions stymie efforts to preserve shared culture*

September 8, 2015 5:00AM ET

by [Ryan Schuessler](#) @RyanSchuessler1

UNALASKA, Alaska — Patricia Lekanoff-Gregory remembers when a delegation of American Unangax flew to Russia's Komandorski Islands to meet their kin in the early 1990s.

Lekanoff-Gregory's father made the journey to Russia as the global euphoria at the end of the Cold War reached far north, into the Bering Sea. She said her father, who is elderly and asked her to speak for him, said the Russian and American Unangax were sitting on either side of a room, staring at each other in silence, told to wait for the official interpreters to arrive. But they couldn't wait. Soon enough, the two groups were shouting words in their native language to each other. "Seal." "Table." Hugs. Tears. The two communities had not met in decades.

Lekanoff-Gregory has traveled to the Komandorski Islands five times since her father's journey. She's hoping to go again in the coming months to help teach Russian Unangax traditional hat making.

"They're just finding out they're Native again," she said of the Russian Unangax, citing the cultural damage from the oppression they faced during the Soviet era. "But money is harder to get, and it's getting more expensive [to go there] now."

While some other Native communities that straddle the Russia-U.S. border have protections that allow for direct visa-free travel between the countries, no such arrangement exists for the Unangax. The efforts to reconnect Unangax communities across the border in the remote North Pacific remain at the mercy of deteriorating relations between Moscow and Washington, and locals say it's getting harder to keep the cultural exchanges going.

"Bringing a couple of people [from Russia to Alaska] is an expensive proposition," said Jim Gamble, the executive director of the Aleut International Association. "And one that we can only do once in a while when we gather enough funding together. And it's similar going the other way."

## A community divided

Russian fur traders first arrived in the Aleutians in the 1700s, effectively enslaving the

Unangax — whom they called Aleuts — and forcing some to settle in the Pribilof and Komandorski islands. When Russia sold Alaska to the United States in 1867, the Komandorski Islands were kept as part of Russia, while the Aleutians and Pribilofs went to the United States.

While the Iron Curtain divided Europe during the Cold War, the so-called Ice Curtain split indigenous communities straddling the U.S.-Russia border. During the Cold War, Russia's Unangax in the Komandorskis were among the indigenous groups cut off from their kin in Alaska.

“There was a real effort at certain points to give up the Aleut language and incorporate them into Russian society,” Gamble said. “So they got a lot less support for cultural elements.”

That all changed in 1989. The Iron Curtain fell, and the Ice Curtain melted. Alaskan and Russian Natives started traveling back and forth to each other's communities.

“They have lost almost all of [their cultural elements],” Gamble said of the Russian Unangax. “And they are very hungry to bring them back.”

About 17,000 people in the U.S. are Aleut. According to a 2010 census, there are only about 500 Aleuts in Russia.

“They really live close to poverty, and it was hard to see that,” Lekanoff-Gregory recalled of her visits to the Komandorskis. “And they come over here and think we're millionaires.”

Bringing Russian Unangax to cultural camps held each summer in the Aleutians is “a primary focus for us,” Gamble said, “because it's a way for the folks in Russia to experience these camps and take what they learned back to Russia.”

### **Tensions flare**

But now, Unangax leaders say, escalating tensions between Russia and the United States have hampered their efforts to reconnect across the border. Visas are taking longer to process, taking four to five weeks rather than two to three, and Gamble said he has heard reports that Russian Unangax doing work funded by his Anchorage-based association are facing government scrutiny and even harassment. Efforts to reach out to Unangax leaders in Russia were unsuccessful.

Russian visas for American citizens cost at least \$160, and to visit the Russian Unangax, Lekanoff-Gregory will have to fly from her home in Unalaska to Anchorage before heading south to Los Angeles, then across the Pacific and north to Russia, where she will catch a flight to the Komandorskis, which are only 500 miles west of her home.

Another effort to reach across the border hampered by deteriorating relations between Russia and the U.S. is the Shared Beringian Heritage Program, which promotes cultural exchanges between Alaskan and Russian Natives in the Bering Strait region and, director



Janis Kozlowski said, is at the whim of any changes in visa processing or travel restrictions.

The program also aims to create an internationally protected conservation area between the two countries.

“We were very close to having an agreement between the two countries before the Ukraine conflict began a year and a half ago,” she said. “Right now the whole idea is in the back drawer, gathering dust, and it won’t be until relations between the two countries are on a little bit more favorable grounds for that to pick back up and start again.”

The National Park Service has recently granted more than \$80,000 to Iñupiat residents of the Alaskan village of Little Diomedede — a tiny island in the Bering Sea separated by just 3 miles from Big Diomedede, which is part of Russia — who are looking to reconnect with their relatives in Russia.

The Iñupiat residents of Big Diomedede, who are related to those in Little Diomedede, were moved to the Soviet mainland in 1948.

Igor Krupnik, an anthropologist with the Smithsonian Institution, [told The Associated Press](#) that it would have been easier to bring the Diomedede residents together several years ago, before relations between Russia and the U.S. soured. It takes time to navigate the now rocky relations between the two countries, and time is something in short supply for the Diomededes’ Iñupiat.

“The youngest person who may remember life on Big Diomedede is now 75 years of age,” he said. “And there are very few elders of that age in [Russia].”

However, there has been some progress on other fronts in the last frontier. Earlier this summer the U.S. State Department updated the 1989 agreement that allows Native Yup’ik in parts of Alaska to visit relatives in Russia’s Chukchi Peninsula without a visa. While Russian Yup’ik have been going to Alaska since 1989, American Yup’ik were allowed the same privilege for the past three years because of administrative issues.

That news left Alaska’s Unangax asking when they would be allowed such access.

“Something that we’ve been talking about for a period of time on the U.S. side is expanding the program to include Aleut folks between Russia and Alaska as well,” Gamble said. “It’s a very similar situation. There’s about 400 air miles separating them. It would be really easy if we had a similar program in place to charter planes back and forth, at a lot less expense and a lot less time involved.”

“Maybe in the future, we can start thinking about including other locations in the agreement,” Alaska Native leader Vera Metcalf, who was involved in securing the visa-free travel agreement, [told The Washington Post](#). “But there would have to be other negotiations to include other areas.”

Gamble said, “If we were able to eliminate the visa part, that would change things a lot. It would be a game changer for us.”

Delores Gregory, Lekanoff-Gregory’s daughter, is active in traditional dance and has always wanted to visit the Russian Unangax.

“Since there are people who are of my culture who are there, I want to learn what their experience has been,” Gregory said. “It’s just hard to get to. But I think the visa-free travel would help.”

# Concerns mount over whale deaths in Gulf of Alaska

By Ryan Schuessler August 24

KODIAK, Alaska – Researchers are scrambling to determine what’s behind the death of 30 whales in the Gulf of Alaska as unusually warm ocean temperatures continue to wreak havoc on the region.

Since May 2015, 14 fin whales, 11 humpback whales, one gray whale and four unidentified specimens have been found dead along shorelines in the Gulf of Alaska, nearly half of them in the Kodiak Archipelago. [Other dead whales have been reported off the coast of British Columbia](#), including four humpbacks and one sperm whale.

This year’s total is roughly three times the annual average for the region, leading the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to declare the deaths an “unusual mortality event.” The investigation into the deaths will take months, or even years, [according to a statement released by the agency](#).

Predation, starvation, or disease could be behind the deaths, but researchers say there have been few signs of physical trauma to the whales. The more likely culprit is unusual water conditions.

Over the past two years, a large mass of warm water that climatologists have dubbed “the blob” has persisted in the north Pacific, and El Niño 2015 [is pushing more warm water into the region](#).

The unusually warm and calm seas are believed to be behind a series of toxin-producing algae blooms – record-breaking in size and duration – stretching from southern California to the Aleutian

Islands. Clams sampled near the town of Sand Point, Alaska were found to have toxin levels more than 80 times what the FDA says is safe for human consumption, said Bruce Wright, a scientist who studies toxic algal blooms for the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands Association. The levels were ten times anything Wright had previously recorded.

“The conditions I look for are warm water temperatures and sunny, calm

weather,” Wright said. “All the conditions seem to be right for a significant event. And associated with this major event, you would expect to see die offs of marine mammals and seabirds and fish, and that’s what we’re seeing.”

The unusually warm water has been affecting sea and weather conditions in the North Pacific in other ways. [Tropical fish](#) have been turning up in Alaska, including four ocean sunfish – rare to the region – that were [spotted in Prince William Sound earlier this month](#).

“I don’t think the ocean temperature would affect the whales directly,” said Bree Witteveen, a marine mammal specialist with the Alaska Sea Grant program in Kodiak. “It would be an indirect influence. It would alter where the prey is gathering — things like that.”

NOAA’s declaration that the whale deaths constitute an “unusual mortality event” triggers the formation of an investigative team and opens the possibility to secure additional funding for research, according to NOAA spokesperson Julie Speegle.

“We are sending up a team to investigate this particular event, and we’ll have more resources to hopefully get out and do more necropsies.” Speegle said. “The more samples we can take from these dead whales, we can test for biotoxins or viral agents and wide range of possible causes.”

Earlier this summer, Alaska Native communities along the coast, including Kodiak’s Sun’aq Tribe, had raised concerns about another possible danger to marine life — U.S. Navy training that allows the use of underwater sonar, which some [research](#) has linked to whale strandings.

“At this point, the tribe is just standing by to find out what NOAA comes up with,” said Tom Lance, natural resources director at the Sun’aq Tribe. “We’re not pointing fingers at the Navy. We’re suspicious that their activities could impact marine mammals, of course, but until we have more facts we can’t say definitively that it’s one thing or another.”

Only one whale has been sampled so far, and Wright said the carcass was too decomposed to provide any reliable insight.

“I really think we don’t have enough information to even speculate,” Witteveen said. “It’s definitely a mystery for us. I wish there was a smoking gun or leading hypothesis for us to look into. It’s just so unusual, it’s really hard to say.”

## **Shell exacerbates housing shortage in Alaska port town**

*Nation's largest fishing port was already short on housing. With Shell in town, locals say things are getting worse.*

**Ryan Schuessler** Aug. 13, 2015 *Web Exclusive*

“When I first came here, I put myself on every list [for housing] there was available,” Luna recalled. Nobody ever called her back.

She wasn't the first or the last person to struggle to find affordable housing in the town that hosts the country's largest fishing port. Out of what she called sheer luck, Luna was eventually able to find a place to rent, but not everyone is that lucky. During peak fishing season, Unalaska's population can sometimes triple, and there still isn't enough space for everyone who pours into town looking for work.

And now tiny, far-flung Unalaska is bracing for another curveball: Shell. The housing shortage isn't anything new – longtime residents can remember when people rented broken-down cars as a place to sleep, or made a camp in abandoned World War II-era bunkers.

Today, it's the oil giant's fleet looming around the city's harbor that's making waves, and locals say affordable housing is getting even harder to find as a result.

“We have a community who focuses really hard on bringing industry in and making it easy for industry to basically set up shop here,” said lifelong Unalaska resident and former city council member Dennis Robinson. But, he said, the community has “failed miserably” at making sure there is enough affordable housing for all its residents.

Royal Dutch Shell is using Unalaska and the adjacent Port of Dutch Harbor in Alaska's Aleutian Islands, some 2,000 miles north of Seattle and 800 miles west of Anchorage, as a launching point for exploratory drilling in the Chukchi Sea – another thousand miles to the north.

When the Obama administration gave Shell the thumbs up for exploratory drilling in the arctic earlier this year, it sealed Unalaska's fate: Oil will leave its mark on this fishing town. To what extent is still up in the air, but residents are worried that if Shell finds oil up north, and its employees flood into Unalaska, even more locals will be priced out.

“Especially during the fishing season, it's already stressful enough,” said 25-year-old Unalaskan Andrea Treiber. “It's going to be a whole lot harder if they live here.”

In the 1970s, a fishing and crabbing boom grew Unalaska's population of just over 300

people by almost 300 percent. By the 2010 census, the population was nearing 4,500, and locals say the infrastructure never caught up.

Unalaska's remote location in the Aleutian Islands and the challenging topography keep development costs high, resulting in the housing shortage. If it's available, many Unalaskans live in company housing built by their employers, such as the seafood companies that process fish in Dutch Harbor. Eighty percent of Unalaska's fulltime residents rent. The lucky ones own their own homes.

Residents reported paying as much as \$800 a month for a small room with a bed, but no bathroom, or up to \$1,500 for a modest studio. Small houses can sell for more than half-a-million dollars.

Even the city government has had a hard time finding housing for its employees.

"When we have people we hire who come from the outside, they have nowhere to go," said assistant city manager Patrick Jordan. At times, there have been up to a dozen city employees living in Unalaska without permanent housing.

A 2010 study by the city found that Unalaska needed more than 300 additional housing units – a number that has since grown as the population increased over the last five years. City leaders have been talking about the housing shortage for decades with little turning up in terms of widespread, long-term solutions.

Now that Shell has come to town, the pressure to solve the problem has intensified.

"The unknown is what effect the oil development is going to have on us," Jordan said. "As a city we almost have to react to what happens after the fact."

That all depends on whether Shell finds oil in the Chukchi Sea. The list of unanswered questions keeps getting longer: Would the company keep Unalaska as its hub? If so, how many workers will be coming to town? If they come, where will they live?

"We work and communicate locally to mitigate potential impacts in Unalaska," Shell spokesperson Kelly op de Weegh said in an emailed statement. "As for the long-term future, our first step is to determine whether our Chukchi operations will lead to a commercial discovery."

Shell employees and contractors have been coming and going since the company's drill arrived in Dutch Harbor earlier this summer. Many of them stay in a block of rooms now on hold at the town's one hotel, and rooms are released if they are not used, op de Weegh said. Locals say the company is tying up more of the already scarce short-term housing in Unalaska during peak tourism season.

Locals also say the remote town's cellular and Internet networks have slowed since Shell arrived, and that it takes longer for their mail to arrive.

“People raised their [rent] once they heard Shell was coming in,” said Unalaska resident Delores Gregory. Before moving away for school several years ago, Gregory was paying \$1,700 a month for an apartment. A few months later in 2012, when Shell’s activity in Unalaska restarted, she heard that the unit’s rent had risen to more than \$2,000 a month. That’s how much Flor Luna and her husband pay now.

“It’s not like I can go down the road and find something cheaper,” Luna said. “We’d love to have something smaller so we don’t pay so much, but there’s nothing available.”

“They’re having to move to Anchorage or other villages or down south to have a place to live,” Andrea Treiber said of her childhood friends. When she finished college a couple of years ago, Treiber wouldn’t have been able to afford to live in Unalaska if she hadn’t moved back in with her parents.

“This is my home,” she added. “This is the only place I’ve lived.”

Many in town fear that Shell’s arrival will turn Unalaska into the next Williston, North Dakota – the town of less than 15,000 residents that had the highest rent in the country after an oil boom more than doubled its population in 2014.

“It’s already happened,” Robinson said of the oil giant putting more stress on Unalaska’s housing shortage. “And it’s going to get worse.”

*Ryan Schuessler is a journalist currently based in Alaska. @RyanSchuessler1*

**AMANDA HOLDEN, 29, PORT LIONS**

R: Do you remember approximately the year you got Internet access in PL?

A: I moved here in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and they had it then. So that was 2002.

R: Can you estimate how much time per day you spend using the Internet?

A: I'm constantly on my phone. SO, 18 hours?

R: So as far as news information, can you remember the last two or three pieces of news you saw or read or watched?

A: Um, the Bruce Jenner. The Navy war games in the Gulf.

R: Where were they from?

A: Facebook, and tribal council packets that got through email.

R: So online.

A: Yeah.

R: So in general terms if you do look for news information, where do you go to find them?

A: Facebook.

R: Almost entirely?

A: Yeah. Sometimes I watch Good Morning America.

R: So beside Facebook, is there anything else online that you try to go to consistently?

A: KTUU once and a while.

R: In Anchorage?

A: Yeah.

R: Do you go to their website or Facebook page?

A: Website.



R: So speaking of Kodiak's news outlets, do you ever rely on them for information about anything?

A: When I'm in Kodiak, I'll listen to the radio when we're coming in and out of Anton's for the weather. But that's about it.

R: You don't ever look at the paper's website or get the paper here?

A: No, I don't subscribe to it.

R: So do you feel like you can rely on Kodiak's news organization for information about Port Lions?

A: Yeah I think so. Um, yeah. Well the only times I ever look at the newspaper is when I know they have articles about Port Lions. Or the weather.

R: Can you think of any examples of when you knew they had information about PL?

A: Um, our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I think they did a piece on the dock.

R: So when you are looking for news and information about PL, where do you go?

A: ADN. Normally they'll cover whatever KDM covered as well.

R: I imagine you hear a lot from people here as well?

A: Yeah.

R: DO you think that Kodiak's news organizations could improve their coverage of PL.

A: Um, not really, because not very much goes on here. When stuff does go on here they always cover pretty well.

R: DO you think that if those news organizations made an effort where they looked for more information and news from PL, that people here would be more inclined to look at those outlets?

A: Yeah, I guess so.

R: Do you remember the last time a journalist ever came here?

A: The fourth of July.

R: Have you ever spoken to a journalist on the phone?

A: No.

R: Are there any topics or issues in the community ehre that you think deserve more coerage.

A: The only thing that's really big that's going on now it he Navy games.

**BOBBI BARNOWSKY, 42, OLD HARBOR**

R: When did you first move to Old Harbor?

B: 2009.

R: And did you have personal Intenret access then?

B: No.

R: So when did you get Internet access here?

B: 2010.

R: Can you estimate, in general, how much time you spend on the Internet per day, now?

B: I would say, at least, eight hours a day because I run the tribe, so I'm using it all day long. 8-10 hours, easy. But then I didn't, and you should ask how much it costs to get Internet here.

R: So how much does it cost to get Internet here?

B: \$1,200 just to get it set up, then you have to pay another \$800 to get somebody to get out to set up your dish. So it costs \$2,000, so that's why many people don't have Internet here. And it wasn't until cell phones came here that now people have MiFi's and that just started in 2013 with the Colloch landing.

R: And that's probably much more reliable and consistent than the other systems?

B: No.

R: Just, general barrier to access then, overall?

B: yes.

R: As far as, in terms of news access, and current events, do you recall the last one or two things you read, like news items, or watched? Or views in any way?

B: I avoid the news at all costs. Because it's depressing, and all you get is negativity so I'm not interested in that. But it's on TV, every day at 5 and 10, but I never sit down and watch it.

R: So you never make an effort really?

B: No. I do check – like when I was in town this week, I did look at the newspaper. The Kodiak Daily Mirror.

R: But only when you were in town?

B: Yeah, we don't get it – well we get it here, but it's a week late.

R: And probably, you wouldn't read it online or anything like that?

B: You have to have access, you have to pay for a code. And the tribe has a code, but I don't have time. So we do have a code, the tribe has a code to have access to the Kodiak Daily Mirror every day, but it's really not very relevant to us, because the only time there's an article in is when I submit it. So if there's something about Old Harbor, it's because I've submitted it.

R: That was my next question – so how reliable to you think Kodiak's news outlets are for information about Old Harbor?

B: Very poor.

R: Do you think there's room for improvement?

B: Very much so.

R: Could you elaborate on that?

B: Sending a reporter out for big events. We notify them, for big events, but they don't send anybody out. So the only news they get on Old Harbor is what we send to them.

R: And how often do you send things?

B: I try to send things, probably once a quarter. So every 2-3 months.

R: Do you think people would be more receptive, or make a greater effort to access Kodiak's news outlets if there was more information about Old Harbor?

B: Yes.

R: Has there ever been a journalist who has come here, or any consistent phone calls between reporters in Kodiak and people here?

B: Not to my knowledge.

R: Do you recall any time a journalist was here?

B: One came on the ferry, but he didn't come out into Old Harbor. So when the ferry first came to Old Harbor, it came around and I did talk to him only because I had communication with him about what we – I'm the one who sends in all the articles, so he was here, and he saw me come on the ferry, so he called me over just to say hello. Wasn't even an article on Old Harbor.

R: Right. Are there any topics or issues that come to mind that could be covered that aren't?

B: Current events, the fisheries. Yeah, there's plenty of things. I think there's a lot of daily activity, like fishing openings, or statistics – and not even statistics, but articles that include what's happening in Old Harbor. So we see everything that's going on in Kodiak and all these great programs, and nothing has shown all the great programs going on in the villages. So whether it's Old Harbor, Port Lions, Ouzinkie, I think there – in my opinion there should be a page dedicated to each village, where somebody is doing outreach to every village at least once a week.

R: So when you need or are looking for information about Old Harbor, how are you finding it?

B: Facebook.

R: Is there a page or something?

B: We do. We have a couple of them.

R: What kind of things are posted on there?

B: Events, we had somebody post something recently about the break in at the church.

R: In Kodiak, right?

B: No, here. Our church was broken into last week.

R: Oh wow. You heard about the one in Kodiak as well?

B: Everybody keeps saying that. That was the newspaper I read this week because our church had just gotten broken in to, so I read that article. They stole stuff. They stold a golden cross and some money. They stole stuff. So that hurts the church a lot.

R: So is that the kind of news that you think should be going out to the regional media?

B: I think so. I think the crime that happens here needs to be going out more. They have the blotter, but they really don't follow up on the crimes here. It's great that we have the blotter, but when there's a DV or something that's nto really in the paper, that's not, you know, and I think things like that should be. It's not going to stop unless people like that notice it.

R: Do you think the idea of having contact with the media in Kodiak, or having people here send information, do you think there are people who are willing and ready to take that role? Because there's an argument to be made that the Kodiak Daily Mirror, I think, has one reporter, and maybe not the budget to have someone everywhere, all the time.

B: Yeah, but it could be just a phone call. Just a phone interview. They could do it that way. I think there's stuff that could be done better, but I think if that opportunity was here, I think you'd have somebody who would do it.

R: Do you hear much about what's going on in the other villages through the media?

B: Not at all.

R: Do you think there's something being lost there?

B: Yes.

R: What would that be?

B: Just a loss of connection, a loss of knowledge about what they're doing and what we're doing, because we're all replicating what we're all doing out in the villages. And we're isolated, so we don't know what the other villages are doing, and there isn't a way to share that communication.

R: Is there anything else you'd like to add on this topic or anything?

B: No, I just ... there's been a definite change since Internet has come into our village. And I can't say it's all for the positive. So it was interesting coming to a village with no Internet, to having Internet come into the village. And it's not even the Internet isn't widespread to every house yet. And so that's a big difference between here and the lower 48, or even here and Kodiak. And that lack of – some of it's knowledge, but some of it's just the lack of the use of the Internet, needs to be spread, I think.

R: What were some of the negative things that you noticed, once the Internet came?

B: A lot of bullying. A lot of cyber bullying. A lot of people badmouthing others, just stuff that goes with social media. And you know, we have our tribal Facebook page and our tribal webpage, I don't know that it's used as much, I don't know how to track our usage, but I think it's something that a lot of things you see, like Americorps, they have a hard time coming to many rural communities because we don't have regular access to Internet, so they can't do...I was an Americorps member here and couldn't do some of my projects because I didn't have a strong enough signal. Using your cellphone only works so well. So I think it's definitely a limiting factor for our community. When we're uploading grants, it takes us twice as long and it just sometimes doesn't happen when you can't get on. When we try to do our payroll, there are days when we go to do our payroll and the Internet is out and there's nothing you can do. Once it's out it's out, which is normal, it's regular business for Internet. But there's no alternative here. Usually if you're Internet is out at home, you can go to a library, or you can go to a school or somewhere else. If it's out, it's out. And it's often out. If the weather's bad, the Internet's out. If it's blowing, the Internet's out. If it's cloudy, the Internet's out. You know, so that's not very reliable.

**CRYSTAL BARTLESON, 29, PORT LIONS**

R: Do you remember when you first acquired Internet access here in Port Lions?

C: No, I think I was in high school, though. I think I went into high school in 2000 – we might have had it before that, but I think that's the first time I remember using it. Right around 2000, 20001.

R: Can you estimate today, how much time on average you spend on the Internet?

C: A lot. I actually got rid of my Facebook account, so probably about half as much as I used to. Probably, I don't know, I'd say about four hours a day.

R: And as far as news and information – newspapers, TV stations, radio stations – do you remember the last one or two pieces of news you read or saw or watched?

C: Does that include when I look at Yahoo or Amazon news?

R: Yes.

C: Probably about our economy.

R: National? Statewide?

C: National.

R: Okay. Do you remember where you saw them?

C: Yahoo. I can't remember which, there are so many on there, I don't remember who wrote it.

R: In general terms, when you look for information, news or or journalism, where do you go to look for it?

C: Yahoo.

R: Is that set as your homepage?

C: No, that's just automatically where I always go to. I just browse. I'm never looking for anything specific.

R: So is there anywhere else besides Yahoo?

C: Just local. Anchorage, Anchorage Daily News, stuff like that.

R: So as far as, even more local, how often do you rely on the newspaper in Kodiak or the radio station for news?

C: Never. No, I used to look at KDM's website, then they restricted it to where you have to buy membership to access it, so I don't even look at it anymore. Anchorage, and that's it.

R: I know you said that you got Internet when you were in HS, did getting Internet change at all what you did in that way?

C: No, not for a while. It was more social media and emails and stuff like that.

R: DO you feel like using the Internet changed how you consume news?

C: Yeah. No. Yeah. Big time. I don't ever watch news on TV. It's all online now. I don't even have TV at my house. I wouldn't know what was going on if I didn't have the iNternet.

R: Do you feel like you could rely on the KDM, KMXT, for news about Port Lions or news relevant to your life here?

C: Yeah. A little bit. It's more towards Kodiak.

R: DO you remember the last time there was something from the newspaper or radio station that you saw, that was important to you here?

C: No it's been a while.

R: So when you do want information or news about PL, where do you go?

C: Facebook.

R: Any specific pages or individuals?

C: Well I've been off of there for two months now, but they have a little information spot. There are pages for Kodiak and stuff, and I think there's one here. I think Dorinda set one up here. And the city has one, and the tribe has one. That's about the only place I see information for us.

R: Speaking hypothetically, if the newspaper or radio station in Kodiak were to spend more time actively visiting PL and looking for issues and topics to write about here, would you be more inclined to go to their news organization?

C: Yeah. Yeah.

R: Have you ever consciously decided not to, for that reason?

C: Um, yeah I guess so. If there's something about the school. Like basketball or something, you know then I'll look at the newspaper because I know there will be something in there – pictures of something like that. So yeah, if they did it more I definitely would use it more.

R: How do you think those news organizations in Kodiak could improve their coverage of PL?

C : Anyway, really. Call us. Come out here. Ask us to periodically send stuff in. Anything.

R: Have you ever spoken to a journalism either in person or over the phone, from PL?

C: Um, no.

R: Are there any topics or issues in PL that you think deserve more coverage?

C: Probably more to do with our school. They really only care if it's big sports things, um, and I mean just with the local organizations. The only time we're ever in the paper is if we do fourth of July celebrations. So if we're doing something big we'll advertise in there, but they don't ever come to us and ask anything.



R: In more general terms to wrap this up. Thinking about news, what types of topics do you think are important?

C: Right now, the economy. I'm freaking out.

R: Would you call yourself well informed?

C: Yeah. It's so easy to get information now, as long as you spend the time to read it, then anybody can be informed about anything they're interested in.

R: Do you think that Internet usage has allowed you to find more information relevant to you than outlets in Kodiak have been able to provide?

C: Oh yeah.

R: Do you have any specific examples?

C: Just, pretty much in any aspect. There's just not much on the island.

R: Local, State, National, Internationals?

C: National.

R: Is there any other information or topics that I should know?

C: I don't think so.

### **DORINDA KEWAN, 52, PORT LIONS**

R: So do you remember when you first got Internet access here in Port Lions?

D: Dial up became available between 95 and 2000, depending on carriers – so it was sporadic. We first had dialup in our home around 98.

R: And what about satellite television?

D: Um, now have you looked at the infrastructure? Does cable count? Because that's been here for a long time.

R: If you get beyond local channels, or area channels –

D: Yeah. That's what we called cable. And as far as I've been around here, that's been available. Back into the 80s. Dish and Direct became popular here ten to twelve years ago. So people actually started installing dishes and choosing DirectTV or DishNet. And you will please remember how old I am, so I might use the wrong terminology when talking about technology.

R: So when did you move to Port Lions?

D: Now I wasn't born here. I first moved here in 1987.

R: And can you estimate how much time on average, per day you spend using the Internet?

D: That's a loaded question...I would be on the Internet two hours a day or less, but it's so slow and inconsistent I often find myself on the Internet up to four to five hours just trying to accomplish what should take two hours. So my usage would be two hours or less, and that includes work and home, but I think it's closer to five when it's all said and done because we struggle so much to get quality speedy service.

R: So same question, but for television.

D: Definitely less than two hours per day, and half that time is just on for noise. I'm not even looking at it. I'm not your typical village person in terms of TV.

R: And in terms of news or journalism, do you recall the last two or three things you read, watched, or saw?

D: Internet and TV both?

R: Yes. And what were they, if you can remember.

D: KTUU, NBC's evening news, both on Facebook and on TV at home, watching it live. And do you want the specific news items?

R: Yeah what pops into your mind as something you heard or read recently?

D: On the last couple days, they were looking for a woman in the Fairview area in Anchorage for a suspected involvement in a shooting. And another...what would be a cute one...Congressman Young's 82<sup>nd</sup> birthday and marriage, he just got remarried. He's a widower his new wife is a widow. That kind of stuff.

R: And you said those were television?

D: Both Facebook, Internet – following the same news station on Facebook and on TV. I more often see my news by following specific Facebook pages, but then I'll have the TV on and I'll hear similar stories or hear more detail than what I read in one or the other.

R: So in general, besides that news station, is that where you usually get your news?

D: No, I follow all kinds of – both conservative and liberal point of view type news Facebook pages. But on TV I almost always get my TV news from the same station. The Anchorage station, and the national NBC news.

R: For the ones you follow on Facebook, are there any particular ones that you usually go to or rely on more than others?

D: No, I read them all. Because I try to digest the stuff and see which point of view it's coming from and see what I think sounds more accurate.

R: Can you name a few of them?

D: Well I'll look at the Daily News Facebook page, I'll look at Huffington Post. There's probably five or six of them I'll look at daily, and there's one – what's his name – Steve Crowder. He's very conservative, I look at them almost daily for online just to see what kind of stuff, and if it looks interesting I'll pull it up and read more detail about it.

R: If you had to put them in these categories, would most of them be local, state, national, international?

D: The Internet and Facebook would be mostly national. And local news I tend to stick with the one station on Facebook and TV.

R: And talking about media in Kodiak, mostly the newspaper and radio station there, how often if at all do you rely on those outlets for information?

D: Well, because I don't like having the newspapers cluttered up at all, I rarely subscribed to the paper in the past. Then you could look at it online but you also had to pay for online subscriptions, so depending on the time of year I will do it online subscription for the Kodiak Daily News, and I do follow their Facebook as well, and KMXT the radio station I follow them on Facebook, too.

And I probably look at them a few times a week.

R: So that's what you do now – thinking about the time before you had Internet access here, how often did you rely on them then?

D: For some reason at my house, we have a hard time getting the radio station. We can drive out to the airstrip and sit in the vehicle and listen to it on the radio. But for some reason at our house it was always a challenge. So I strictly relied on the paper, and I looked at it about once a week.

R: Do you think you looked at it – their products – more or less now that you have Internet?

D: Slightly more. It would be a lot more, but I get frustrated when the Internet gets slow and I don't have time.

R: DO you feel like, in general terms, that internet usage or TV usage changed the way you consumed news?

D: A little bit for me, but drastically for most of my family.

R: For you, how has it changed?

D: Um, more accessibility to the national stuff by being able to follow it on Facebook and being able to access it on the Internet. When I pull up my email, I see it on Yahoo News or whatever. So, more accesbility for me. What I find of rmy family, si that they are just inundated with stuff on the Interent. Email and all the other things they do. My husband and my kids are so involved in all the different social networks, and I've had to really coach them on making sure they don't believe every single thing they read or see, and to verify what they're looking at. So that's what changed for me. Before my kids would have to research things for school and use papers, but now with the Internet they're still doing the school side of it, but they see stuff all the itme on all the different social networks.

R: In terms of your usage, do you feel like you access news more or less now that you have Internet?

D: Slightly more.

R: And as far as Kodiak media outlets, KMXT and the newspaper, do you feel as a resident of Port Lions that you can rely on them to give you information about your community here on a regular basis?

D: Pretty much.

R: In Port Lions?

D: You mean - maybe I don't understand the question.

R: Like if you got the paper, and you were on the Facebook page, how often do you think you could rely on them to have news or information relevant to Port Lions, not tjust to Kodiak?

D: Oh I see what you're saying. The Kodiak-centric thought. They're not as guilty of it as a lot of Kodiak residents and agencies and organizations. So I don't really know how you want the answer phrased. They're failry reliable.

R: Would you, as a consumer of information, regularly expect to see news relevant to Port Lions in those media outlets?

D: They're not actively seeking information about us, but they seem to be very good about having it available and reporting it when they get it. So, I'm fairly comfortable with their level of reliability for reporting on Port Lions. But that could change with personell. Their sports writer for the paper loves visiting the villages, and he's gone out of his way to write about them consistently. Prior to him, that dind't happen. So there's no guarantee that if he went away tomorrow, the next sports writer would do that. There's a longtime Kodiak resident who has a connection to the entire island, and he's invested himself in working, living, getting to know traveling to all parts of the island, and he writes for the paper. He used to be a reporter and now he writes occasional articles. He's a friend of all of us. If he went away tomorrow I don't think that would happen.

Right now I think they're doing a fine job of it, but it could change with personell. I don't know if they have a policy they're committed to of going out and seeking news islandwide. I don't tknow that they have that.

R: DO yo think they should?

D: Oh definitely. Definitely. If they're not doing that, that should be something that's part of what they do. It shuld just be automatic. It should be Kodiak island, not Kodiak city. We run into that all the itme. I call it Kodiak-centric train of thought, or mentality.

R: Basing your answer off what you know and have seen of Kodiak's news organizations, how do you think they could improve their coverage of the rest of the island or your community?

D: Oh it would be so easy for them to have a regular communication with governing bodies. Municipal city, tribal governments, school advisory oards – I mean they could do that online. They could also – you know I started Port Lions bulliten board on Facebook. They could like that page and check that daily or weekly. It would be super easy for them to do it. It wouldn't take much time. I twouldn't take much paper. It would be mostly electronic. Because they do have fast and consistent, reliable Internet. It would be easy for them to implement that kind of thing. A phone call or an email to community leaders or governing bodies. I mean, Old Harbor has a Facebook page. It would be easy for them tod that as a news organization.

R: Tell me more about the Port Lions bullitein board.

D: It's just a community page I've started. It's just for people – if they find a backpack on the side of the road and they don't know whose it is, put a picture of it on there. Or the school si having their annual awards assembly so people know what time to show up. The Native Village of Port Lions having an annual membership meeting, you could put that on there. I do it however I want. I post pictures of seasons and holidays. Right now I still think I have an easter picture, a picture from church on

there I need to change. It's news and information that the community might want or need. I think there's probably too many Facebooks in the village, because I think there's a Port Lions swip swap. The city of Port Lions posts on the bulliten board, the tribal office does. It's just so easy when you'r enot in the village and you have good Internet, you could follow those like (snaps fingers). There's not much on there, so it would be so easy to follow. The one I set up was just for people ot share information and ask questions and spread news about community events. And I go on there, and anbydoy that steps out of the rules, then their posts get deleted. No bashing anybody, no profanity, no any of that. Ijust go on there and take their stuff off. And I've only had to do it once. So it's a real positive information sharing page.

R: Do you have many people who are connected to Port Lions but no longer live here, that are on there?

D: Yeah it's amazing to me. I ended up with 2 or 3 hudnred followers, and we don't have that many houses that have Internet here. Tribal members and former community members – and there may not be a lot of activity on it. Some weeks there may be ten things posted on it, some weeks there may be nothing. But it gives them a connection to hom, and they like that. The same people follow the tribe's webpage. And if the city had a webpage, they would follow that. Keeps them connected to home. So many people have left to make a living elsewhere, but really feel a strong connection here. They wouldn't have left here if they didn't need to go somewhere to find a job.

R: Jumping back to the last line of questioning I had, do you remember the last time a journalist ever visited Port Lions, and for what reason?

D: My memory, oh I'm going to mess up her name, sweet girl. Kodiak Daily Mirror sent over someone for our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in December. And I should know her name because her step brother, half brother, whatever, goes to school in Sitka with my boys and plays on their basketball team. She came in early December and spent the night. I gave her a tour and she had never been here before. There may have been people since then but that's the last one I remember.

R: Have you ever spoken to a reporter over the phone or anywhere? When was the last time that happened and for what reason?

D: The sports writer I told you about for the Kodiak paper. He used to call me about when my kids weres till in school here, about sports related stuff. I haven't had a kid in school here since 2012. So it's been at least three years. He used to call me or my husband on occasion. Who else called me. Someone else called me. Oh gosh. I turned 50 and I got really senile. Someone else called me in the last couple years. It's not very often, but it happens on occasion. And then like I said, the gentleman who writes occasionally for the paper, he called me and we emailed a lot a year ago around our fourth of july. Because we tried to do our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary community celebration over the course of a year, with different events and gatherings, and on

the fourth of July we had a huge 50<sup>th</sup> community celebration, but we celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Tustamina too. It was huge. I think we fed 300 people. So he was on the phone and emailing me, and that was just a year ago.

R: Can you think of any topics or issues in Port Lions specifically that you think deserve more attention, either in Kodiak or state media?

D: All of the regional issues, that affect the whole island, including us, tend to not get any coverage. Here's a good example. Transportation. Kodiak has two ferries that serve them. All kinds of freight service from Seattle and Anchorage. All kinds of large airplane service, and we have no freight delivery to any of the villages from Seattle. Only three of the villages are on the ferry schedule, and it's just one of the ferries, and it's not very frequent. We're the most spoiled in terms of ferry service, Old Harbor and Ouzinkie don't get very much. The price to bring fuel in is huge, because we can't buy hundreds of gallons that Kodiak can buy to get the price breaks. Regional issues, not just Kodiak issues. If they covered the regional issues there'd be a lot more about transportation, healthcare, cost of living, some of the communities aren't on the Kodiak Electric grid, and they're still running diesel generators to get their power. So what's not being covered is everything that's regional, and what is being covered is what affects Kodiak. And they have a whole different set of infrastructure and needs and issues than the villages have.

R: Do you think that if the Daily Mirror and KMXT spent more time, or made more of an effort to cover the other communities, that more people in places like Port Lions would make the effort to subscribe, or listen?

D: Absolutely. Absolutely. And, I think there's a longterm affect of what would happen if there is more attention paid to villages. I've always wanted to know what the economic benefit to the city of Kodiak and the island of Kodiak that comes from the villages. Timber operations, charter boat services, lodge operations, commercial fishing -- the dollar value has to be huge. If those villages and any for profit enterpsies went away that are there in the villages, how would that affect Kodiak? Every lodge buys their supplies. The fuel that gets purchased. The people traveling in to buy groceries. It would be huge. What would be the dollar value you could attach to the benefit the villages provide to Kodiak as an island or as a city. Nobody every talks about that. What services we receive, borough wide, are minimal. And attentioned in the news for regional sisues - minimal. Funds being funneled in, federal and state, minimal. Why do a two million dollar project in a community of 200 when you can do a two million dollar project in Kodiak that has 8K people? Because the cost to benefit ratio is always calculated into how those funds are spent. It makes the politicians look better if they look 80000 people over two hundred.

But on the flipside, I've always wondered what is the conomic benefit that the villages provide to the city of Kodiak.

R: That's an interesting question.

D: And if more attention was paid to regional issues on the flipside, that would also bring more attention to how these little communities support the island.

R: In more general terms, what type of news do you think are important to you?

D; My family is interested in highschool, college, and professional sports. I personally am interested in state, and federal budgets. Not a big pop culture person, but I follow some of that. Education is my big thing, so I'll follow that. It'll just make me angry most of the time, but I follow it anyways. Not a big fisheries person. I don't have enough room up here for everything to do with fisheries. Public safety also draws my attention, in the state. Nationally I don't pay much attention to it.

R: Local, state, national, international?

D: State.

R: Lastly, is there any other information or ideas or topics that you think would be important for me to know?

D: The biggest topic – transportation as it's related to all transportation, including getting fuel, and technology. I don't know how it relates to what you're going to prepare in your dissertation, but regional issues aren't focused on, and those are two of the biggies. If we had reliable technology in the villages, we wouldn't have the issues with economic development and the drying up and blowing away of these small communities. If we had reliable technology people could get jobs when they work at home and they're on the Internet all the time. There's tons of jobs like that. I have a cousin that works for Boeing and only goes to the office once a month. She does everything at home. She writes code. Those are huge – transportation and technology are what's contributing to our small communities fading. For Kodiak, that's really critical. In terms of news or that type of thing, but technology is a really big deal. If we had some consistent, reliable technology, our communities would be in a much better position as 21<sup>st</sup> century communities

### **JIM CEDENO, 53, OLD HARBOR**

R: So how long have you lived in Old Harbor?

J: Five years

R: Okay. And, when you first got here, was there Internet access that you had?

J: Uh, I didn't have it. But there was some very extremely limited Internet access.

R: And when did you first acquire personal Internet access?



J: As part of my job. They provide us with something I guess they call Internet. It's the Hughesnet. Extremely limited. There's four entities, well three entities mainly. The city, the native corporation, and myself, public safety, that we actually share the same Internet service. So the same account. So with the limited and overpriced ... that Hughesnet has, it made it very difficult for us to do our jobs and perform based on what was available on the speed. It's with all three different, maybe ten people trying to get to use the same line at the same time.

R: And has it improved at all?

J: Not much. I'd say there's some, weather does seem to have a big affect on it, whether its .... It is satellite driven, and whether the communication, the fogginess affects the signal. They have satellite up there, over there that reflects it. So when it gets there, then it gets up, then it gets down, it's still (unintelligible).

R: And I guess, thinking in terms of using the Internet to read news and journalism and current events and things that are going on, how often do you use the Internet for those purposes?

J: Outside of here, a lot. A lot. Here in the community, you can't. It'll just freeze up and by that time the page won't open. Because it'll time out. Out here I don't. I try to download stuff when I'm out of the village and download it to my tablet, so I can read it afterwards. I read a lot of journalism.

R: Do you remember the last thing you would've read or watched in the village? If at all?

J: I mean, related to the village?

R: Just news that you consumed in the village. While you were here, you read a piece of news.

J: I usually follow...keep up an eye on any of the daily reports on who is being arrested, who has warrants, stuff that the court puts out daily. If there's anybody available that's come up with a warrant that's part of this village, I know who to go after.

R: Are there any particular news outlets that you consistently use or go to for news?

J: No, pretty much I'll Google and try to get whatever comes up on the search. The more reliable sources. It varies.

R: How often do you feel you can rely on the newspaper in Kodiak, or the radio station in Kodiak, to give you news about your community here?

J: Not much, I mean they do do a lot in the evenings, but usually working I don't have the capability to try and be listening to the radio. There is a lot of good news that gets put out on the radio station, I think outside of the elders, the young people don't seem to listen to the radio much.

R: Do you feel like the news outlets in Kodiak cover Old Harbor enough, or that they could cover it more?

J: Not much. It barley will have some mentions of what's going on in the community. Kodiak news media basically focuses on what's going on in Kodiak. And that's maybe probably 99 percent. And seldom do the information get passed on about what's going on in the village. Then again, I don't know if it's the villages not informing them, either.

R: Do you think there's room for improvement?

J: A lot of improvement. It's not necessarily just on the information, but even emergency response, safety. If you need to communication information fast, to establish a particular protocol outside of the regular tv stations...not everybody has a TV, not everybody has a Facebook...so finding alternate methods to be able to basically get out the information to the communities is important. And I don't think they're at that point yet.

R: So when you do need news or information about what's going on in Old Harbor, how do you get it?

J: Out here? Rumor control. Biggest source is whenever things are going on, people that do have Facebook use Facebook. I do not use Facebook. Now with the Internet, Facebook is used a lot by a lot of the people. TO me it's - I don't have a Facebook account, don't want one, I don't want people knowing my business. That seems to be the only reliable source out here, actually.

R: Is Facebook?

J: (nods). Then again, it's not reliable information. It's reliable source to get information, but it's not reliable information.

R: Do you think there are nay topics or issues in Old Harbor that could be covered in Kodiak or beyond, that arne't being covered?

J: I think communication is a big one. That's why when you mentioned when you're coming out here, it's because out there are a lot of challenges in communicating between what the needs of the city of Kodiak are, and the borough, and the outlying villages. There is a lot of the leadership forums that we have, there's a real hindrance into how communication gets done and how the information that's

important to the rural communities gets disseminated right. There isn't that. SO we have some problems to address.

R: Are there any other thoughts that you have on this topic?

J: Most of the villages here, the ones that you have, pretty much Port Lions, Karluk, Ouzinkie, the other side tend to have a little more connection to into Kodiak because they also have a ferry that comes out that a lot of, even the newspapers get transported out. Out here, I know the tribe receives a couple copies of the Kodiak Daily Mirror newspaper, but how do you disseminate that information into the community? So it's pertinent, if everybody is really looking at when they do have access, they're not really looking at the radio for reliable information, they're not reading the newspaper. They're looking at the Facebook, which you find that a lot of the rural communities are trying to kind of match up with what's going on in the outside world. They're trying to not feel left out. They're trying to use whatever the new sources of media are to access information. They're just not necessarily accessing the right information, so a lot of the same mistakes that have happened in the past in the lower 48 are happening here, as we're discovering...because you know, the Internet out here is fairly new. And, we're going through the same growing pains as they went through down in the lower 48 15-20 years ago.

Although now it's just the norm. Almost everywhere you go, there's Internet. Even free Internet service. Out here, because you don't have that free Internet, the free WiFi accessible at McDonald's, Starbucks – that social network that develops, those places that provide that, it's not available here. So those are some assets of communication. You go to Starbucks, everybody chats, you know, people run business out of there. And that's a source of information, too. Some of the Starbucks I used to go to in the Lower 48, they have the little thing that's posting the daily – whatever the most current, hot topics are. So you're getting information while you're drinking coffee with your friends. It's that kind of social interaction that's not available here, because we've got very limited bandwidth. And most of us, a lot of the community is trying to split bandwidth between families, between homes, it sucks. That's the bottom line.

### **JOHN CZARNOTA, 60, OLD HARBOR**

R: During your time in Old Harbor, do you have access to the Internet?

J: Yes.

R: And since you've been coming here, have you always had it or did it start one certain year?

J: No, I think I've always had Internet. But I use the hotspot on my phone.

R: So you said it's been about four years since you've been coming to Old Harbor?

J: Yes.

R: So, on average, if you had to guess, how much do you spend using the Internet per day?

J: I would say, once a week, myself. My computer is crashed.

R: And what do you use it for?

J: Facebook, mostly.

R: Even if it's not that often, do you recall the last piece of news you read on the Internet?

J: About the Dogers. LA Dodgers.

R: Do you remember where you read that?

J: It was a person that I know, personally. She lets everybody know how the Dodgers do every day.

R: Just on Facebook?

J: Right.

R: In general, when looking at stuff about news or current events, even if it's not that much, where do you usually go to get that information?

J: TV.

R: Do you use the TV here more than the Internet?

J: Since there's only one channel and half the stuff is garbage on it, yeah I use the TV more, but a lot of times it's just on for noise.

R: So what channel d you watch for news?

J: It's channel 13. Out of Anchorage.

R: Would that be the one news outlet you usually go to?

J: That's the only one.

R: So during your time in Old Harbor, how often do you think you can rely on the newspaper in Kodiak, or the radio station, for news or information?

J: Um, not at all, because the paper is only sent to the office, and I don't get down to the office very much. We don't have the paper at home.

R: What about the radio station? Do you ever access that?

J: No.

R: Either of them, even online?

J: No.

R: So when looking for news or information about Old Harbor, how do you go about finding that?

J: I think, looking at all the post office there's a lot of hanging up notices. There's notices at the tribal office. There's notices here, you'll see. That's really how I do it. Just, people tell me what – I ask a lot of questions. That's how I do it.

R: Do you think the news organizations in Kodiak, could they improve their coverage of what goes on in Old Harbor?

J: Uh, I really don't think they do too much of Old Harbor.

R: Do you think they should do more?

J: Of course.

R: Do you remember the last time a journalist was here, that you've seen?

J: I've never seen one.

R: Ever spoken to one on the phone?

J: No.

R: Specifically, based on your time in Old Harbor, and based on what you know of the community, what do you think could be covered in Kodiak's news that's not covered?

J: Well, since there's not a lot of things going on, I think maybe the school's happenings, maybe when they graduate cover that a little bit better. As far as fishing here, Kodiak has more fishing, so I don't know if that's something that they touch on. I don't know how they do that.

R: Just some general questions. In general, when you look for news or information on current events, what topics do you think are important?

J: I like the BBC World News, I like just the news in general. Today Show Weather. Because it goes from their local weather in New York to a local out of Anchorage, which really doesn't matter here because we might have a totally different climate.

R: Do you prioritize local, state, national, or international information?

J: Probably state. That's the most information that I think applies here.

R: And what kind of information would that be?

J: Right now ,the biggest thing is the state budget. Because everybody gets a dividend if you're a full time member, if you live full time. Since I'm not a PFD, I don't get that, so it doesn't amount to much. But the state of this state is set on oil and oil isn't doing as well as it used to. So they have to change some things so they don't go broke.

R: One last question. If you could tell something to the leadership of Kodiak's news organizations, about Old harbor or what they could do better to cover the community here, what would you say to them?

J: I think if they put, had a little diddy of what's going on in Old Harbor...I don't expect a lot from the Kodiak paper, but if they could say something about Old Harbor, Larsen Bay, Akhiok, and all the different, small rural communities, that would be nice to hear.

R: Do you think, as a consumer of information, that if those practices were in place. Would you be more inclined to go to the newspaper's website or go to the radio station's website, if you knew that information was there?

J: I probably wouldn't' go to the website, but I'd read the paper. Because we get the paper every day here. It's not the same day it comes out, but after a few days, it comes. I really like the paper, but it doesn't do a lot of things for this area.

### **LEPANI NADORE, 26, OLD HARBOR**

L: The school has, understandable, a contract with GCI or whoever provides the Internet, so the community has a tendency to go over to the school to use that Internet, and everybody accesses it even after school hours. And other than that, that's probably the best Internet connection throughout the whole village. I'm going to say there rocking at least 15 MB/s versus everybody running off a cell tower rocking 1 MB/s on 3G.

R: So how long have you lived in Old Harbor?

L: Uh, this is going on my third year.

R: Okay.

L: So I'm fairly new.

R: Yeah. So have you had access to the Internet since you moved here?

L: Nope. Before we moved down here in 2012, me and my girls, we did not have access to the Internet until we moved downtown and somebody showed us a little method of borrowing the school's internet. So it became that process where everybody was reliant on the school's Internet, so everybody downtown kinda – if you're close enough to be able to access it – cus everybody pretty much, the local IDs, the student IDs, whichever student can access it even after school hours. And their Internet connection is like far beyond anyone else's. And it's the same way if you get the satellite dish, if you have instead of ... I'm not going to say if you get the satellite dish. If you get the transmitter and receiver, that actually points to the school, and if you've got that you get a connection. So the school is the main hub for GCI's Internet down in this rural community.

R: So if you had to guess, how much time do you think you spend on the Internet every day?

L: If I'm playing games, I'm going to say about five hours. Depending on the day, if my kids are being good, if not, then I'm looking at probably just watching YouTube videos and pausing and going and tending to them. Other than that, I'm going to take a guesstimate, for me, myself personally, probably about five hours.

R: So, thinking about that usage in terms of accessing news information and journalism and current events, do you recall the last one or two pieces of that information you saw, read, or watched?

L: Just yesterday, on Facebook. But not so much – so much of the stuff we haven't really been following the news that much, except for stuff that's been posted on Facebook. But we also double check the sources sometimes, if it's an article written by somebody else and it's not actually fact. And people have a tendency to follow those articles, but we do have a tendency to try and keep up with news outlets through Facebook.

R: Do you have a particular outlet you go to more often than not?

L: KTUU, channel 2 news out of Anchorage.

R: How often, or do you think at all, you can rely on the newspaper or radio station in Kodiak for news or information about Old Harbor?

L: They broadcast on the local radio channel...I think it's public radio...that we actually receive in the car, so we always listen to that every time we get in.

R: But for news specifically about Old Harbor, information relevant to the community here – would you rely on that radio station for news about what's going on here?

L: No. But it's for news about what's going on out there. Everybody is kind of inclined here, that when an event does happen here, you hear it from your neighbors and stuff, and it actually does reach the media in Kodiak, and then it relays back to us. So, information that does get distributed on the public radio, an event, when it's a serious event, that's when they actually mention Old Harbor and bring up that topic.

R: Do you think there are ways the news outlets in Kodiak could improve their coverage of this community?

L: That's a really good question. I think the only possible way would be for somebody here relaying any message, but this community is so small it's like, everybody knows everything, because the message gets spread around. News kind of has the tendency to spread within the community, and then kind of remains in the community, unless it's a serious event then of course it's going to get out there. But this community has a tendency to kind of take care of its own, per se. That much I've noticed. Something happens to the habitants here, it stays in the community.

R: Do you think that there's an inclination that, if the newspaper or radio stations in Kodiak had more information about Old Harbor or the other communities on the island, that people would be more inclined to go those news outlets for information?

L: Possibly, I'm not entirely sure. Cus, me coming from Anchorage, there's news coverage 24/7, and coming down here it was a different experience because I didn't know I was getting myself into. I came down here, this was before they even had the cell towers, there was no cell phone here not too long ago. And now that they have cell phone towers, it seems like it's slowly moving towards where I used to be. I mean, it was almost a step back for me, but I think it was a good step back cus I kind of was just sitting and doing nothing. Coming to a community that was lacking any basic means of communication, where everybody was relaying on VHF radio and talking to each other, I mean that in itself kinda was my news.

R: When that access was brought here, when you lived here, did that change the way you got information?

L: Oh yeah, a lot.



R: In what ways?

L: For example, the incident that happened in regards to the shooting of the bear...last year?...no, the year before...I think it was March 2014, in regards to the mom being shot. It was that size with a couple of cubs, and when that incident got out, that kind of came back to us, and it kind of reflected on our community. But information like that really travels fast. So if it's a serious incident, it kind of has a tendency to get out faster now that we have cell phone access as well as internet access, a lot of people have a tendency to get that information ack. But that's kind of the community on itself.

R: So do you remember, albeit a short time before that access was brought, do you remember how you got information before that?

L: Just, pretty much talking to people here. That was the only form of communication, would be if something serious happened, like the Colloch incident, that was all relayed through the radio. And we also had our local phones that could dial long distance, but other than that that was the only method that we had, especially the regular TV programming that comes on, it's a local channel, but pretty soon they're going to go to digital and we're not going to have that access anymore anytime soon.

R: So before you had regular Internet or cell phone connections, did you depend more on, say, the radio station or newspaper out of Kodiak?

L: Yes.

R: And now you depend less?

L: Pretty much, yeah. Because with the Internet now, you're able to look up the information yourself. So if anything new is happening I have the tendency to go to MSNBC, and then...what was the other one...No offence to FOX, but I kind of stray away from that news media outlet. I was kind of watching some of their god damn freakin coverage, and it was pissing me off. But the main news media outlet I follow is MSNBC.

R: Any topics in Old Harbor that you think are not being covered by, say, Kodiak or statewide media that should be?

L: Not to my knowledge quite yet. I mean, eveyrhting seems to be handled accordingly. We have a spill, we get a report. I'ma ctually part of the crew that responds to those spills, and in regards to incidents, people have a tendancy to call the state troopers then they come down here to handle the situation. So stuff is happening here, but it's on the DL to where it's not going to impact the community

drastically, but everybody hears about it. Everybody knows about it, but we kind of just keep moving along, cus we know that situation is handled.

R: DO you remember the last time a journalist came here?

L: Uh, the only last time I spoke to a journalist was probably that incident at Colloch.

R: Any other final thoughts on this topic?

L: Nope.

## **22, PORT LIONS, PETER?**

R: So when did you first acquire Internet access?

P: Since I was in middle school. Six years ago, seven years ago was the frist time I really used it.

R: Could you estimate how much time per day you use the Internet, today?

P: On average, per day, approximately four to five hours.

R: As far as news information, can you remember the last two or three news items you saw or watched or read?

P: I look at the news almost daily.

R: So who do you usually turn to for information?

P: My very first one is Drudge Report. And lately I've been using Yahoo, just mainly because the search engine is right there, and Yahoo news is right there as well.

R: So do you usually use the Internet?

P: I don't watch much TV mainly because I do work outside a lot, so I don't really watch TV at all. That also goes with newspapers. My main news outlet is online.

R: Are there particular outlets – I already asked you that. Sorry. Speaking of Kodiak's news – KMXT and the DM – how often do you turn to outlets like those in Kodiak for information?

P: I would say more like once a month.

R: Did you ever use them before you got the Intenret?

P: It was mainly for reports and stuff like that.

R: Do you think the Internet has changed how you consume news?

P: I believe I can look online for more specific news I actually like to see. I think it's easier for me to see news I actually want to see. So I think it has changed.

R: Do you feel as a citizen of PL that you can rely on the news media in Kodiak to get your information that's relevant to your life here?

P: I don't think so. Mainly because we don't get KDM or I don't really listen to the radio station much either.

R: So do you think that, if the paper or radio station in Kodiak were to make more of an effort to produce content relevant to PL, would you frequent their media more be it online or in other forms?

P: Hm...I really don't know if it would really affect the lives of people in PL as much. Mainly because it's a self sustaining village for the most part. If we have problems, even transportation and stuff like that, it usually gets resolved within a day. I don't really know if Kodiak did make an effort to make news from PL, or any of the villages, I don't really think it would make that much of a difference.

R: Not starting a news outlet, but if there was more stuff in the newspaper about PL, do you think people would read the paper more?

P: Definitely.

R: Do you think there could be more?

P: There could be more. It seems more or less moer Kodiak-based, unless something big – like our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary that we had here. Both the Tustamina coming on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July to celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> as well, and at the end of the year December our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. That was well documented. And I've seen people those newspapers from that particular time on their walls.

R: Do you remember the last time a journalist actually came to PL?

P: I believe that was the last one.

R: Did you ever speak to a journalist over the phone?

P: No.

R: In what ways do you think the newspaper or radio station or other outlets in Kodiak could improve?

P: I think possibly the easiest way rather than getting people out there, is having a local. Local being able to volunteer and say, hey, these things are coming around, they're able to relate to the people a lot more, especially if they're from here. I think that would probably be a better way to get news out here.

R: If that happened, do you think more people here would be interested in subscribing to the newspaper or looking at it online?

P: I do think so.

R: In some more general terms, are there any topics or issues in PL that deserve to be covered that aren't being covered?

P: I remember seeing – I can't remember exact name or village – but I remember there was a piece on the Bering Sea region of Alaska. They were saying a lot of stuff about the earth going through warming process, so climate change. One of the elders from one of the villages said that our region specifically, the Bering Sea region, has not seen much snow at all. And that's going to change the way we live around here. I was thinking to myself, I was just about to write something on there as a comment – there's other regions in Alaska that are experiencing the same exact thing. But it seemed like they're just talking about the Bering Sea like it's the only place that's being affected. To be honest, we only had one day of snow this whole winter. And it disappeared within two days.

R: So things like that, could've been ways that local media could incorporate –

P: To do a little more research and see if there's other places, not just one that's being affected by the same thing

R: And just to wrap things up about news in general, what type of information do you consider important?

P: I'm kind of a science nerd. So a lot more things about science – astrophysics and stuff like that.

R: Local, State, National, International

P: Even though we're a remote village out here, I believe sometimes what the government says and what they do can affect us in a huge way. So that's my interest.

R: So, a more state or national perspective?

P: Both local, especially if it's directly in relation to the village, and then international.

**POLLY ASHOUWAK, 20, OLD HARBOR**

R: Are you from Old Harbor?

P: Yeah, but I lived in Anchorage for 12 years, but finally moved back.

R: When did you move back?

P: Two years ago, I think.

R: So probably to finish high school, or did you finish high school there?

P: No, well first I came down to help my sister because she was becoming a clinic aid. Because I needed to watch her kids. So we just decided to stay.

R: And since you've lived in Old Harbor, has there been access to the Internet that you use.

P: Yes.

R: You were probably too young when you left to remember...

P: Mhm.

R: So on average, how much do you think you use the Internet per day?

P: Quite a bit. Yeah. Because I have a cell phone and Internet service. So yeah.

R: So if you had to guess how many hours, on average...

P: Um...six or seven.

R: Do you ever watch news television, or satellite television?

P: I'm a big fan of news. I always have to watch it or read it.

R: So do you remember the last few news pieces you read, or watched, or heard about?

P: It was on CNN. I was reading about those two prison people that had escaped. I think that was the last one.

R: Are there any particular news organizations that you go to regularly for information?

P: Anchorage Daily News, and CNN. Or I watch BBC.

R: So in general, where would you say you get your news from most? The Internet, tv?

P: The Internet.

R: And what news organizations do you use there?

P: ADN and CNN.

R: How often do you rely on the news organizations in Kodiak for information?

P: I never really thought of that.

R: Okay. Like you never think to look, or you just never have a reason to?

P: I just never look because I just don't. Or, I usually see the news from there on Facebook.

R: Do you feel like the use of the Internet impacts or changes how you consume news?

P: Yeah.

R: In what way, would you say?

P: I'm not sure.

R: Do you think, I know you said you don't really look at the Kodiak news organizations, but if you were, do you think you could rely on them for information on your community here?

P: Mhm.

R: In what way?

P: Just talking about what's going on here.

R: Do you think they do a good job of that?

P: No.

R: Could they do better?

P: If they could, yeah.

R: How do you think they could?

P: Just talk about us. What's going on around here in all the rural villages. It'd be interesting to know what's happening on this island.

R: So when you're looking for information about what's going on in Old Harbor, where do you usually go?

P: Flyers. People telling me. That's about it.

R: Anything on social media?

P: Old Harbor community events on Facebook. That's where I go.

R: How many people are in that group?

P: I don't know.

R: How often are things posted there?

P: Every other day, I see.

R: Do you remember the last time there was a journalist who visited Old Harbor?

P: No, not that I can remember.

R: Have you ever spoken to one on the phone or anything?

P: No.

R: What topics or issues, if you can think of any, do you think could be covered in Old Harbor that aren't being covered?

P: School events that involved family, or something like that. Just events.

R: In general, what type of news topics do you think are important?

P: Political.

R: On what level? National? State?

P: State.

R: Would you call yourself, for what you're interested in, would you call yourself a well informed person?

P: No, not really.

R: Any other thoughts or topics you had in mind?

P: I can't think of one right now.

**SUSAN BOSKOFKY, 53, Port Lions**

**R:** Living in Port Lions, when did you first acquire Internet access? Do you remember the year?

**S:** No, actually I don't, because we had dial up. America Online.

R: Would that have been the 90s? Early 2000s?

S: Late 90s.

R: And do you have access to satellite television here?

S: Yes. Well everybody got their own dish.

R: Do you remember when you first got that?

S: Early 2000s.

R: And, just a rough estimate, can you estimate how much time per day you spend using the Internet, in general?

S: Probably, if you added it all together, three hours.

R: And what about the television?

S: Well I don't count, because the television watches me a lot. Probably about three hours.

R: Thinking about news and journalism, can you recall the last two or three news articles you read and what they might have been about?

S: I could remember a couple. An arrest in Kodiak. And that earthquake in Japan – that's not real recent. I tend to stay away from the news and whatnot. Because it's nothing but bleak stuff.

R: So the arrest in Kodiak, do you remember what organization produced that information?

S: Kodiak Daily Mirror.



R: Do you get the newspaper?

S: I apply for it online.

R: And in general terms – and I know you just said you try to stay away from news – but when you do look for it, where do you get it from?

S: I watch channel 2 news on TV, and on the Internet with Kodiak daily Mirror.

R: And channel 2, is that out of Anchorage?

S: (nod)

R: Alright. And how often do you rely on the Daily Mirror or Kodiak's other news organizations for information?

S: Not real often, because I don't really go on there other than once and a while.

R: Do you think because you have access to the Internet you look at the Daily Mirror more than you did beforehand? More than when you had the actual paper?

S: No, I did it more then.

R: And did they fly it in then?

S: It gets mailed over.

R: So do you feel like having the Internet changed where you get your news from or how often you look at it?

S: Mhm.

R: In what way?

S: Because I know it's there, I know I can go to access it at anytime. And I just chose not to.

R: Just because it's too...

S: Like I said, I like a simple life without all the...you pick up a paper or you even sit and watch news it's nothing but killings and all of that. It's the same old news over and over again. And then any kind of big story, they – how would you put it nicely – squeeze every drop out of the story they can. And a lot of the stuff that is being reported, it don't even need to be.

R: Do you have any examples that come to mind?

S: No.

R: So going back to what's going on in Kodiak, do you feel like when it comes to what's going on in Port Lions or issues that are important to Port Lions, can you rely on the Daily Mirror or ...

S: No.

R: And why do you think that...

S: Well because we're such a rural community, other places don't know what's going on here. And there's no newspaper or anything here.

R: Can you think of any examples of something that happened here, that was not covered by the Daily Mirror or radio stations in Kodiak?

S: Well, not covered right away, but maybe a day or two later. A fire here recently.

R: So, do you think that Kodiak – the Daily Mirror, the radio stations there – could improve their coverage of Port Lions?

S: (shakes head)

R: Do you remember the last time a reporter visited Port Lions?

S: July 4, 2014.

R: What were they here for?

S: We had a big community celebration, 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Port Lions. Oh no, take that back. December. They were back here again.

R: DO you remember where they were from? Were they from Kodiak?

S: Yeah.

R: Have you ever spoken to a reporter over the phone?

S: No.

R: So just some more general questions, what type of news do you think is important?

S: Current events. What's going on right now.

R: Would you call yourself a well informed person when it comes to news?

S: No.

R: Can you think of any topics or issues in Port Lions that you think deserve more coverage in local or state media?

S: I could think of a lot but I'm not going to say – so no.

R: I'm just curious, why wouldn't you want tha tout there?

S: It's just happening in all of the villages. All the villages are declining so rapidly, with – it's just a general decline of all the villages. Not just here on Kodiak island, but throughout the state.

R: Is there any other information or perspective that you think would be important for me to know about this topic?

S: I thought you were going to ask more about the Internet? The services. That there I'd fill your ears.

R: Well let's hear about it then. What's important to know about that?

S: How Internet services in rural communities is very poor. You're lucky to get it. And there's days that you don't get it. So you can't stay connected.

R: Is it just that it's inconsistent service or is it weak service?

S: Weak service. The local telephone company has an Internet service here, and you can't even go on there and load up a picture, it's so slow. Way back when, my dial up was even faster than that. Then they – StarBand pulled out of there, they no longer served here. And they were fairly decent. But it makes it hard for organizations, like the tribal governments or city governments, to do the job because the outside world has access to all this speedy internet and whatnot, and we're being required to utilize the Internet to do reporting to funding agencies, and...

R:It's unreliable?

S: Mhm.

**WILMER ANDREWVITC, 55, OLD HARBOR**

R: How long have you lived in Old Harbor?

W: My entire life.

R: Do you recall when you first had Internet access here in town?

W: It would have to be in the early 90s. I'll tell you, that's as far as I can see after...I had two strokes seven years ago. My second stroke was massive so it did some damage to my memory, so I don't have short term memory but I could remember way back.

R: I'm interested in how, you know, the Internet arrived in villages changed the information flow....

W: Well the computers were okay, when they first came up, but then in the 2000s they come out with these little gadget things, and that's all you seen the kids and teenagers doing. You try to talk to them and you can't, because they don't pay attention. So I don't really care for them because I don't even have a computer. My cell phone, I still use it...I've it for how many years, I'm still trying to figure it out.

R: Do you remember, because you've been here your whole life, in the past, before the Internet and before cell phones, how did people get news here? Did they fly the newspaper in?

W: People got newspapers, or we had first the tv, and there was only one station which was from Anchorage. And you get the news from that, or you get the Kodiak newspaper.

R: Do many people still ge the Kodiak newspaper?

W: Some do.

R: Do you?

W: I used to. But it got too goddamn expensive for me. But then the tribe gets it so I go to the tribal office and read.

R: So from what you've read of the paper, do you think the newspaper in Kodiak could cover Old Harbor more? OR that they should be writing about Old Harbor more?

W: Well, it depends, you know, if there's something going on. Like somebody here could probably send in graduation and all that sort of thing...holiday things, tribal [unintelligible] and put it in the newspaper. We never see much of anybody come out. Taking pictures or whatever. Only certain times after so many years, maybe once or twice a year, or something. Only if something happens is when they come.

R: When was the last time you talked to a reporter in Old Harbor, or have you ever?

W: I have never.

R: DO you think that the newspaper in Kodiak could improve in some ways with how they write about Old Harbor, or the frequency?

W: They do pretty good. They just write the stories about whatever is going on. They do a good job. Certain things going on at the church or whatever...[unintelligible]...and we ask to put in an obituary for our loved ones, which I did when my two brothers were dead, and for a long time their wives didn't do it, so I did. Then I just lost my second youngest brother. He's been gone a year and six months, and his wife just passed away December 20, so it was 11 months and four days after him. We forgot to do an obituary for her, because a lot of people from Old Harbor who lives in different places in Alaska didn't know my brother passed away because we didn't put in obituaries. But they do a good job. They really do a good job with things like that, and people they have sent in stories...They do a nice job. It's really good to read what happens, even though people like me...I don't subscribe. I don't.

## ANALYSIS

### **WHAT RURAL ALASKANS CAN TEACH US ABOUT LOCAL NEWS**

Ryan Schuessler

KODIAK, Alaska -- The paperboy is an idyllic image in American suburbia.

He's easy to picture: a scrawny blonde kid in a striped t-shirt, riding his Schwinn through the gridded blocks of identical houses, throwing papers into each yard. But it's a stereotypical role that's hard to come by in rural Alaska. Replace the kid with a round middle-aged man and the Schwinn with a two-seat Cessna from God-knows-what year. Roads turn into mountain passes, and cookie cutter houses into far-flung villages.

For years, the closest thing rural Alaska had to a paperboy were their pilots: the men and women who fly mail, cargo, and passengers to villages that have no roads connecting them to the outside world. They also took newspapers -- but not so much anymore. When it comes to news, things have changed all over the country. Outlets, especially newspapers, are scrambling to find ways to stay afloat as news consumers are rapidly changing their habits.

The United States' most isolated places are no exception.

### **THE CENTRAL CITY**

In 1980, researcher William Adams theorized about the role of "central cities" in media markets. Predictably, he found that coverage was dominated by news from the cities

where outlets were headquartered – where the journalists themselves lived and worked. Residents of the “central city” could routinely expect to read or hear information relevant to their lives when they read the local paper or turned on the news. The same could not be said for that market’s outlying communities who were stuck with news unilaterally coming out of the “central city.” The “central city” is the gatekeeper.

The concept of the “central city” is quite possibly more entrenched in Alaska than anywhere else in the present day United States – in ways that extend far beyond news. With thousands of residents living in villages and towns hundreds, even thousands of miles from any road, air service from “hub” towns (as they’re called here) remain an essential part of life. In the past, they have also been the gatekeepers of news.

Enter: the Alaskan paperboy – the bush pilot in his Cessna – flying the nearest local paper out to a village along with grocery orders, grandma coming back from her doctor’s appointment, and the Keurig someone ordered on Amazon three weeks ago.

But that role is changing, at least when it comes to news. A lot has changed since Adams wrote about the “central city” nearly 40 years ago, mainly the development of the Internet. Academia has produced volumes about how the development of the Internet has changed the role of information gatekeepers – mainly that it has torn down the old model. Consumers who have access to the Internet, satellite television, and social media no longer have to depend solely on Adam’s “central city” news outlets. The Internet gave

them choices – the ability to place themselves into audiences online instead of being tied to whichever paper or station happened to be closest.

But what does this look like on the ground in Alaska – the place where the “central city” relationship continues to exist in an extreme form? I went to find out.

### **WHEELS DOWN IN KODIAK**

For the past several months, I have been based in Kodiak, Alaska – a town of around 6,400 in the Kodiak Archipelago – working as a freelance journalist and researcher, exploring this question.

The Kodiak Archipelago is like its own bubble. On a physical island, the city of Kodiak is nearly 300 air miles from Anchorage, and is only accessible by air or boat. Yet, on its own, it is a “central city” as Adams would have defined it. The archipelago also hosts about half a dozen other villages of varying sizes, only one of which is connected to Kodiak by a road. The air service to the outlying villages is out of Kodiak, where there is a grocery store, Wal-Mart, and other services. In most cases, to get to these villages, one has to get to Kodiak first.

The town also boasts two local media outlets. The *Kodiak Daily Mirror*, a newspaper, and KMXT, a public radio station. Both outlets have fulltime staff that produce daily news content.



From Kodiak, I flew out to several of the archipelago's villages, using the local air service. During one conversation with a pilot – who happened to be the company's owner and whom I later saw on an overdramatized reality show called *Alaskan Bush Pilots* – I learned a bit about the history of the role of pilots.

“We used to fly newspapers out here all the time,” he told me en route to one village (as he let me try flying the plane). But things had changed. Now, only a few newspapers go out with the mail – usually to tribal government offices that have a subscription. This anecdote proved to be in line with what I would learn in several of the villages.

#### **WHEN THE INTERNET CAME TO TOWN**

During my time in the archipelago's outlying villages, I spent my days trying to get that perfect shot of a bald eagle (I got it) -- as well as interviewing locals about when they first had access to the Internet, and how they get their news today.

In order to avoid the timely process of securing tribal council approval to do interviews in the villages, I agreed to keep names and locations anonymous. In the end, I visited three of the archipelago's villages and interviewed 15 residents. I interviewed slightly more women than men. The youngest interviewee was 20. The oldest was 60. The vast majority, though not all, were indigenous Alutiiq people.

The Internet first came to Kodiak's villages in the early 2000s, locals told me. Satellite television arrived around the same time. Access to consistent, reliable Internet service remains a challenge in every village I visited.

"Internet services in rural communities is very poor," a 53-year-old woman told me. "You're lucky to get it. And there's days that you don't get it. So you can't stay connected."

"I was an Americorps member here, and I couldn't do some of my projects because I didn't have a strong enough signal," a resident of another village told me. "Using your cellphone only works so well. So I think it's definitely a limiting factor in our community."

## **CREATING DIGITAL AUDIENCES**

Nevertheless, the presence of the Internet and other digital media infrastructure (satellite television, cellphone service) has left a mark on the villages when it comes to news consumption, and many residents report that access to this technology lead to decreased dependence on Kodiak's local media outlets in the villages.

As a result, residents are placing themselves into digital audiences that bypass Kodiak's media. Not one person I spoke with pays for a subscription or online access to the *Daily Mirror*, and only a few reported that they regularly listen to or consume KMXT content.

Instead, they're using the Internet to place themselves into statewide audiences, or creating village-level spaces online. Nearly everyone gets their news online, most over Facebook.

Nearly every resident interviewed – spanning age – listed *Alaska Dispatch News* and Anchorage's NBC affiliate as the primary producers of news information they consume, among other national or international news organizations.

“I follow all kinds – both conservative and liberal point of view type news Facebook pages,” one 52-year-old resident told me. “But on TV I almost always get my TV news from the same station. The Anchorage station, and the national NBC news.”

“[Yahoo! News is] just automatically where I always go to,” a 29-year-old said. “I just browse. I'm never looking for anything specific.”

Yahoo! News, CNN, and BBC were among the other networks resident consistently rely on for news information.

I asked each resident which “level” of news they most consistently consumed: local (*Kodiak Daily Mirror*, KMXT), state, national, or international. The vast majority of them cited state-level news, with national-level coming next. Local and international news were rarely mentioned.

Older residents who were news-conscious when the Internet was introduced into their villages cited that introduction as one of the factors that depleted dependency on local news outlets. Access to the Internet, they say, allowed them to tap into state-level audiences that they felt had more importance in their lives and communities. Younger residents, who were children when the Internet came to town, reported never having read news from Kodiak's outlets.

In addition to allowing residents to place themselves into existing online audiences, the Internet has also allowed them to create their own at the village-level. None of the villages have traditional news outlets, but social media – particularly Facebook – has allowed for the low-cost development of village information exchanges that loosely resemble “citizen journalism.”

For example, two of the three villages I visited have community Facebook pages.

“It’s just for people – if they find a backpack on the side of the road and they don’t know whose it is, put a picture of it on there,” the resident who created one village’s page told me. “Or, the school is having their annual awards assembly so people know what time to show up.”

What is interesting and telling, is that both pages have followings that exceed the present population of the villages they serve. This means that the Internet has allowed for the

creation of village-level information exchanges that transcend traditional media structures. Anyone with Internet connection and an interest can access village news, which is why the groups' followings exceed village populations.

"It's just so easy when you're not in the village and you have good Internet, you could follow those like [snaps fingers]," she added.

### **'KODIAK-CENTRIC'**

Of course, there is a reason behind why the Kodiak Archipelago's villagers are placing themselves in state/national-level audiences or creating village-level spaces: Kodiak's local media isn't giving them what they want.

When asked how often they could rely on Kodiak's news outlets for information about their villages, most villagers replied "very little," "not at all," "very poor," or similar responses.

Alas, we see Adams' "central city" in action. Residents of a market's outlying communities (the villages) cannot expect to see news relevant to their lives from the "central city's" (Kodiak) news outlets.

Only a handful of residents could remember when a journalist from Kodiak came to their village to cover an event. Most of those who could remember recalled when the *Daily*

*Mirror*'s reporter came to cover the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their village's founding. One individual recalled when the paper's sports writer came to cover a school basketball game. Nobody interviewed could recall being interviewed over the phone.

Calling it a "Kodiak-centric" way of thinking, one resident said, "they're not actively seeking information about us."

Most villagers could think of topics that they believe should be covered. For example, over the summer the historic Russian Orthodox Cathedral in the City of Kodiak was vandalized and desecrated – an even that made local and state headlines for days. Residents of one village were quick to point out that their own historic Russian Orthodox church had been robbed a few days prior, but it was never covered.

"All of the regional issues, that affect the whole island, including us, tend to not get any coverage," one resident said.

"I think the crime that happens here needs to be going out more," another said.

Residents also expressed irritation that, when regional issues that impact Alaska, Kodiak and the villages are covered, villagers themselves are rarely contacted for comment.

One villager recalled seeing a story about the lack of winter snow in the Bering Strait region.

“But it seemed like they’re just talking about the Bering Sea, like it’s the only place that’s being affected,” he said. “To be honest, we only had one day of snow this whole winter. And it disappeared within two days.”

“Just a loss of connection, a loss of knowledge about what they’re doing and what we’re doing,” one resident said about not being able to easily find news about other villages. “Because we’re all replicating what we’re all doing out in the villages. And we’re isolated, so we don’t know what the other villages are doing, and there isn’t a way to share that communication.”

However, not every resident interviewed saw the lack of coverage as a problem. Two anecdotal patterns emerged. Overall, younger residents did not see it as a problem that their communities were not covered.

“There’s just nothing going on here,” one told me, a sentiment echoed by others in their twenties.

Similarly, among the three villages, residents of the one that is closest to the city of Kodiak and has the most frequent air service to town did not see the lack of coverage as a problem. Looking back at Adams’ central city theory, it makes sense that the residents with fewer geographic barriers between themselves and the “central city” would feel this way.

## **BUILDING COMMUNICATION**

In general, it is clear that the villagers in the Kodiak Archipelago's outlying villages are using the Internet to seek alternative sources of news, and that many are disenchanted with the media from the nearby "central city."

There is an argument to be made, however, that they could be wrong – that they simply are not aware of coverage of their communities. This may very well be true. However, given the commercialization of media in the United States, this is a misconception that should still be addressed as if it were true. News consumers seeking alternative information sources means a smaller audience – thus smaller profits – for Kodiak's local media.

Every resident interviewed said they would be more likely to actively seek out Kodiak's local media outlets if they felt they could consistently find information relevant to their lives and communities. However, it is clear many are not.

In defense of Kodiak's media outlets, it is not easy to get to these villages. Air taxis and accommodations are expensive, and there are only a handful of journalists in town to begin with. However, as one villager put it, "but it could be just a phone call. Just a phone interview. They could do it that way. I think there's stuff that could be done better, but I think if that opportunity was here, I think you'd have somebody who would do it."



Indeed, telecommunications can easily bridge this geographic barrier. Municipal and tribal officials would make good contacts for journalists in Kodiak, and regularly scheduled communication could offer more story ideas and insight into regional issues that, otherwise, are overlooking village perspective.

Additionally, these village-level digital spaces – the community Facebook pages – is another easy way for Kodiak journalists to keep an eye on what is going on in the villages. These pages have the potential to aid in sourcing, producing story ideas, or building connections in the villages.

Furthermore, residents in all three villages expressed interest in having members of their own community become citizen journalists.

“I think possibly the easiest way rather than getting people out there, is having a local,” one 22-year-old resident said. “A local being able to volunteer and say, ‘hey, these things are coming around.’ They’re able to relate to the people a lot more, especially if they’re from here. I think that would probably be a better way to get news out of here.”

## **WHAT WE CAN LEARN**

In the past, local media – like the *Kodiak Daily Mirror* and KMXT – has been the most local media option. Clearly, the Internet has changed that. The words of these villagers

offer lessons in how regional media can bridge geographic barriers and grow or keep their audiences in outlying communities.

**1. Tap into existing local networks:** In the case of Kodiak, local journalists could benefit from reaching into the digital spaces outlying villages have created for themselves, such as the community Facebook pages. Without the expense of gas or plane tickets, this is an easy way to stay tuned to what is going on in a media market beyond its “central city,” and an easy way to produce story ideas. It’s also a way to promote news organizations’ content directly to those communities and build brand recognition.

**2. Train locals:** Some communities are easier to reach than others. Local newsrooms could benefit from a small investment of time to train interested volunteers in news production. As locals in Kodiak’s villages suggested, this makes the flow of news bilateral, not just unilateral. Furthermore, local individuals already have the community understanding, perspective, and trust that “central city” journalists may initially lack.

**3. Make connections:** Internet and telephones make it easy for reporters to bridge geographic barriers that, traditionally, have lead to shortages in coverage of outlying communities. Regularly scheduled phone calls to leaders or other points of contacts in these communities could help maintain local organizations’ reputation and, most importantly, maintain or build their audiences in these places.

**4. Look beyond the “central city”:** Most importantly, stories and news do not exist in a vacuum. More often than not, issues covered in local media are also felt in that market’s outlying communities. Excluding – either intentionally or unintentionally – the voices of and perspective of those residents only serves to alienate potential consumers. Morally and pragmatically, this is problematic for news organizations. When covering a topic, local reporters could benefit from asking themselves if voices from outside the boundaries of the “central city” could complement, add to, or improve their coverage. More often than not, such voices would add a level nuance and comprehensiveness that would otherwise be missing.

In the end – and like any community – Kodiak’s villagers simply are interested in news and information that’s relevant to their lives. They want to see their own communities in the news – not just read about others. In the past, they had little choice and were bound to the convenience of the nearest newspaper. That is not the case anymore. The Internet has given them autonomy as news consumers, and regional media is missing out on an audience.

The paperboy – be him the scrawny blonde kid or the bearded bush pilot – and everything he represented is no more. How is your newsroom going to adapt?

## CONCLUSION

While this project has proved successful in many ways, the challenges presented provide lessons for similar endeavors in the future. The skepticism of outsiders I encountered in Alaska was a hurdle that could be overcome with time. However, the rigid, pre-determined travel itinerary meant I would often be leaving communities just as I was starting to break down barriers with those in the community. This project would have benefited greatly from flexible travel arrangements that would have allowed for the option to stay in one community longer, as opposed to being bound by a plane ticket purchased months prior.

Regarding the possibilities for future research, there are many facets of the Internet in Alaskan villages – and rural areas, in general – that were not discussed in this research due to the narrow focus on news consumption. Not discussed in this project's analysis were infrastructure barriers to Internet service, financial barriers to Internet access in outlying areas, and the impact the Internet has on the social fabric of these communities across generations – all of which were brought up by interviewees. While the Internet has allowed for more consumer autonomy for these communities when it comes to news, to assume it has had only positive effects would be incorrect and, frankly, naïve. Globalization by way of Internet access has real, visible impacts on rural communities – in Alaska and beyond – that can be both positive and negative. This is a topic worthy of academic exploration. The lack of existing literature on this subject only speaks to the need for researchers to move beyond the urban standard of journalism and mass communication research and further explore rural areas.

APPENDIX

# PROPOSAL

PROFESSIONAL PROJECT

Ryan Schuessler  
Spring 2015

Missouri School of Journalism

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Committee:

Fritz Cropp, Chair  
Cristina Mislan  
Judd Slivka

# **INTRODUCTION**

My five years at the Missouri School of Journalism – having completed the undergraduate sequence in Convergence – are primarily what have laid the foundations for my ability to successfully complete this project, when it comes to the journalistic skills. The Convergence sequence leaves students with the technical abilities to produce all kinds of journalism – writing, photography, video, audio, infographics, etc. The classes in this sequence (in particular, Convergence Reporting and Convergence Producing) have enabled me to successfully complete internships at a wide variety of news outlets, including radio stations and text-based organizations. I am confident in my ability to produce high quality journalism using these skills. The sequence also left me with a critical approach to journalistic practices -- always thinking about which medium is best suited to tell a certain story – as well as a keen news judgement.

Additionally – and perhaps most importantly – I have focused my professional development on building an eye for good content. My first internship four years ago was with the *St. Louis Beacon*, founded by longtime, seasoned *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* editors and reporters. The *Beacon*'s slogan was “News that Matters,” and avoided frivolous, entertainment-driven news that is so common in the industry these days. My time at the *Beacon* had a profound affect on my news judgment that carries on to this day. I have built my career – albeit a short one – on telling underreported, substantive stories that are not diluted by the processes of deadline-driven newsrooms. Examples of successful stories I have produced include the story of the United States' first mosque in Cedar Rapids, the economic conflict between private paddlefish caviar producers and Oklahoma's state-run operation, and the open-ended renaissance of Sarajevo's Jewish community after the Bosnian War.

In addition to the content of my work, I try to prioritize geographic areas that are also underreported. Having been born and raised in Missouri, I am familiar with the “flyover country” stigma that is applied to most American communities by the costal-centered media. Seeking out stories in the Midwest, South, and Western regions of the United States has allowed me to build successful professional relationships with major news organizations through freelance work, most notably with Al Jazeera. There are lots of stories to be told in “flyover country,” but journalists just need to go and find them. Working with Al Jazeera to produce journalism out of these regions has further developed my skills and news judgment, leaving me a better journalist.

Regarding future goals, I hope to continue making a career out of telling substantive, important stories from underreported regions in the United States and the world. I have come to find a passion for feature journalism using multimedia tools, and hope to continue that in the future. This project – spending the summer producing multimedia journalism in southern Alaska, while also analyzing how the introduction of the Internet affects the flow of information in geographically dispersed communities – would be an incredibly relevant experience when it comes to achieving my long term goals. Not only would this project allow me to further practice the type of journalism I am seeking to build a career from, but the research would help me to better understand how news consumers access and experience the type of work that I produce – work that is largely online. I am confident that this is the perfect time to take on such an important, developmental, and career-building opportunity.



# **PROFESSIONAL SKILLS COMPONENT**

**CHANGING TIMES IN ALASKA'S SOUTHERN ISLANDS**

Over the course of the summer, I will travel throughout the islands of southern Alaska – Kodiak and the Aleutian chain – documenting life there through a journalistic lens. The focus of the work will be on how modern life and globalization have changed the small, largely indigenous communities there. For example, how the town of Adak – the westernmost municipality in the United States and the last inhabited island in the Aleutians before the Russian border – has been affected after a military base there closed in 2010, nearly depopulating the entire city in weeks. I am also seeking out specific stories ahead of time. For example, an article in which the Aleutian’s native Unangan recount their deadly internment by the United States government during World War Two, an event which occurred seven decades ago this summer; the changing role of the Russian Orthodox church in indigenous communities; a teenager who is the only child left in Nikolski, Alaska, and is shouldered with the responsibility of carrying on his 8,000-year-old bloodline on the island; following the Orthodox faithful who descend on Spruce Island every July for a pilgrimage honoring St. Herman, a Russian Orthodox saint from Alaska. These are stories I am exploring from afar, and are examples of the type of work I intend to do during my time in Alaska.

I will work as a freelancer producing work intended for digital media outlets – work that would fall under the Convergence sequence at the School of Journalism. I will take advantage of existing freelance relationships I already have – Al Jazeera and National Geographic News, for example – and also look to foster new ones in outlets such as, but not limited to, *The Atlantic*, *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, and *The New York Times Magazine*. Having been trained and educated as a multimedia

journalist, I will produce work using the medium most appropriate for the story – writing, photography, audio, etc.

As discussed above, my educational background in the Missouri School of Journalism’s Convergence sequence has left me with the skills and mindset to work effectively as a multimedia journalist. I have a background in writing, which I consider my main medium, but am proficient when it comes to photography, videography, and audio production. Professionally, I have cultivated professional relationships at various news outlets – primarily Al Jazeera America – where I publish multimedia-style feature stories, many of which have an emphasis on culture, demographic trends, history, and religion. This is the type of journalism I hope to make a career out of, and I feel well prepared to continue this practice as described above.

A tentative schedule is as follows:

**Week 1 (May 25):** Travel to Kodiak, Alaska. Begin journalist work and research interviews.

**Week 2 (June 1):** Kodiak; journalistic work and research interviews

**Week 3 (June 8):** Kodiak; journalistic work and research interviews

**Week 4 (June 15):** Kodiak; journalistic work and research interviews. Return to St. Louis ahead of sister’s wedding.

**Week 5 (June 22):** St. Louis for sister’s wedding. Initial interview transcription and remote work as needed.

**Week 6 (June 29):** Anchorage, en route to Adak, Alaska. Begin journalistic work in Adak.

**Week 7 (July 6):** Journalistic work in Adak

**Week 8 (July 13):** Travel to Dutch Harbor/Unalaska. Begin journalistic work there.

**Week 9 (July 20):** Dutch Harbor/Unalaska. Continue journalistic work in region.

**Week 10 (July 27):** Return to Kodiak. Continue research interviews and journalistic work.

**Week 11 (August 3):** Kodiak; journalistic work and research interviews

**Week 12 (August 10):** Kodiak; journalistic work and research interviews

**Week 13 (August 17):** Kodiak; journalistic work and research interviews

**Week 14 (August 24):** Kodiak; journalistic work and research interviews. Tie up any loose ends. Return to St. Louis.

**Week 15 (August 31):** St. Louis. Interview transcription and finish any outstanding journalistic work. Finish project in preparation of September defense.

On average, 30 hours per week will be dedicated to journalistic work, with an additional ten designated for the academic research component of this project, which will be described later on in this proposal. This project will take place from May 25 to August 31, 2015. The project's defense will be scheduled at a later time, likely in September. Acknowledging that journalism, particularly in a freelance capacity, is fluid, it is realistic to consider that there may be some weeks where there is less than 40 hours of work, just as there will likely be weeks where there is more than 40 hours of work. I imagine that the latter will be more common of those two, given my professional habits and the nature of my work.

Since this project would be carried out on a freelance basis, the journalistic work will be executed independently, with publication determined on a story-by-story basis. Given my established freelance relationship with Al Jazeera, that outlet can be considered the main organization to which I will pitch my stories. However, other outlets will be targeted as well. The work will be self-supervised, but with regular weekly updates sent to committee members by email, provided Internet access is available. If there is no reliable connection, a retrospective update will be sent to committee members at the first possible opportunity.

Upon completion of the project, the multimedia packages – either published or unpublished – will be submitted as “abundant physical evidence” of this project. This could include, but is not limited to, text stories, photos, audio clips, etc. Keeping in mind that it is difficult to determine what stories will be covered from afar, I will aim to

produce eight to ten multimedia packages by the conclusion of this project, with the intent to produce as many relevant stories as possible.

# **PROFESSIONAL ANALYSIS COMPONENT**

**DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND MEDIA GLOBALIZATION IN ISOLATED  
COMMUNITIES:**

**KODIAK, ALASKA AS A CASE STUDY**

## **- INTRODUCTION -**

Kodiak, Alaska is the second largest island in the United States and its territories. However, it only has a population of less than 14,000 people who live in the seven communities of the Kodiak Borough. The city of Kodiak is the largest community in the borough, where most of the population lives. The other communities have several hundred residents at most, and dozens at the least. The city of Kodiak (which will now be referred to simply as Kodiak) is the main point of connection between the borough's other communities and the rest of Alaska, and by extension the rest of the country and world, given that the outlying communities are only accessible by air or sea travel, via Kodiak. The island's local media outlets – that have traditionally served the rest of the borough's communities -- are based in Kodiak, which has more or less served as the island's gatekeeper when it comes to media, as well as other things. Like any media market in the United States, Alaska's more remote communities have recently experienced the introduction of digital media infrastructure such as Internet and satellite television.

The purpose of this study is to begin to explore these research questions: **1)** How do the residents of the Kodiak borough's outlying communities experience news consumption through newly introduced digital infrastructure (Internet, satellite television, etc.) in terms of content, frequency, and medium? **2)** How does that experience relate to the traditional gatekeeping role of Kodiak as a central city and regional hub?

Existing literature addressing this topic is sparse, and seemingly non-existent when it comes to specifically exploring the introduction of digital media technology in geographically isolated Alaskan communities. In general, studies of rural or isolated

media markets are underrepresented in mass communication research. Indeed, as Hanusch (2014) writes, “Journalism as it is practiced outside metropolitan centres is still one of the least researched fields of journalism studies” (1). Larson (2007) declares, “Narratives of rural inferiority are also often reinforced by academic works that treat urban spaces as more worthy of attention than their rural counterparts” (3).

This disparity was apparent when collecting existing literature to build a theoretical framework from which to conduct this study. Therefore, literature had to be pulled from a variety of academic disciplines and general findings taken from geographically specific studies, none of which were in Alaska. Existing literature was able to provide context and background on the nature of local or rural media in terms of both consumption and production, the role of the Internet in audience construction, as well as the effects that media globalization has on geographically isolated communities. The theoretical framework of the study brings together traditional gatekeeping theory as defined by Shoemaker & Vos (2009), but applies the gatekeeping role to Adams’ (1980) idea of a “central city” within a media market.

In order to address the aforementioned research question, loosely structured interviews will be conducted with individuals in several of the outlying communities in the Kodiak Borough. Which communities will be difficult to determine ahead of time, as there is no regular travel to or between communities on account of unpredictable travel (air, sea) conditions. Topics of questioning during the interviews will include, but will not be limited to, where consumers get their news and how they select those channels, how frequently they get that news, any barriers to receiving that news, etc.



The clear lack of existing literature specifically discussing journalism mass communication in any capacity in rural communities is reason enough to pursue an endeavor such as the one proposed here; however, there are professional and theoretical applications. Not only would such a study add to the minuscule body of journalism analysis that specifically discusses the profession in a rural context, but it would also give insight into the audience construction of rural or isolated media consumers. As existing, general literature has established, the Internet has the potential to link geographically dispersed or rural consumers and also allows them to place themselves within self-selected audiences. The Internet may very well give the rural or geographically isolated resident more media consumption power than ever, and it would be in the interest of any regional media outlet to better understand all the consumers in their market.

Understanding how journalism is consumed better informs the actual practice of journalism. This analysis will also inform the professional skills component of this project, given that I will also be producing multimedia journalism intended for digital formats in these same communities. It would be in the benefit of any journalist to better understand how the audience consumes their work; specifically how those communities consume journalism about themselves, if at all. Analyzing these research questions while simultaneously producing journalism will foster a more complete, consumer-centered professional experience.

## **- THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK -**

There has been little research as to how gatekeeping functions within rural media markets, which therefore requires the pairing of gatekeeping theory and a theory that characterizes rural media markets. Adams (1980) discusses the concept of a “central city,” where one population center, which happens to be home to most of the region’s media outlets, faces several constraints when trying to provide local coverage over a large, geographically fragmented audience. In a quantitative analysis of news coverage in one such market, he finds that 40 percent of the coverage at one news station was news coming out of or relevant only to the central city, and that the remaining time was not divided up consistently between other smaller communities in the market (259). Residents of the central city could routinely rely on news that was important to them and their community, while those in other parts of the market lacked such a privilege (260). Adams’ discussion speculates that it is simply easier for journalists in the central city to cover that specific community (262).

Bringing together Adams’ “central city” and Shoemaker & Vos’ (2009) definitions of a gatekeeper, one can see how the traditional media market models lend themselves to the establishment of a central city as a regional gatekeeper of news. In the context of this review, we can consider the central city as the gatekeeper of news being disseminated to rural, outlying, or isolated communities within that market. In some markets – particularly those that are geographically isolated – the central city may itself be a rural community, though its theoretical function remains the same. It is also worth noting that some communities may be so isolated they are not under the umbrella of a central city of any size.

The central city's role as a media hub allows it to also be the gatekeeper of news and information to other more dispersed communities in the market. For the sake of this study, the central city is the city of Kodiak, where the borough's media outlets are headquartered. The geographical barriers between Kodiak journalists and the borough's dispersed communities would seemingly hinder the bilateral flow of information, as Adams discussed.

With the introduction of the Internet and satellite television, however, comes the opportunity for the borough's outlying consumers to tap into new channels of information that bypass Kodiak's gatekeeping role. As existing studies (Reese 2010; van der Wurff 2008; Williams & Delli Caprini 2004; Dimmick *et al.* 2004; Kolodzy *et al.* 2014; Lazaroui 2011; Oates & Lokot 2013; Banerjee 2002) show, digital infrastructure allows consumers to bypass traditional gatekeepers like those in Kodiak.

That brings us to the research questions:

**RQ1:** How do the residents of the Kodiak borough's outlying communities consume news through the digital infrastructure (Internet, satellite television, etc.) in terms of content, frequency, and medium?

**RQ2:** How does that experience relate to the traditional gatekeeping role of Kodiak as a central city and regional hub?

One could hypothesize that *the introduction of digital infrastructure into the Kodiak borough's outlying communities would result in consumers bypassing Kodiak's traditional role as a regional gatekeeper in favor of new audiences into which consumers place themselves.*

## **- LITERATURE REVIEW -**

Literature discussing the media landscape in rural and isolated communities, relating to both production and consumption, is rather lacking in the realm of journalism and mass communication research. It is difficult to come by and is often scattered across various disciplines. Hanusch (2014) writes, “Journalism as it is practiced outside metropolitan centres is still one of the least researched fields of journalism studies” (1). Furthermore, Larson (2007) declares, “Narratives of rural inferiority are also often reinforced by academic works that treat urban spaces as more worthy of attention than their rural counterparts” (3). Indeed, it is time to study rural and isolated media markets within the context of existing theories in this discipline.

### *Changing role of Media Gatekeepers*

Gatekeeping is one of the most thoroughly studied theories in journalism and mass communication research. Shoemaker & Vos define the gatekeeping function of the press in various stages, but most importantly as the process through which decision-makers determine which information will make it through the proverbial gate, and therefore what will be “news” (Shoemaker & Vos 2009). Indeed, gatekeeping theory has been one of the most thoroughly studied theories in the fields of journalism and mass communication research, yet it has rarely been applied to small or isolated media markets.

However, there has been a larger amount of research on how the introduction of digital technologies, such as the Internet, has changed the role of media gatekeepers. Singer (2014) effectively summarized this transition, writing that “gatekeeping has been transformed from an essentially binary process – information either passes through the

journalistic gate and becomes visible to the public, or it does not – to a process that is both more complex and more collaborative” (66). Singer discusses how social media and interactive interfaces on news organization websites allots media consumers a secondary gatekeeping power, where social networks enable users to pass on information to their network, thus assuming a role of a gatekeeper as it is traditionally defined.

Jiang (2014) also emphasizes the increased importance of digital networks, writing that “the network has become an essential element of people’s life, and they are accustomed to using the Internet to obtain various information” (849), concluding that the rise of the network has deemphasized the role of traditional gatekeepers (851).

### *Characterizing Rural & Isolated Media Markets*

So who are these rural journalists? What do rural newsrooms like and how do they function? What are the consumption patterns of people in rural or isolated communities? Again, the body of literature that could establish a standard base of knowledge of rural media is lacking and is not consistent in its scope, likely due to the relatively recent proliferation of the Internet into these communities.

Larson in her 2007 dissertation at the University of Kansas used interviews to investigate how rural people perceive the Internet. The author’s main conclusions were that, in the rural communities she studied, women were the primary users of the Internet (137). She also finds that rural Internet users tend to distrust the other “people” they meet over the Internet. In a similar study, Gilbert *et al.* (2008) look at the difference of patterns of Internet usage between more than 3,000 urban and rural users. In line with Larson’s findings, the authors observe that rural women tend to use social media and the Internet more than their male counterparts (1606). Additionally, they find that rural social media

networks tend to be smaller and more confined to a smaller geographic space than their rural counterparts (Gilbert *et al.* 1609).

When it comes to rural journalists or news producers, there are also significant demographic differences between urban and rural journalists, or as Hanusch (2014) makes the distinction, local and metropolitan journalists (7-13). Hanusch polled more than 300 Australian journalists and found significant differences in terms of age, salary, work experience, and education. The author believes his findings reinforce a commonly held notion that small media markets are “training grounds” for journalists looking to move into more metropolitan markets (8). He also finds that local journalists have a greater sense of community advocacy than their metropolitan counterparts and are more likely to encourage community dialogue and political participation within their local systems (13).

In Adam’s rural or isolated “central city,” Hanusch’s local journalists are the gatekeepers. But what do the markets’ structures look like? The body of literature that explicitly discusses the structural barriers in rural or isolated media markets is, again, small. Papoutsaki & Sharp (2005) discuss what might be a more extreme example of this type of market: the characteristics of markets in Pacific Island nations. The authors write that these markets are plagued by “vast distances, scattered populations, diverse traditions, ethnic conflicts, persisting colonial influences, poor economies and unstable political regimes” (1). In the context of the gatekeeping role of the central city, it is most important to consider the vast distances, scattered populations, and perhaps by extension of the latter, diverse traditions via the geographic barriers to media market development in such communities. Indeed, as Adams (1980) speculated, it is often geographic barriers

that keep central city journalists from reporting on other communities within the market (262). A more extreme example of that geographic barrier is a market scattered across dispersed island communities as Papoutsaki & Sharp discuss, the discrepancy in coverage Adams discusses would presumably be even greater.

### *Digital Infrastructure Redefining Audiences*

Like all media markets, those in rural and isolated areas have experienced a shift in some way after the introduction of digital infrastructure, mainly satellite television and Internet, which create new consumption opportunities for consumers. The literature discussing the audience-reconstruction effects of digital technology in general is bountiful. However, the scarcity comes when discussing that introduction in rural or isolated communities. The introduction of the Internet into rural or isolated communities has created new digital spaces through which consumers can find news (Reese 2010; van der Wurff 2008). In his sociological look at the globalization of journalism, Reese, while not explicitly mentioning rural or isolated communities, discusses how the Internet can link dispersed communities, thus creating a new audience online (345). van der Wurff comes to a similar conclusion, where the Internet built new audiences in digital spaces out of diaspora populations as well as those remote communities that were too expensive to reach with traditional media products.

Indeed, one can see from these two studies how the introduction of the Internet or satellite television challenges the traditional gatekeeping role of Adams' central city. Particularly in the case of van der Wurff, where the author explicitly mentions cost as a factor that inhibits the ability of journalists to reach outlying communities, a concept that echoes Adams' discussion of why central city news content dominates market coverage

in place of other communities within the market. The Internet challenges the central city's traditional role as an information keeper by offering outlying consumers an alternative channel to build their own audiences. As Williams & Delli Caprini (2004) write, "If there are no gates, there can be no gatekeepers" (1208).

Dimmick *et al.* (2004) findings from the early days of widespread integration of the Internet support this theory. The authors, through a telephone survey of 211 residents of an Ohio television market, found that online news had a significant displacement effect on traditional media, particularly on local news broadcasts (27). The authors hint at how the generalist approach of the Internet allows consumers to pick and chose which audiences they belong to (28, 31).

This concept can be projected on rural or isolated communities, as there is little, if any, literature explicitly looking at this phenomenon in such communities. Kolodzy *et al.* (2014) discuss several 'lessons' for journalism educators regarding audience structure, among other topics. Relating to this research question, the authors' second lesson is most important. They discuss how digital news has broken down the geographical boundaries of media markets, and has created an atmosphere where consumers can self-identify as audience members in digital spaces (3-4). In the context of rural or isolated communities, this idea helps build some perspective on how the integration of digital infrastructure can bring new opportunities for those who depend on small markets due to their traditional geographic isolation.

In an analysis of newspaper industry, Lazaroiu (2011) discusses existing literature to analyze changes in that industry through the introduction of Internet technology. He places an emphasis on blogging and citizen journalism, discussing how those concepts



are driving said change. In general, the author discusses how “the growth of the Internet as a news source threatens the newspaper’s future” (156). Indeed, as we have seen, Internet usage is a direct challenge to the traditional media gatekeepers in a market. Through increased weight of consumer power via the Internet, Lazaroiu writes, media can be democratized (156).

These democratizing effects of the Internet have been well documented. Oates & Lokot (2013) write of the ‘war of frames’ that emerged during the Russian protests of 2012, where traditional state run television was challenged by new media online, which presented an alternative framing of the events in that country. The authors found that Internet news presented a vastly different portrayal of the same protests than their state run counterparts, which can be seen as the traditional gatekeepers (1). In this case, as Williams & Delli Caprini (2004) write, there are no gatekeepers if there are no gates (1208). The rise of the Internet in Russia took away from the government’s ability to control the information flow during a time of national crisis. It is an extreme example of this phenomenon, but an example nonetheless. Similarly, Banerjee (2002) discusses how the introduction of satellite television into the Asian media landscape may have contributed to the liberalization of those markets, and thus the liberalization of the political and social atmosphere there. Such an analysis fits in well with the aforementioned studies that discuss digital infrastructure as a force that significantly weaken the power of traditional gatekeepers.

Bringing these ideas back to the intersection of gatekeeping, Adams’ central city, and audience reconstruction, there are studies that seem to indirectly support the theory that rural or isolated consumers would consciously abandon traditional media for

alternative digital audiences they can more easily relate to. This would presumably be even more the case when the cost for journalists covering outlying communities in central city-style markets is high enough to significantly discourage such coverage. These studies (Price & Brown 2010; Reed & Hanson 2006) find that successful local media is successful because it is just that: local. In a qualitative case study of Allegheny Mountain Radio (AMR), Reed & Hanson find that the small radio station, which broadcasts to a dispersed audience in rural West Virginia, can attribute its long-term, sustained growth to the local approach of its programming and management (217, 220, 227). Unlike Adams' central city, this community radio station sought out programming that would be of interest to consumers throughout the dispersed market, not the content readily available in a central city.

Price & Brown's discussion maintains this claim. In the discussion section of their study, which qualitatively analyzed interviews with rural and local media managers, they write:

Currently the rural markets are the most intensely local and are already strongly entrenched in their communities by offering sports, news, and other information. As information migrates to the Web, they are developing Web content unique to each community, in addition to the interconnectivity and broader benefits of the Internet. (10)

The authors discuss that local media may be best suited to adapt to the new media landscape that allows rural or isolated consumers to consciously place themselves into digital audiences free from the traditional gatekeeping role of central city media that Adams described. Rural and local media are already producing content relevant to audiences that are left out by Adams' central city. This may also explain the success of AMR that Reed & Hanson observed. It would seem that, when it comes to central city-

style markets that do not have local media in their outlying communities, the introduction of the Internet could reroute the rural or isolated consumers to new, self-constructed audiences in digital spaces, thus bypassing the traditional gatekeeping function of the central city.

### *Media Globalization Effects on Isolated Communities*

Bakker & Sádaba (2008) analyzed the state of the Internet regarding user demographics and experiences, and found that Internet penetration is highest amongst youth subcultures in societies (93, 98). There are several studies (Johnson 2001; Kral 2010; Rygaard 2003) that research how the impact of digital media infrastructure -- such as Internet and satellite television -- has isolated communities, particularly when it comes to youth culture within such communities.

Johnson's 2001 study on the introduction of satellite television into two isolated villages in India provides an early example into how such technology can change a community. His interview-based study finds that the introduction of satellite television into these communities, which exposed their residents to new national and international programming in several languages, created a new social division amongst residents (152). Johnson found that those who had access to satellite television programming became part of a new elite class of "connected" people. On the contrary, those who did not have access to the programming were seen as primitive or uneducated, no matter what their pre-television status in the community had been (160-161). Those without access tended to express anger or frustration towards satellite television (161). Johnson's focus on the changes in the social structure is of particular importance when looking at one effect that such introduction can have on a community. While geographically and culturally

specific, his findings offer insight into new media infrastructure in small, isolated media markets.

Kral (2010) and Rygaard's (2003) offer more insight into how the introduction of digital infrastructure can change a community. Both authors focus their research through a sociological lens investigating how media globalization impacts local, indigenous cultures in isolated areas. While each study is geographically specific, the findings offer similar insight.

Contrary to conventional wisdom in the field of globalization studies, Kral's look at the introduction of Internet and SMS technology in remote aboriginal communities in northern Australia finds that media globalization has little damaging effects on local culture (4). The author finds that aboriginal youth in these communities are using the new media infrastructure and tools to construct social circles based on their common native identity, and are doing so in their native language. Kral specifically references the development a form of SMS slang used by aboriginal youth in their native language (10). Despite the increased exposure to outside content via a globalized media network, the aboriginal youth use those same tools that gave them access to maintain their common, local identity.

In a similar study using both qualitative and quantitative methods, Rygaard (2003) looks at media globalization effects on youth culture in remote Greenlandic communities. His findings align with Kral's. Those digital tools are also used to reinforce a native identity despite the exposure to globalized media. The author goes one step further and characterizes the flow of information between the globalized world and these isolated communities via digital media. Rygaard writes that the flow of content and information is

unilateral, where the isolated consumes media from the outside world, but the outside world does not consume media from the isolated communities (305).

Rygaard's study touches on the nature of media infrastructure in geographically isolated communities after the introduction of television and internet. While the scope of the study is specific to the effects that introduction has on youth culture, his analysis on the changes in infrastructure apply to the underlying question of my study pertaining to media availability and what types of content are brought to communities through the introduction of television and Internet.

### *CONCLUSION*

Previous research from across various disciplines seems to imply that rural or isolated media consumers are increasingly able to place themselves into digital audiences at their own discretion – a step away from the central city model that Adams described in 1980. The lack of specific research that looks at the processes and effects of digital media infrastructure in rural or isolated communities is a testament to how such research can contribute to the field of journalism and mass communication research in an original way, particularly when it comes to the changing gatekeeping roles within these understudied markets. As this media infrastructure becomes increasingly integrated into societies in both the developed and developing world, understanding the changing media consumption patterns of all consumers – not just those in urban areas – could benefit the field of journalism and mass communication in both its professional and academic applications.

**- METHODOLOGY -**

In order to address the aforementioned research questions, semi-structured qualitative interviewing methods will be used. Understanding how consumers in the Kodiak borough's outlying communities experience media consumption, and how that consumption relates to Kodiak's traditional role as a gatekeeper, would be best understood through individual interview scenarios. Questions asked could be, and are not limited to:

**-In general, from where do you receive most of your news?**

**-What is your preferred medium to get news? Newspaper? Radio? Internet?**

**-When did you first acquire Internet access?**

**-How did you receive news before you had Internet access?**

**-When was the last time you read news produced in Kodiak?**

Loosely structured interviews would be the best avenue for researching this subject due to the individual nature of the research question – how individuals consume news. Inquiring about past and present news consumption habits – with a focus on how the Internet changed those habits – will offer insight into how digital media infrastructure affects media consumption on the level of an individual consumer. A rigid interview structure would be disadvantageous in this endeavor given that the Kodiak Borough is home to several small, dispersed communities. Keeping the interview's structure and content open and flexible will account for the sociological and historical differences between communities, none of which have had the exact same path of development regarding digital media infrastructure. A flexible interview structure will leave room for analysis and interpretation that will better allow for broad conclusions and inferences

between different individuals and communities. Ultimately, this strategy will foster more insight into this study's research questions.

Given the geographic and weather conditions that make travel to the borough's outlying communities difficult, it is unclear as to how many will be conducted, and which communities will be visited for interviews. Ideally, I will visit three or four communities in different parts of the island and conduct three to five interviews in each community. The interviewees will likely be sought out upon arrival in the community, with advance notice given to community leaders. A preference will be given to those in the community who have Internet or satellite television access, as they can best speak to the change in news consumption habits after the introduction of digital media infrastructure over time. The interviews will be transcribed and coded, then analyzed as a whole to find patterns that could give insight into the research question.

## **- CONCLUSION -**

As Hanusch (2014) and Larson (2007) wrote, respectively, "Journalism as it is practiced outside metropolitan centres is still one of the least researched fields of journalism studies" (1), and, "Narratives of rural inferiority are also often reinforced by academic works that treat urban spaces as more worthy of attention than their rural counterparts" (3). The clear lack of existing literature specifically discussing journalism mass communication in any capacity in rural communities is reason enough to pursue an endeavor such as the one proposed here; however, there are professional and theoretical applications.

Not only would such a study add to the minuscule body of rural-specific literature in mass communication studies, but also it would give academic insight into the audience construction of rural or isolated media consumers. As existing, general literature has established, the Internet has the potential to link geographically dispersed or rural consumers and also allows them to place themselves within audiences. The Internet may very well give the rural or geographically isolated resident more media consumption power than ever, and it would be in the interest of any regional media outlet to better understand all the consumers in their market.

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