Aging and Consequences in AI/AN People

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Projected growth rate of Alaska Native Elders

• Alaska Native population is projected to grow steadily through 2045, from 143,868 in 2015 to 184,561 in 2045.

• The proportion of the Native population aged 65+ is projected to increase greatly between 2015 and 2045, rising from 7% to 12%.

Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development, 2016
Projections of Alaskans Age 60+ and 85+

- **2012**: 100,000 (60+), 10,000 (85+)
- **2017**: 120,000 (60+), 12,000 (85+)
- **2022**: 140,000 (60+), 16,000 (85+)
- **2027**: 160,000 (60+), 20,000 (85+)
- **2032**: 180,000 (60+), 24,000 (85+)
- **2037**: 200,000 (60+), 30,000 (85+)
- **2042**: 220,000 (60+), 40,000 (85+)
Shifting demographics

• ANE are cared for by family and community members
• Longer life spans and shifting family dynamics leave ANE without supports to age in their home and community
• Culturally responsive senior housing and assisted living facilities are needed in urban and rural hub communities that serve surrounding communities.
• More ANE are seeking advanced health care services in urban settings
Alaska Native Elders

• Majority live off the road system – extremely remote
  • Increasing trend for ANE to migrate to ANC and FAI
    • Closer to specialized health care, obtain assisted living/nursing home care, live near family

• The life expectancy at birth for Alaska Natives and American Indians increased from 65.7 in 1980 to 70.7 in 2010.

• Despite challenges, ANE are resilient and continue to serve as role models for our families and communities
  • We need to work together to develop Elder-centered community based services that honor and respect their knowledge, wisdom, and wishes.
Urban health care systems

• Many lack understanding of AN culture
  • Communication differences (speak indirectly in stories, ESL)
  • Family and community engagement – meaningful roles, transmitters of knowledge
  • Lack of access to traditional AN foods (essential for ANE health, wellbeing, identity)
  • Mistrust of health care system
  • Boarding schools – re-traumatization with LTSS, leaving home
Next Steps – build upon what is going well

• Increase workforce trained to work with Elders and their families
  • AK GILD Program, UAA Health Sciences, WWAMI, AHEC, APU
• Develop research infrastructure to collect data on Elders across Alaska
  • Professional development training, graduate student research, community partners
• Develop training opportunities for community members to serve as co-researchers
• Establish a network of organizations, providers, researchers, and tribal leaders to establish health care priorities to support Elders
• Increase awareness and education on traditional diets
  • Importance of traditional foods on health and wellbeing
  • Store Outside Your Door, traditional foods in tribal nursing homes
Current work to develop research infrastructure

• Alaska Native successful aging study (NSF Arctic Social Sciences)
• Alaska Native ADRD caregiver and health care provider study
• Role of Alaska Native culture in long-term care settings
• Impact of traditional foods on wellbeing of Alaska Native residents

• National Resource Center for Alaska Native Elders, UAA COH
  • Dementia caregiver supports and training development
  • Partnerships with AARP, Ombudsman, ACOA, Tribal Health Organizations
  • NIEJI Elder Abuse Training
  • State Plan for Alaska Native Elders
Acknowledgments

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