

Maniilaq Association

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Maniilaq Association and the Denali Commission

Working together to improve Healthcare in Northwestern Alaska

Maniilaq Association is a tribal non-profit organization that provides all healthcare and most of the social and tribal services for the 12 villages of the Northwest Arctic region, including Point Hope. We employ over 500 people in a region with a population of approximately 7,800 people and are the largest employer in the region.

Over the past several years, Maniilaq Association and the Denali Commission have worked together to improve the ability to provide healthcare to the people of Northwestern Alaska. To date, we have built new health clinics in the villages of Ambler, Buckland, Deering, Kiana, Noatak, and Shungnak and are presently building one in Kobuk.

These new clinics are allowing Maniilaq Association to bring both better healthcare and more employment to the rural villages. We now have the ability to provide not only primary medical care, but also dental care, eye care, and several behavioral healthcare programs in each of these villages. The new clinics are allowing us to shift many healthcare functions from Kotzebue to these rural villages. In addition to the Community Health Practitioners/Aides, we now have village based Nurse Practitioners, Home Care Providers, CHAP Coordinator Instructors, Dental Health Aides, Behavioral Health Aides, WIC Coordinators, and Health Educators utilizing our new clinic facilities. This approach not only reduces the cost of healthcare by allowing us to treat the people where they live but also makes our clinics more sustainable and improves the local economy in the villages.

Over the past thirty years, Maniilaq Association has grown into one of the best healthcare providers in rural Alaska. We have demonstrated that we are fully capable of providing the quality healthcare the people of our region both need and deserve. We have recently developed a Long Range Plan that will allow us to both improve the care we presently provide and increase services provided. The following paragraphs summarize where Maniilaq Association and the Denali Commission can work together to implement our long term goals.

Member Villages

Ivisaappaat, Nunatchiaq, Ipnatchiaq, Katyaak, Kivaliniq, Laugviik, Qikiqtagrak, Nautaaq, Nuurvik, Akuligaq, Isinnaq, Tikigaq, Ambler, Buckland, Deering, Kiana, Kivalina, Kobuk, Kotzebue, Noatak, Noorvik, Selawik, Shungnak, Pt. Hope

Village Clinics

Maniilaq Association is dedicated to providing a state of the art clinic in each of our villages to assure that we can deliver quality healthcare, social services and tribal services to the people of our region. Maniilaq has provided most of the money required to build the six clinics constructed so far with Association funds. We certainly appreciate the construction funds that have been contributed by the Denali Commission. In addition, we have also received construction funds from Rasmuson Foundation, Murdock Charitable Trust, and the Paul G. Allen Foundation.

Although the Denali Commission contributed to the construction funding of the clinics in Ambler, Buckland, Deering, Kiana, Noatak, and Shungnak, the Commission did not contribute funds towards the design costs. It is our understanding from discussing the issue with both Tessa Rinner and Roger Marcil that we can be reimbursed for these design costs as well. We are working with Tessa on this issue.

When we applied for funds for our new Kobuk clinic, we used the construction cost for the Deering clinic as an expected cost. We also listed the Village of Kobuk as non-distressed. We would like to modify our application to include the design cost, the actual construction cost, and the fact that Kobuk is now listed as a distressed community.

The Denali Commission recently funded code and condition surveys of both the Noorvik and Selawik clinics. The surveys were done under the ANTHC term contract with the Dowl Engineers team. We are currently reviewing the draft copies of these reports. The report recommends an addition to the Noorvik clinic and replacement of the Selawik clinic. Our goal is to work with the Denali Commission to implement these recommendations. We will be submitting copies of the final reports to the Denali Commission within the next month.

With the help of the Denali Commission, we have renovated the Kivalina clinic. Originally, we thought that this renovation would allow us to provide adequate healthcare for the people of Kivalina until the village relocated. However, based on recent meetings it now appears that the village will not be relocating for at least seven years and probably much longer. Therefore, Maniilaq Association has decided we need to pursue building a replacement clinic. Our goal is to design the clinic in a modular fashion that will allow us to relocate the building should the village relocate within the lifespan of the facility. We are requesting Denali Commission support in this effort.

The ability to transport patients is critical in the Arctic. Maniilaq Association has a med-flight program in place to transport patients from the villages to Kotzebue and from Kotzebue to Anchorage when required. We are in the process of developing a transportation plan within each village to transport patients both to

the village clinic and from the clinic to the airport when required. As part of this effort, we have been working with both the State of Alaska and the USDA to acquire the required vehicles. In order to assure reliability and increase the longevity of these vehicles, we need a storage facility in each village. We are requesting Denali Commission support in this effort.

Maniilaq Health Center Improvements

The Maniilaq Health Center was designed in the early 1990's and construction was completed in 1995. The Health Center was well designed and constructed and has served us well. However, both healthcare needs and medical technology require periodic improvements in the facility. We have significantly increased our third party billing to the point we have outgrown the space allotted to billing, increased our prescription service to the point we have outgrown our pharmacy space, added a physical therapy program, and need to renovate our specialty clinic area to allow it to handle our new cancer program as well. All of these improvements can be made within our existing exterior walls. We are requesting Denali Commission funding support for the design and construction required to implement these improvements.

Public Health Nursing and WIC Facility

The State of Alaska has donated the old Courthouse in Kotzebue to Maniilaq Association. Our plan is to renovate the facility and use it to house our Public Health Nursing, WIC, and Family Resources programs. These programs are presently housed in different rented space throughout Kotzebue. Co-locating them in the old Courthouse will not only eliminate the rental cost of the existing facilities but also allow much better program to program coordination. It is our understanding that Denali Commission funding may be available for the design and renovation of the Public Health Nursing and WIC sections of this facility.

Elder Care

The care of our regions elders has long been a high priority of Maniilaq Association. The Maniilaq Board and Staff has for years recognized the elders of the region as teachers of the traditional values and the cultural spirit of the people of the region. Maniilaq is committed to developing a continuum of elders care that allows us to provide elders services within the region. The following paragraphs summarize our approach.

The detailed studies of the elders of our region clearly show that they prefer to be cared for at home. We are in the process of expanding our Home Care program to provide that care whenever possible. This includes village based chore services, personal care attendants, respite services, and meal services. The elders physical home environment is also important. There are times when

renovations of the home are required to make it possible for the elder to continue living at home. We are requesting Denali Commission support in this effort.

The next level of elders care Maniilaq is planning to provide is independent living services. Maniilaq Association applied for and has been awarded a HUD Section 202 grant to build a five unit independent living facility here in Kotzebue for those elders that are capable of taking care of themselves with minimum assistance, but don't have an acceptable place to live. The grant amount is fixed and does not cover the full cost of building the facility here in the Arctic. Maniilaq Association would like to work with the Denali Commission on funding to help fill that gap between the HUD funding and the actual construction cost.

Finally, there is a need for both assisted living and nursing home care for the elders of our region. It is a tragedy for us all when elders must leave their families and the region to seek these services. Additionally, the growing future need for these services has been well documented in studies. Maniilaq currently operates the Kotzebue Senior Citizens Cultural Center which is licensed as an assisted living facility. However, this facility does not support operations that are financially sustainable under the current Medicare/Medicaid reimbursement system. We expect the existing program will end within the next year. Maniilaq Association is however committed to providing assisted/skilled nursing care here in Kotzebue. We have been working with both Mathers Associates and the Dowl Engineers term contract team to define the need and develop conceptual approaches to meeting that need. Concept design of a new wing co-located with the Maniilaq Health Center has been completed. Additionally the Maniilaq Board has established an elders reserve fund to cover an anticipated deficit during the first two years of operation. We are requesting Denali Commission support of both the design and construction of this facility.

Domestic Violence

Maniilaq Association owns and operates a Family Crisis facility in Kotzebue. This facility was surveyed by a Denali Commission staff member and was found to be inadequate for two reasons. First, the shelter is too small to meet the needs of the region and second, it does not contain any transitional housing. This project is listed in your funding package for Domestic Violence Facility Program under Attachment 1. We are requesting Denali Commission support for both the design and construction of a facility that will fully meet the needs of the region.

Behavioral Health

Maniilaq Association has many programs in the Behavioral Health field. Our goal is to consolidate most of those programs under one roof. We own a building we plan to use for that purpose but the facility needs major renovation. We have defined the changes required for the heating and ventilating systems and have

secured funding for those renovations. We are requesting Denali Commission support for both the design and renovation needs of the rest of the facility.

The one Behavioral Health program we will not be relocating is our Mavsigviq Camp. The purpose of this program is long term abuse treatment built on the foundation of the values outlined in the Inupiat Ilitqusiat and focuses on individuals becoming directors of their own healing. This program has been operational for several years at a remote site approximately 15 miles from Selawik and approximately 75 miles from Kotzebue. The program has proven to be very successful. However, the camp needs some infrastructure improvements. These include a more efficient energy source such as wind generation and runway lights for the airstrip. We are requesting Denali Commission support for both the design and construction of these improvements.

Daycare

Maniilaq Association has operated the Daycare Center in Kotzebue for several years. The City of Kotzebue donated the facility to Maniilaq Association several years ago. This program serves the entire community but the facility is undersized and in need of renovation. These two issues have resulted in the need to limit the number of children served. Currently, we provide services to 80 children ages infant to eight years old. We are licensed for 94 and could increase with expansion of the facility. Our current waiting list is in excess of 35 children and our ratio for teachers to children is at maximum and won't allow additional children without increased room sizes and space. We are requesting Denali Commission support for the design and renovation costs for this facility.

Patient Hostel

Maniilaq Association sends many patients to the Alaska Native Medical Center and other hospitals in the Anchorage area. Many times, these patients are healthy enough to be discharged but must stay under the watchful eye of their physician or they may be there for periodic treatment such as that required for some cancers. At present, Maniilaq has no place for them to stay during this period. We are requesting Denali Commission support for the design and renovation or construction cost for a patient hostel to fill this need.

Policy Issues

The cost sharing policy used by the Denali Commission often places some of our villages at a significant disadvantage. Although we realize that some method needs to be used to differentiate the financial match capacity of a village, we are often at a loss when trying to understand the logic of saying that Kobuk is distressed but Deering is not. As frequent travelers to these villages, it is far from obvious why one would only need a twenty percent match and the other fifty

percent. We encourage the Denali Commission to try to find a more equitable method.

We understand that the Denali Commission tries to partner with organizations that specialize in the field they are funding. In the case of ANTHC, that seems to work fairly well. However, in the area of training, your method has not resulted in any benefit to Maniilaq Association. We encourage the Denali Commission to find a method of distributing these funds that better reaches rural Alaska. We have some ideas we would gladly share with your staff.

We realize that the Denali Commission was set up to build infrastructure in Alaska and agree that it has been very successful to date. We at Maniilaq Association are also aware of and agree with the importance you put on sustainability. To that end, Maniilaq Association is committed to assuring the sustainability of all projects we initiate. However, we are concerned about the potential lack of sustainability of some of the village based projects and recommend that the Denali Commission use its influence where possible to aid the villages in obtaining operating funds.

Quad Board / Assembly Meeting

- Purpose is to strengthen cooperative efforts and provide a forum to hear information together
- Incorporates the processes set in past regional strategies
- Follow up meetings will be held in each community to develop a unified approach to address the critical issues identified

Agenda Items

- State of the Organization
- Reports from various groups on the critical focus areas
- A list of critical actions will be developed
- Recommendations will be considered and consensus agreed upon as to which organization will lead or follow up on the desired outcomes



Marie Greene and Helen Bolen led the quad Board meeting group events.



NANA Board of Directors



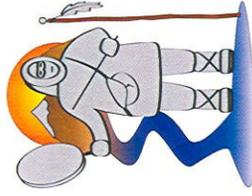
Maniilaq Health Center Director, Hugh Hallgren, facilitates group breakouts

NORTHWEST ARCTIC LEADERSHIP TEAM

Vision: Our People are Healthy -
Physically, Spiritually and Mentally



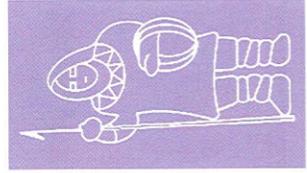
Northwest
Arctic Borough
School District



Maniilaq
Association



Northwest Arctic
Borough



NANA Regional
Corporation

Maniilaq Association

(Board Chair & Association President)

NANA Regional Corporation

(Board Chair & Corporation President/CEO)

Northwest Arctic Borough

(Mayor & Assembly President)

Northwest Arctic Borough School District

(Superintendent & Board President)



Maniilaq President/CEO, Helen Bolen with the borough assembly

Timeline . . .

MAY 2004 Plan a regional strategy effort that will promote local ownership for the issues and solutions.

JUNE - AUGUST 2004 Invite the groups working on the issues to present their recommendations.

SEPTEMBER 2004 Invite the Boards/Assembly to come together for a Quad meeting to include Regional Elders and students.

OCTOBER & NOVEMBER 2004 Team to meet with residents in each community.

NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 2004 Clarify which legislative priorities to focus on together.

JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2005 Develop a plan that will be a collaborative approach for working on the critical issues together.

MARCH - JUNE 2005 Each organization to review the plan for implementation.

Critical Focus Areas

Healthy Communities and Wellness

Inupiaq Language and Culture

Workforce Development

Education

Infrastructure

Basic Services

Public Safety

Economic Development

The Team Approach

Review strategic plans for each organization

Determine critical focus topics

Identify the top “current pressures”

Shared priorities for each organization

Hello, and Thank you. My name is Raven Sheldon. I am the Environmental Director for the Native Village of Selawik. I am pleased to be given the opportunity to provide the Denali Commission testimony and thank the Commission for their visit to our region.

Our most pressing environmental health problem is our solid waste situation. There will be a theme in my testimony, and I will state that up front -- that a poor solid waste situation negatively impacts physical health and the practice of subsistence activities. And this negative impact on health and subsistence in turn negatively impacts the sustainability of Inupiaq communities.

The topics I will cover in my testimony will be the following order:

- ◆ Our historic solid waste situation
- ◆ Some of the particular health and subsistence risks we face from our solid waste situation
- ◆ Our current situation and some successes and failures in addressing the situation
- ◆ A summary list of the obstacles we face
- ◆ Recommended actions for the Denali Commission
- ◆ And a closing statement.

Five years ago, we had the worst inspected dumpsite in the State: We scored 3 out of a possible 100. That is because we had, and still have, an open tundra wetland dump. It was, and still is, unfenced and uncontrolled, and takes up about 24 acres. Why? We had no heavy equipment, no cover, only a broken-up boardwalk to access the site, and no turnaround. And until 2001, we had honeybuckets from 800 people going directly into the dump with all the other garbage.

When you have poor access, and people have to walk on top of garbage to get to their dump, and risk getting their vehicles stuck, people will tend to drop their garbage at the edge. That is how our dump grew to about 24 acres of sprawling trash and hazardous wastes. Each year, our dump expanded about 200 ft closer to town. Open burning was not sanctioned, but with 800 people, it happened every few weeks anyway. Our wind pattern is such that the smoke blows right into town, and you can smell it strongly and see it for days. The poor access to the dump also caused some people to use a smaller river dump that washes out each Spring into our subsistence area. It caused most households to burn the trash in open barrels right in town, or store their garbage outside, further increasing the health risks to our community.

(Health and Subsistence Risks)

We don't guess that we have health risks associated with our dump. We know. In 2001, we had an epidemiologist and a team of experts carry out a scientific health study of which I will share a summary:

Just by visiting the dump, our residents were about from 170 to 250 percent more likely, meaning 1.7 to 2.5 times more likely, to experience rash, stomach pain, diarrhea, ear irritation, eye irritation, congestion, sore throat, cough, and numbness than people

who did not use the dump, depending on the symptom. Residents who visited the dump were also from 330 to 370 percent more likely to experience vomiting, faintness, and headache than people who did not visit the dump. We have the exact numbers for each symptom and the confidence intervals for anyone here interested. What people need to know is that these numbers were scientifically derived, and already account for factors like people's age, health, tobacco use, economic status, gender, and honeybucket use. In other words, it doesn't matter who you are, it just matters that you visit our dump.

People who burned their trash in front of their homes to avoid going to the dump, were about 2 times more likely to experience fever and stomach pain, 7.8 times more likely to experience rash, 10 times more likely to have a cough, and 68 times more likely to feel faint. The more often people burned, the more likely they were to experience these symptoms, something in science called a "dose response".

People bothered by the dump odor in town (which was used as an indicator of wind path) were from 2 to almost 4 times more likely to experience fever, diarrhea, eye irritation, congestion, and sore throat, and 8 times more likely to have a rash.

While the exposure to wastes is less, those using the River dump as a substitute dump couldn't completely escape health risks. They were anywhere from 2 to 3 times more likely to experience fever, stomach pain, and sore throats.

If you ever hear a news story on increased health risks from something – like lack of exercise or eating a high fat diet – listen to the numbers. They talk about numbers like 20 or 30 percent as being significant, and that the risk is a high public health priority. But what I just read to you were numbers like 200 to 6,800 percent. I would say THIS is a high public health priority.

Skeptics might say that people imagined these health symptoms. But the surveys were given according to National Health Institute Standards, and residents who expressed health concerns about the dump were just 1.8 to 2.4 times more likely to experience only 4 of the ten symptoms that were correlated with visiting the dump. For all we know, those people were concerned about their health from the dump because they knew more than the rest of us did back then. When you visit us tomorrow you will see how our waste situation could impact our public health so much.

I am proud to say that we are a traditional Inupiaq community. Some 82% of our residents eat subsistence foods half or more of the time in our daily diet. But this study found that concerns over dumpsite pollution had impacted the subsistence activities of a full 72% of our community.

Note that the health study results showed that the particular risks I just described were not associated with the fact that we had honeybuckets at the time. With the exception of 10 households, we've since been hooked up, but our health risk situation from the dump has not changed much. And the impact on subsistence has not changed, and it

may have gotten worse. We still have an open dump with very poor access. It still catches fire, although much less often because our elders have been getting on the CB and telling residents that they must stop. Because of the continued poor access, people still burn in town, use the boat dump, and store garbage outside.

I want to stress now our two priorities, and I will return to them at the closing of my testimony:

Community Health: We hear from Anchorage and Juneau and DC that more accountability is needed for sustainability, and that resources spent on enforcement and compliance will improve Village solid waste situations. As an Inupiaq community, our values already are to respect the environment and we value our community's well-being like it was our own health. We don't need prompting or strictures to want to protect community health. Taking care of our community is our number one priority. While ensuring community responsibility is important, taking resources away from directly improving our solid waste situation is wasteful and in the face of the health risks we are talking about, we believe it is wrong.

It is not just Selawik that faces health risks. The same study I spoke of was carried out in 3 other villages elsewhere in the state, with similar results. And a 2004 scientific study on 198 Alaska Native Villages found those that the open dumps that were ranked of highest hazard by ANTHC and DEC scores were associated with a number of negative birth outcomes for mothers from those villages. Mothers gave birth to shorter-term, lower birth-weight babies, and the babies were more likely to have birth defects. The effect was small, but in scientific terms it was significant. Again, all the kinds of factors you'd think caused this relationship were accounted for—like prenatal care, water hookup, economic status, education, smoking, etc. But an effect was still found to our babies. As Inupiaq, a negative birth outcome for any baby in our community is like it happening to our own child.

Subsistence: Science has proven what we have always known, and can see with our own eyes: that our physical health and our well-being depend on subsistence. But we can't keep our subsistence if we continue to have open dumps that are polluting where we hunt and gather, or garbage smoke that settles on where we dry our meats and fish. Without subsistence, our community independence suffers. Without subsistence, our social structure of elders teaching respect and responsibility and how to survive in our climate, suffers. Without subsistence, our culture suffers, which is the glue that keeps our community together and strong.

(Successes and Failures)

Therefore, we have worked very hard over the past 5 years to address our solid waste situation. Our Inupiaq culture includes working together and persistence in the face of difficult situations. We have worked with every entity that we can, including the State DEC and DOT, USEPA, BIA, NANA, the Borough, our school, and last year we received a Denali Commission award for which I thank you. We have a close working

relationship with the City and our Councils collaborate on problems and work as one community. In 2003, our goal to close our site and build a new landfill, and thus open the door to Ecotourism, was selected as a Federal Environmental Justice Community Revitalization Project, a high honor that only 15 community projects are selected for each year.

What has changed since our score of "3" is that we were able to buy a used dozer and can consolidate the front edge of the dump about twice each year-- when the ground is frozen enough and the snow hasn't come. This has allowed us to stop the expansion of the dump at about 1300 ft from town. We don't have access to gravel and it is \$60 per yard. With some federal monies we were able to buy gravel and cover and build a turnaround pad. Unfortunately, the pad lasted just a few months and then sunk into the tundra. It is now mixed in with the waste. We were able to offer a free collection program for three summers to stop people from having to visit the dump so that they would not be exposed to health risks. That was helpful, but that money has run out.

On the program side, we've had many successes and some lessons learned. A big success was that we were the first roadless non-hub Village to get an approved SWM plan by the State DEC and a tentative approval for a new landfill permit. Most recently, we turned a big setback into a success. Through the STIP Amendment #8 this last winter, our new landfill road and boardwalk projects were taken off the STIP list. We had been waiting five years for our road to be built so that we could move our site to a safer location on higher ground, further away from town and the airport, and in a favorable position for burnbox smoke. We'd been in contact with DOT that whole time and been working to secure monies to build our new landfill and finally close out our dump. In 2003, DOT engineers had even come to town and said that our boardwalks were an emergency situation and the project should be started as soon as possible.

For those who are unfamiliar with tundra wetland, you just can't make your own path to a new site, you need gravel or road mats. Each year that we were waiting for the landfill road, the grant awards that we got had to be spent on addressing the existing site and reducing the immediate risks to our people. We found out that we were taken off the STIP list over the holidays, and given just three weeks to comment.

Being taken off the list after working so hard on our waste situation was a major setback. But I am very proud to say that our community really came together and mobilized. We went around by snowmachine collecting about 200 adult signatures to request our projects be placed back. We went to the clinic who verified in writing the number of accidents due to the condition of the boardwalks and the association between asthma and breathing garbage smoke. We had our residents come in and fill out boardwalk injury reports, and we developed a Powerpoint of pictures and stories of why we need this landfill road and boardwalk. Without new boardwalk in-town, it is difficult for residents to get around town, let alone, get to the dump. All within a space of three weeks during the holidays, we worked with the Borough, local State House members, DEC, DOT project officers, and *pro bono* private consultants. I am proud to

say we were successful in turning this decision around. We now have both the landfill road and boardwalk construction projects slated for next summer.

In terms of other successes, we've had a number of grant awards from BIA and EPA. They have paid for:

- ◆ A Bobcat and fitted dumpsters that are ready to be used at the new landfill, but can't be used with our existing boardwalk.
- ◆ A workshop to store our dozer and Bobcat
- ◆ A used oil burner to heat the shop
- ◆ An antifreeze recycler
- ◆ Storage totes to backhaul batteries
- ◆ Connexes to store hazardous wastes and create a materials exchange center
- ◆ Community education monies to teach people about our new programs and how to use our new landfill when it gets built
- ◆ And the Denali Commission last year awarded us funds for Supersacks for our planned sackfill, and two new burnboxes that we can use at the new site.
- ◆ Funding for cleaning up the existing site front edge this Fall, and moving the site back to its original borders.

This sounds like complete success, but let me tell you the reality of living in a roadless community:

After two years, we still have not been able to get our workshop wired correctly because we kept getting placed further down on the priority list for an electrician to come to town. And there were communication problems about which parts were needed, and logistical problems about getting them. When we turned to a local certified person, they had so little experience in wiring they did the job wrong, and so we had to get back on the AVEC list again, which places its priority on household emergencies, not equipment sheds.

Without electricity, after two years, we still can't set up our used oil burner which is supposed to provide heat for the building. We've had problems getting that set up because we don't have anyone experienced in set-up.

Without heat or light, we can't start our recycling programs because we have no place for them. After two years, we still can't use our antifreeze recycler.

Our hazardous waste storage Connexes that we paid to have fitted with vents and shelves and locks didn't come that way, so we have to retro-fit these. In the mean time, with space at a premium, and our programs having to start and stop, these Connexes get filled up with equipment and supplies from other vital community programs to protect them from winter weather. Each time we think our workshop will be ready, and we have the resources to start our programs, we clean out these Connexes and get ready again. But by that time, another hurdle comes up. It might be a search and rescue, it

might be bad weather, it might be illness of one of our 2, now 3, staff members, or a mandatory conference or training. It might be the several weeks of staff time each quarter that must be devoted to writing reports and accountability. We are finally in a position to say that our waste programs will be able to start this summer. We've found a local person that is willing to exchange use of the Bobcat for assistance in setup, and are at the last stage of wiring.

When we get funds for gravel, it is never enough to make our existing site safe and the pad well designed. Then there is the problem of arranging for the gravel to be barged and never being certain whether we will see it that year. We've had promises from local barge companies that they will store their equipment over the winter so that they can make a pad, and at the last minute, have been told that another job took priority, or that the river is too low, or it is too late in the year to make it to Selawik.

(Summary of obstacles)

To summarize, here are the primary obstacles that have us only about two-thirds of the way there, after five years of persistently trying to address our solid waste so that we can stop the health risks and protect our subsistence:

- ◆ No gravel source
- ◆ No cover source
- ◆ Dependent on two summer barges each year, and supplies must be arranged months in advance to meet the schedule, pinpoint the price, and arrange for the most economical shipping configuration.
- ◆ Aging dozer that is not ideal for the job.
- ◆ We're a small village so that staff have several different jobs and projects to take care of, including search and rescue, and Council service as examples.
- ◆ Subsistence is vital for economic and social well-being reasons, but it is season-dependent and not predictable, so it can interrupt projects.
- ◆ Solid Waste grants are piecemeal, with different timelines, different focuses, and small pots of monies. Coordinating all of them into a cohesive program takes a lot of work, and it is difficult to get them to coincide into a larger, leveraged solid waste improvement, such as a new site or major upgrade.
- ◆ The State now requires almost 10% in matching funds, which is difficult to obtain, especially on a timeline that doesn't coincide with the potential funding sources
- ◆ Diseconomies of scale in almost every aspect of running the program.
- ◆ Difficulty in fee collections when the service provided is an open dump that is presenting health risks
- ◆ Full operation and maintenance of a safe program is simply not affordable, and it is a constant juggling act as to what feature we fund, and which we must let go for the time being. This process in itself adds to the inefficiency of the program.

- ◆ The work for staff is more than what is available to fund them. Sometimes we have to let people go for a period, and the investment in their training and work is wasted, because they either move on or require transitional time to start up again.
- ◆ The time period needed to truly change community disposal behavior and health education does not coincide with grant periods or agency expectations.
- ◆ The number of grants needed to piece together enough of a program to cover all the aspects of a safe solid waste program translates to several reports due each quarter, which takes up a significant amount of staff time, time better spent in actually implementing the programs.
- ◆ Finally, communications are twenty years or more behind the time here. Our phone lines go down constantly, as does our internet. Until two weeks ago, we had no in-village IT person. We have a sign on the door that says “Don’t slam the door, it causes the phones to go down”, and it can. Our internet is spotty at best. I can’t underestimate how much wasted time we incur with poor communications and computer equipment. I believe our staff productivity could increase by 50% if we had the communications reliability that is typical of an Anchorage office. I will offer an example for our Denali Commission grant. We had to sign up for ASAP, the Automated Payment system. We went online at 9 am in the morning to enroll, and by 4 pm, we still had not accomplished getting signed up. That is because our internet goes down and up so frequently that for every five times we hit the “continue” button, we lose connection, and have to press the back button. When we tried to call ASAP and our bank for answers to questions, we couldn’t get through because our long distance lines were down (as well as our fax). This process would have taken about one-half an hour had we been at an internet cafe in Anchorage.

(Recommendations for Denali)

Unlike some folks, we realize that the Denali Commission is not all-powerful. But we have identified a number of useful actions that it can take:

- ◆ Flexibility. Flexibility in grant project periods, with particular sensitivity to the busy summer season we have of subsistence, construction, and barges. Also, awareness of the timing of barge logistics – meaning we need to start arrangements generally by April or earlier, and the fact that we are powerless to change that.
- ◆ Flexibility in award amounts for the solid waste grants. For example, we would like to see award levels in the context of barge transportation costs. Barges have a minimum weight requirement and charge -- \$14,560 for a 20 ft Connex to Selawik regardless of whether it is full. We try to configure all of our supplies so that we don’t pay for empty space. That is how we managed to ship up three Connexes that we bought for our program free-of-charge. But that isn’t possible without flexibility in the grant. For example, our Tier 3 Denali Solid Waste award for \$35,000 in Supersacks ended up paying for less than half of a container and half the minimum weight. The minimum weight charge is \$14,560 this year to

Selawik. So instead of a total cost per sack of \$18, we are paying about \$24.50 per sack.

- ◆ Flexibility in how the Village spends the award. We like the general idea of a community block grant. If we were provided a pot of money with flexibility in addressing our solid waste problems, we'd be able to respond better to real-time conditions and barge schedules. We'd only need to file one report instead of several, and we'd spend less time juggling which program needs can be covered when. And operation and maintenance simply must be included as an allowable expense. It makes no sense that it is more difficult to find \$5,000 to repair a good dozer, than to buy a brand new one for \$100,000.
- ◆ Flexibility again. Changing the "received by" deadlines to "postmarked by" deadlines, and allowing email submittals in the case of villages whose printers are so worn down that they cannot handle printing out 5 copies. And again, deadlines during high subsistence times are very difficult for Villages to meet. If the deadlines can't be changed, then there should be at least an attempt to provide Villages with a grant announcement 6 weeks before high subsistence season. We need more time to write grants because our staff have so many more responsibilities than most urban staff, and most of our Villages still are not practiced at grant writing, but want to learn to do it, and need a warning far enough in advance to do it on their own.
- ◆ Inserting responsible waste disposal clauses into all Denali Commission projects. New clinics and bulk fuel tank farms and multi-use facilities are very important for our communities. But we have open dumps that get overwhelmed with construction/demolition debris, or we have to contend with old clinics and farms that may have contaminated sites and hazardous wastes, and present dangerous places for our children to play. We are not equipped with the type of heavy equipment to dismantle old facilities.
- ◆ Training money for SWM staff to learn to carry out their SWM programs better. A requirement that the training must qualify a person for a new job does not make sense in Villages. We have a workforce of mostly high school-level or below. If we require an advanced skill for a job, we won't get any applicants. This can take our most motivated people out of the village to look for work, and that does not help our sustainability. For solid waste improvement, we need to develop the capacity of our staff in disciplines such as utility management, GIS, operator training, hazardous materials exchange and handling, community education, and water and air quality monitoring. The EPA IGAP program can pay for staff training, but because travel to Anchorage is so expensive for us, travel costs can exhaust that budget. To avoid the pitfall of using training as an excuse to travel, the Commission could require a support letter from an agency program or expert that could affirm the readiness and need for a village or staff person to receive a certain type of training. We could then use the saved IGAP monies to implement solid waste programs, including the sorely needed subsidy of waste collection programs.
- ◆ More resources to solid waste projects, and priority in funds placed on reducing health risks and protecting subsistence.

In closing, we Inupiaq tend to see the big picture, so I want to end by tying in solid waste issues again with health, subsistence, and the trendy word of "sustainability". You can have all the community economic development you want, but you can't have a sustainable community without community health. And there is no health without subsistence. Open dumps like ours do cause serious health effects. And open dumps do seriously impact subsistence. So our sustainability is threatened by our solid waste conditions.

Less subsistence means that our health will suffer from poor nutrition. It means we will be less able to afford our utilities because we would have to spend our money on buying expensive store food. But most importantly, subsistence provides us our values and culture. Without our values and our culture, and this is just like all cultures-- including the one in Anchorage-- our community well-being suffers.

So there can't be health for our community without subsistence. We can learn from our solid waste situation and our health risk study I spoke of. When our environment is impacted, we begin to lose our subsistence. We have Red Dog here and we have seen the environmental effects on Kivalina. We also see the social effects on our own community when the few men who do get jobs must leave their families to work weeks at a time, and they stop their subsistence activities.

We hear a lot of talk about increased mining development as a way towards economic sustainability. The little revenue and few jobs that might come to a real Village like Selawik don't come close to paying for the permanent loss in our subsistence and community well-being.

I am just about finished here and want to make sure that the Commission hears this important point: Economic development before health is backwards for an Inupiaq community. Health and subsistence protection, by improving our solid waste and sewage conditions, has to come first. On that foundation, economic development that is sustainable in the Village (and not just in Anchorage or Kotzebue) will follow.

We have at least two economic development ventures that are tied into solid waste improvement -- Native art and ecotourism. Tourists come to Alaska for the environment and for the idea that Native peoples living traditional lives are here. Whether we get paid for it or not, we Inupiaq are responsible for bringing in huge revenue to the State. And the draw of Eskimos and true Eskimo art, whether sent to Anchorage or sold in the Village, will suffer if subsistence is impacted, because it depends on subsistence and the inspiration behind the subsistence lifestyle. The loss of subsistence is complex, but we know here in Selawik and in every other Village in this region, that concerns from waste pollution play a very large role. We need to turn this around not only as many local Native communities, but as a single State.

In terms of tourism, we can't plan for it until we remove the liability risks of knowingly subjecting tourists to the health effects of just being near the dump, or breathing

garbage smoke in town. And once the liability is removed, we still have to maintain our subsistence. Tourists will not pay to see a westernized town with social problems due to loss of a subsistence culture, and an environment polluted by mining wastes. But High-end eco-tourists will pay \$1,000 a day for the chance of living a traditional Inupiaq life.

Like all things Inupiaq, economic development happens naturally. A strong sense of community is a primary Inupiaq value, and while our traditions have lost ground, they are still intact. Our people are not moving to Anchorage. Instead, we are pleased to say that our growing population is supporting a new store and new post office, and we are breaking ground this Fall.

Thank you.