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**MEMO**

**TO: AMHTA 2005 Rural Outreach Trip Community Hosts; Visitors**

**FROM: Beth McLaughlin; Thea Agnew, Agnew::Beck Consulting**

**DATE: October 18, 2005**

**SUBJECT: 10/06/05 Debriefing Notes -- DRAFT**

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Following is a summary of reports that were made during the Debriefing of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority's 2005 Rural Outreach Trip. Approximately 30 people traveled to ten villages in the Tanana Chiefs Conference region. The purpose of this trip was to bring rural Alaskan residents/leaders/Mental Health Trust beneficiaries together with state policy makers/funders/legislators. Through this meeting it is hoped that you have gained an increased understanding of rural issues and needs and it is also hoped that rural residents will gain greater understanding of the universe of resources that can have positive impacts on the health of their communities. It is also hoped that solutions to rural challenges can be advanced, funding options for rural projects can be discussed/implemented and greater connections can be made between rural and urban Alaskan residents.

Each summary presented below is community specific. As you will notice, there are many common themes. Please read the story of each community carefully. If you are aware of resources that might aid villages in their needs, you are encouraged to contact the community host identified in the table following this summary. You can also contact the Trust's Rural Technical Assistance Contractors – Thea Agnew and Beth McLaughlin at Agnew::Beck Consulting – to pass along contacts, resource options, or any ideas that you feel may be of help to these communities. Contact information for all trip visitors is also included at the end of this document.

Thank you for participating in this trip. We appreciate the energy you have devoted to considering the stories that your hosts have to tell. Please help us continue the momentum by lending any assistance that you can.

## **Tetlin**

### **Strengths:**

- Active young people – want to be involved in making positive changes for community
- Older people in community – also expressed desire to make positive changes for community
- Local maintenance worker, Stan, working hard for community health

### **Challenges/Issues/Needs:**

- Tribal council not engaged with community; for example, the village administrator does not live in village, commutes from Tok and thus is not accessible to community.

- Significant infrastructure needs: water/sewer not functioning properly
- Clinic and washeteria sewage system not constructed properly – can be fixed but village is in need of parts and tools
- No behavioral health services despite need and interest in community for counseling services.
- Loose animals, health of animals not properly provided
- Need to remove old appliances

**Projects that are aiding/could aid this community:**

- Church building is run down; would like to have a place of worship
- Suicide prevention information dissemination; hotline for at those at risk
- Culturally sensitive posters for health clinic
- Services for students in local school (i.e. hearing disabled)
- Infrastructure: water/sewer, road maintenance, housing, refuse
- Elder transportation
- Relocation of city dump is needed, residents are concerned about the potential contamination of their water supply and the proximity of dump to school
- Dog vaccination and animal control/care are needed
- Teacher's housing
- Road to Tetlin is BIA road, state does not maintain, it is in poor condition

**Nenana**

**Strengths:**

- Community members looking out for themselves and working together
- Youth and elders engaged
- Nenana Student Living Center: community very proud and excited about this project which houses approximately 80 9th-12th graders from around the state each year. Students attend Nenana's public school.
- Tanana Chief's Conservation Corps – provides construction training and skills for young adults ages 18 – 23; gives young adults job skills and also have option to travel with various programs

**Challenges/Issues/Needs:**

- Population is approximately 50% native and 50% non-native. Have to work to make sure that services are provided equally for both demographics
- Difficulty in accessing food from Fairbanks food bank
- Need to fill vacancies in senior independent living facility
- Lack of coordination between tribal and state services

**Projects that are aiding/could aid this community:**

- Need for a larger facility/clinical space for Railbelt Mental Health; specifically there is a need for detox beds and clinical office space
- Need in community for small business space

- Auntie's House: Railbelt Mental Health is hoping repair and renovate of existing "corner bar" into a consumer run, group, sober-living facility. Revenues could come through small business such as pizza parlor, silk-screening, soda fountain, hotel.
- Teen multi-use center – is now partially constructed, but community is in need of approximately \$800,000 to complete the project.
- Need for coordination between community health aids, behavioral health aids and school; potential for billing of Nenana Student Living students who are all served by Denali KidCare
- Need for additional services for Mental Health and Substance abuse among seniors living in senior housing
- Tanana Chief's Conservation Corps - community in need of projects that the conservation corps could tackle

## **Tok/Tanacross**

### **Strengths:**

- Tanacross
  - City council very involved – upbeat and dynamic
  - Tight-knit community
  - Completed comprehensive plan in 1993
  - 20 new houses built locally
  - Recent water-treatment plant upgrades
  - Involved with Tok Community College to help youth gain work skills
  - Substance abuse counselor
  - Mentoring between young and old community members

### **Challenges/Issues/Needs:**

- Tok
  - Behavioral health services in high demand; Tok services are booked solid
  - Psychiatric programs have been drastically cut (this impacts the entire Tok subregion)
- Tanacross
  - Crystal Meth abuse becoming prevalent in high school, use is growing
  - Need for elder support housing
  - Community expressed concerns re: youth, employment and economic development, depression, substance abuse, suicide
  - There have been 21 suicide attempts (out of a population of 130 people) with one successful attempt last year.
  - Domestic violence is a problem, but there is no one to respond to calls in the community
  - Need construction skills training
  - Lack of confidentiality for behavioral health counseling

### **Projects that are aiding/could aid this community:**

- Tok
  - Need for assisted living facility
  - More support for elders

- Tanacross
  - Need for health clinic and teen center
  - No behavioral health aide in the community
  - Need for workforce development and training – currently many community members have employment only 2 months per year

## **Kaltag**

### **Strengths:**

- Friendly and open community
- Much community pride about volunteer road maintenance projects
- Have a state of the art water and sewer system
- Have a \$1.2 million fish processing plant, but are in need of additional equipment for the plant's operation
- Community center was designed by locals but is in need of repair/renovation

### **Challenges/Issues/Needs:**

- Alcoholism, suicide, depression; disconnect between community and mental health providers
- Water system maintenance – community has no money to pay maintenance worker
- Need for workforce development
- No AKAIMS
- Salmon relief monies did not reach Kaltag community

### **Projects that are aiding/could aid this community:**

- Assisted living center is needed (Community Health Aide is overwhelmed with health issues)
- Need money for equipment for fish processing plant

## **McGrath**

### **Strengths:**

- Mental health services provided by Southcentral Foundation; there is a mental health service provider in the school and this has made a huge difference for local kids; there is much concern about suicide
- Community is strong and proud of its successes
- Great VPSO
- School is an asset to the community
- Teen center

### **Challenges/Issues/Needs:**

- How to keep children/families in local schools
- Substance abuse is common
- River is eroding land where town stands
- McGrath is a hub to other villages, however it is not currently able to provide services to these

### **Projects that are aiding/could aid this community:**

- Erosion control
- Support for equipment upgrades to teen center facility
- Increase elder support; current elder support is entirely volunteer effort
- Operating funds needed for equipment at local school (kiln, welding equipment, photo lab)
- Need for dental health aid – presently, dental support is inadequate
- Lack of economic development

## **Nulato**

### **Strengths:**

- Community health aids have been working in community for 14 & 17 years
- Friendly community
- School

### **Challenges/Issues/Needs:**

- Behavioral health position through TCC has been open for over a year; not being filled; used to receive MH services through Galena, however provider is changing
- Lack of suicide support; Community Health Aids sit with at risk clients 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- Substance abuse is a big issue with lack of follow-up after treatment is received
- School lunch program shut down due to lack of operating funds, need about \$53,000 a year, currently getting \$14,5000 from TCC; could get \$22.000 from USDA, but then are not permitted to use subsistence foods
- Population decreasing, school population decreasing, result is an operational difficulty. Are keeping school open for 50/75 kids when the facility is built for around 150 students

### **Projects that are aiding/could aid this community:**

- Telephonic group care for mental health issues?
- School lunch program funding is needed
- City offices recently burnt down and need to be rebuilt
- Elders need additional support – the longevity bonus formerly provided by the state is sorely missed
- Funding for sports/transportation in the school

## **Galena**

### **Strengths:**

- Collaboration and optimism amongst community members
- Residential school program is strong and provides services to students from several villages around the region. School has use excellent auto shop located on the military base.
- School superintendent is super enthusiastic/energetic.
- Health facility/multi-use facility provides good services, in good condition
- Are using telepsychiatry services; community members feel positively about this

### **Challenges/Issues/Needs:**

- Galena Air Force base is being closed – will negatively impact economy
- High incidence of substance abuse and suicide attempts
- Problems with AKAIMS – slow, too many cues, losing connectivity

### **Projects that are aiding/could aid this community:**

- Assisted living home for elders – need \$1,000,000
- Would like to establish Spirit Camp, similar to that that Minto operates
- Need for transitional Housing
- Therapeutic Housing for Youth

## **Holy Cross**

### **Strengths:**

- Strong sense of community
- Subsistence economy, community members very connected to land
- Good water/sewer
- Internet café subsidized by GCI, primarily for teenagers; concern about what will happen to this service when subsidy is over

### **Challenges/Issues/Needs:**

- Substance abuse: alcohol, marijuana, cocaine
- High rate of domestic violence
- Subsistence foods: 14 families did not get a moose this year
- Declining population: school built for 150, only 43 student currently; some hostility exists because kids go to Nenana/Galena for school
- VSPO position is open; closest Trooper is in Aniak
- New Clinic only has one community health aid; need for additional support
- No dental services in the community
- City lost funding due to loss of revenue sharing program
- 1 clinician for mental health services that serves 4 communities, thus Holy Cross rarely gets to see MH provider

### **Projects that are aiding/could aid this community:**

- Workforce Development to keep families in community

## **Eagle**

### **Strengths:**

- Community has strong history; residents are proud of native and gold rush history; have been active in understanding native history and bringing remains back to community for burial
- Beautiful community with many historical buildings – already sees some tourist traffic and with proper development could see more
- Strong village administrator and village financial administrator – these two ladies have been successful in securing grants for community health and are preparing the way for the old

village (there are two “Eagles” the town, which is predominantly Caucasian and the village, predominantly Native) to be moved from the river bank due to erosion and danger of flooding. They have nearly completed the design for the road layout/lot layout for the new village and are looking forward to establishing a new clinic and community center in their new village.

- Hardworking community health aids (2) that are providing services to the best of their abilities despite challenges of adversarial city council and the fact that the clinic has no water or sewer service
- Small group of volunteers providing care for elders
- Excellent school building with strong after school program
- TCC provides tribal workforce program which is managed by tribal administrator. Residents who qualify for this assistance can work up to 35 hours a week in exchange for vouchers that can be exchanged for food/necessities
- Recently acquired around 20 bicycles and exercise equipment through a diabetes prevention grant – bicycles are available to be signed out by anyone in village and exercise equipment is located in tribal offices to be utilized by community members
- Also constructed community greenhouse with monies from the abovementioned grant
- Excellently managed landfill – very clean with small incinerator onsite. Residents pay minimal fee for dumping trash.
- “Elder box program” village council pays postage for foods that are sent by WIC program – boxes include dried foods that are good supply of protein, need for more fresh fruits/vegetables for elders
- Telemedicine cart located in clinic – staff reports it significantly aids their services to the community
- Strong church/religious community

### **Challenges/Issues/Needs:**

- No behavioral health services are currently provided in community
- High instance of substance abuse, especially alcoholism - has negative health effects, negative mental health effects, and though the village administration works hard to provide training/job opportunities, contributes to lack of interest/ability to perform basic jobs
- No means in school of identifying children with fetal alcohol effects and no special education services. This has had negative impact on school environment and on the ability of other children to get the attention/instruction they need (mostly a problem in primary grades)
- School recently lost principal, has two teachers – one providing primary education and the other providing secondary. Due to poor relationship between parents and school and also due to lack of ability to identify children with special education needs, many parents have removed their children from the school. There are presently 18 children in the school but it is estimated that approximately 70 children live in the community.
- Have a comprehensive plan, but this needs to be updated.
- Clinic has no water/sewer.
- High instance of child abuse, neglect, domestic violence, elder abuse with no one to intercede.
- No VPSO
- Need to remove junked cars/old appliances
- School water is not drinkable

- Elders in need of chore service/transportation/more social interaction
- Electricity is at \$0.39/KWH and gas is at \$4.00/gallon at pump. Living expenses are climbing and with no hope for relief on horizon

**Projects that are aiding/could aid this community:**

- Consider alternatives for behavioral health service delivery – presently have a telemedicine cart in the clinic, is there a possibility of telepsychiatry?
- Continue support for move of village. Funding is needed for new clinic and new community center.
- Update community comprehensive plan
- Interested in new building for community radio station
- Work with city council to ensure that funding for community services is being allocated properly; strengthen bond between town and village
- Need to identify children that qualify for special education and get services to them/support to teachers
- Explore establishing Boy's and Girl's Club
- Secure funding for van for elders, work with school to bring elders into school for lunches/socialization. Will also need funding for van driver

**Please see following page for community host and trip visitor contact information.**

## Community Hosts

Community	Contact Name	Contact Number
Minto	Melanie Titus (Village Administrator)	907-798-7112
Nenana	Traci Wiggins (Executive Director, Railbelt Mental Health & Addictions)	907-832-5557 Cel: 378-1372 rmha@mtaonline.net
Galena	Ann Brainerd (Director, Yukon Koyukuk Mental Health & Alcohol Program)	907-656-1617 abrainer2003@yahoo.com fax: 656-1581
Nulato	Pricilla Luckaduck (City Clerk)	907-898-2205
Kaltag	Violet Burnham (Mental Health Counselor, Vice Mayor)	907-534-2301 (City of Kaltag)
Tanacross	Debbie Thomas (Mental Health Counselor)	907-883-5024
Tok	Lily Luke (TCC Sub- Regional Director)	1-800-478-5182
Tetlin	Kristie Young (Village Administrator)	907-883-2021
Eagle	Donna Westphal (Village Administrator)	Home: 547-2391 Office: 547-2231
McGrath	Dusty Parker (Clinic Director)	907-524-3299
Holy Cross	Phillip Dementieff (TCC Subregional Director)	1-800-478-7137

Name	Village	Affiliation	Contact	Travelling From
Art Hansen	Galena	AMHB	<a href="mailto:panda@alaska.net">panda@alaska.net</a>	Fairbanks
Owen Eben	Minto	ABADA	<a href="mailto:oeben@citci.com">oeben@citci.com</a>	Anchorage
Pamela Wilmoth-Schaf	Tok & Tanacross	ABADA	<a href="mailto:pamela_wilmoth-schaf@health.state.ak.us">pamela_wilmoth-schaf@health.state.ak.us</a>	Juneau
Chris Hamilton	Nenana	GCDSE	<a href="mailto:chris_hamilton@health.state.ak.us">chris_hamilton@health.state.ak.us</a>	Anchorage
Josh Fink	Kaltag	OPA	<a href="mailto:joshua_fink@admin.state.ak.us">joshua_fink@admin.state.ak.us</a>	Anchorage
David Allen	McGrath	OPA	<a href="mailto:david_allen@admin.state.ak.us">david_allen@admin.state.ak.us</a>	Fairbanks
Judge Winston Burbank	Kaltag	Courts	<a href="mailto:wburbank@courts.state.ak.us">wburbank@courts.state.ak.us</a>	Fairbanks
Mary Weston	Tetlin	DSDS	<a href="mailto:mary_weston@health.state.ak.us">mary_weston@health.state.ak.us</a>	Anchorage
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Rep Mark Neuman	McGrath	Rep	-	Anchorage
Rep Eric Croft	Holy Cross	Rep	<a href="mailto:representative_eric_croft@legis.state.ak.us">representative_eric_croft@legis.state.ak.us</a>	Anchorage
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Delisa Culpepper	No Village	Trust	<a href="mailto:delisa_culpepper@mhta.revenue.state.ak.us">delisa_culpepper@mhta.revenue.state.ak.us</a>	Anchorage
Bill Herman	Nulato	Trust	<a href="mailto:william_herman@mhta.revenue.state.ak.us">william_herman@mhta.revenue.state.ak.us</a>	Anchorage
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Erika Wolter	Tetlin	Trust	<a href="mailto:erika_wolter@mhta.revenue.state.ak.us">erika_wolter@mhta.revenue.state.ak.us</a>	Anchorage
Marie Trueblood	Holy Cross	Trust	<a href="mailto:marie_trueblood@mhta.revenue.state.ak.us">marie_trueblood@mhta.revenue.state.ak.us</a>	Anchorage
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