



Napaimute News

January, 2018

News from the Forest People

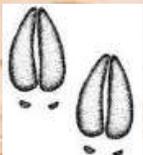
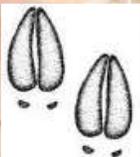
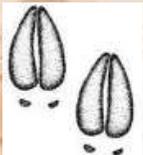


Sunrise at Chuathbaluk during the transport of the ICDBG sawmill. The disassembly, transport, and reassembly of the mill has been one of the main focuses of NVN in 2017

Native Village of Napaimute	In This Issue		
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<p>www.napaimute.org & https://www.facebook.com/nativevillageofnapaimute/</p>			



(L-R): Devron, Marcie, Rachelle, Shelly, Audrey



2018 Napaimute Traditional Council:

Delores Matter, Traditional Chief

Devron Hellings, President

Marcie Sherer, Vice President

Shelly Leary, Secretary

Rachelle Rohde, Member

Audrey Leary, Member

Administration & Key Staff:

Mark Leary, Director of Development & Operations

Dan Gillikin, Environmental Director

Lisa Feyereisen, Executive Administrative Assistant

Marcie Sherer, Finance Director

Nickolai Savage, Kalskag Harvest Site Manager

Edward Hoeldt, Planning & Logistical Support Specialist



Director's Report:

Happy New Year!

It's been another great year for the Native Village of Napaimute with a lot of good work accomplished by a lot of good people.

In 2017 NVN employed 36 Middle Kuskokwim residents and put \$1.3 million into the local economy.

We did this through our continued focus on:

- Economic development through the use of our Middle Kuskokwim wood resources (firewood and sawmill)
- The establishment and maintenance of safe winter transportation routes between the Middle and Lower River (trails and ice road)
- Cultural activities and employment opportunities for Middle Kuskokwim Youth
- Strengthening tribal involvement in the management of our fish and wildlife resources (especially subsistence fishing)



We also spent a great deal of time reinforcing the administration of the organization by updating our policies and procedures at all levels.

I always enjoy telling people **“When I first started working for Napaimute 17 years ago I got handed a blank computer, a box of old files and was told to get to work!”** The blank computer and box of old files part is true.

In those days I didn't even know how to turn a computer on. But I knew how to read through the dusty files and get a sense of the direction that the leadership wanted for their tribe and their village all those years ago. It was also through those hours of reading the meticulously kept records that I began to gain an understanding of all the work that was done long before me by key tribal members like Agnes Charles, Bea Kristovich, and Delores Matter. And it was during those same hours that my own pride in working for the Native Village of Napaimute began to grow.

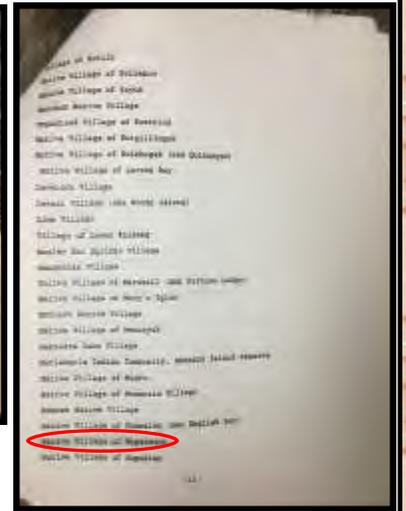
We've come a long ways in the years since. In fact, all tribes in Alaska have. Imagine what life would be like if Alaska's tribes hadn't received federal recognition! In many of our rural areas it's the tribes that are now doing the bulk of the heavy lifting working to improve the lives of our People across this great state.



NVN's Original Files



Newspaper Clipping from the Historical Old File Box



NVN receives federal recognition



Thank you to all of our 2017 employees and supporting organizations! - **Mark Leary, Director of Development & Operations**



2018 NVN Goals & Objectives.*

I. TRIBE

Host Spirit Camp at Napaimute

Council Retreat @ Napaimute after June 12, 2018

Develop a business model for sustainable operations

Implement updated financial policies and internal control

II. PERSONNEL

Recruit and retain qualified employees

Finalize job descriptions and evaluation criteria

One hundred percent compliance with updated personnel policies

Design a hire, training, retention model that promotes development of a reliable local employment pool

III. VILLAGE

Pursue improved transportation logistics to and from Napaimute (barge, ice road equipment)

Pursue family based employee housing

Complete Community Building maintenance and septic renovation

Rehabilitate dump road

Update IRR inventory

Title VI and develop priority

IV. REGIONAL

Actively participate in statewide efforts to unify the tribes

Actively participate in regional fish and game management issues

Actively participate in the Donlin EIS process

*Established by the Napaimute Traditional Council at their Annual Strategic Planning Work Session, November 18, 2017 at the Cook Inlet Housing Authority Conference Room in Anchorage.

This important time provides direction for NVN Administration & Staff throughout the upcoming year.

It is also a valuable tool for measuring performance.

A BIG THANK YOU to the Napaimute Traditional Council for the long hours they donate to moving Napaimute forward and also to the Cook Inlet Housing Authority for their accommodations.



NVN's New Employee Spotlight:

My name is Eddy Hoeldt

I live in Aniak and have been Hunting, Fishing and traveling around the Kuskokwim River my whole life. In my free time I am a Native Youth Olympics coach and Cross Country assistant coach for the Aniak High School. I feel blessed to have been raised in such a unique and challenging area.



I attended Fort Lewis college in Durango, Colorado where I earned a bachelor's Degree in business administration with a focus on management. I have worked with various construction projects, Native associations, YKHC, and Kuspuk School District.

I am excited to serve the middle Kuskokwim region as the Planning and Logistical Support Specialist for The Native Village of Napaimute. This position includes Program outreach, document development and review, Strategic Planning, Grant Research, and providing technical support for all NVN program areas.





Environmental Director's Report:

Introduction

Once again - greetings to all the folks of the Kuskokwim Region and beyond, my name is Dan Gillikin, and I am the Environmental Director for the Native Village of Napaimute's (NVN) Environmental Department. Once again, the Department had a highly successful year in 2017; allow me to briefly share some of our 2017 accomplishment, and our future plans.



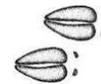
First a little background about me; I started working for Napaimute in 2015, prior to that I was a Fisheries Biologist working for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Kuskokwim Native Association. My wife (Sharon) and I have lived in Alaska for over 30 years now, with the last 13 of them being right here on the Kuskokwim. We live on a small homestead just upriver from Aniak, and are striving to make it as self-sustainable as possible. We feel very fortunate to be here and for the wonderful people we have come to know. The Kuskokwim is our home and we hope to continue calling it that, while making it a better place for all the folks that rely on its amazing resources.

In 2017 we added a new position to the Environmental Department, and are still seeking to fill some of our old positions. Funding through the Partners in Fisheries Monitoring Program and the Indian General Assistance Program is supporting a new Project Support Specialist position, which focuses primarily on grant writing and planning. In early 2018 we plan to fill a Brownfields Coordinator, and the Partners Program Coordinator Positions. Once we are fully staffed I envision the Environmental Program expanding in new and exciting ways, and providing additional technical assistance on natural resource issues and concerns.

Environmental Program Administration

The Environmental Department has several different program areas and funding sources, summarized in table 1 below. While each program may have different specific objectives they all share one common purpose: to increase local stakeholder's ability (capacity) to actively participate in the management of, and decisions that affect our vital natural resources.

One of the key elements for building "capacity" into our program is developing a skilled local workforce that can implement the projects we receive funding for. The Department accomplishes this by; hiring and training local Technicians, providing paid Internship opportunities, and compensating local fishers for sharing their catch data. Last year the Environmental Department employed 12 local technicians, provided 11 Students a week long paid internship, hired one Alaska Native Science and Engineering (ANSEP) intern for the summer, and provided 29 fishers with stipends for sharing their fishing catch data with us. This not only provides much needed cash for the local economy but also provides valuable training and experience for the folks, making them better candidates for future jobs with us, or other organizations.





Environmental Director's Report - cont'd

Program/Project	Funding Agency	Duration	Award FY17	Activities
Indian General Assistance Program (IGAP)	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Annual	\$ 133,156	Solid waste management, environmental planning and review, outreach, capacity building
Partners in Fisheries Monitoring Program (PFMP)	US Fish & Wildlife Service	4 Years	\$ 230,576	Capacity building, fisheries management, outreach and education
Aniak Test Fishery (ATF)	Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission	Final Year	\$ 30,044	Fisheries Monitoring
Salmon River Weir (SRW)	Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission	Final Year	\$ 39,115	Fisheries Monitoring
George River Internship (GRI)	ADF&G	Final Year	\$ 67,488	Environmental Education
In-Season Harvest Monitoring	ADF&G	3 Years	\$ 38,130	Fisheries Monitoring
Brownfields	EPA	Indefinite	\$ 66,259	Capacity building, environmental monitoring
Total Award in 2016 =			\$ 604,768	

Indian General Assistance Program (IGAP)

One of Napaimute's programs is the Indian General Assistance Program (IGAP) funded through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The IGAP program first started in 2005, and has funding through 2019, after which time we must re apply. The IGAP program covers a wide range of projects mostly aimed at collecting; baseline environmental information, management of solid waste, backhaul activities, and sharing information with the Tribe and public on environmental issues. The Programs major goals are:

- Increase capacity by management and administration of the program
- Conduct environmental assessment, reviews and planning
- Facilitate: Outreach, Research, Resource Management, and Youth Education activities
- Promote community planning and good stewardship

Napaimute has completed a Tribal Environmental Plan (TEP), which identifies program priorities, and provides a roadmap for the Department to follow. Some of the concerns and priorities identified in the TEP are beyond the scope of the EPA to fund directly, so one of the tasks for the Department is to find alternative funding sources to address these concerns. IGAP funding does however allow NVN to engage with stakeholders and resource managers on the critical natural resource issues throughout the Region, and participate in the planning process.

Capacity Building - Beyond workforce development (previously mentioned), NVN has been assisting Administrative Staff, updating our organizations policies, procedures, financial controls, and permitting of our landfill facility. Although not the most glamorous of task these administrative functions are necessary to meet federal grant requirements; and to establish a fair, efficient, and reputable organization that can grow with our program needs. Additionally, NVN has been collaborating with other Tribal organizations throughout the region on proposals to address temperature monitoring on a Kuskokwim Basin wide scale, and adaptation strategies related to climate change.



Environmental Director's Report - cont'd

Outreach - Napaimute has been sharing environmental and natural resource development information on a wide range of topics over the years. This has been a collaborative effort to resolve issues and share different perspectives between Stakeholders and Managers, in a respectful constructive way that ultimately protects the resources we all rely on.

Filling what we perceive to be a communications gap between different interest groups has not been easy. It has taken time, development of personal and professional relationships, cultural awareness, credibility with Stakeholders and Agencies, professional staffing, and primarily a Traditional Council that understands the issues and is willing to engage in meaningful discussions.

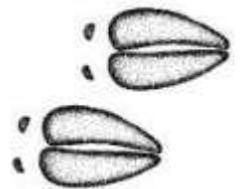
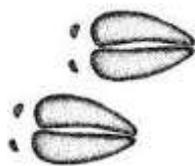


ADF&G Commissioner Sam Cotton listens intently to the subsistence fishing concerns of Allen Simeon

One of the ways Napaimute also conducts outreach is through various social media outlets such as its website at: (<http://napaimute.org/>), which averages about 1,000 visits to the site each month, see chart below. Roughly half of these visits are on post related to natural resource management, conservation, climate change, resource development and other related subjects. We also post more timely information on our official Facebook page at: (<https://www.facebook.com/nativevillageofnapaimute/?fref=ts>), and on community Facebook pages such as Aniak Announcements.



An additional way the Department engages with Tribal Members and Stakeholders is through its various Youth Outreach Programs. The IGAP program helps to leverage resources to support these Outreach Programs. Elements of the IGAP program and EPA are incorporated into the Youth program curriculum, i.e. water quality measurement techniques, impacts resulting from climate change, responsible land stewardship, agency regulatory authorities/mission, and potential career opportunities.





Environmental Director's Report - cont'd

Environmental Assessment – The primary assessment Napaimute has been involved with is the Donlin Gold Project. As most people are aware, the scale of this proposed project is massive, and consequently so is the scope of issues being addressed.

Napaimute, is a Cooperating Agency (along with other Tribal Organizations) collaborating with the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) on the proposed Donlin Gold Project. Napaimute's participation over the last five years of the review process has involved; review of the issues, proposed actions, identifying information needs, providing public comments on the (DEIS), and on State and Federal Permits.

The ACOE and ADEC are currently evaluating public comments related to project permits. The Final EIS, is scheduled to be released in March 2018, which will be the last opportunity for the public to comment on the project prior to a final decision to allow the project.

Local impacts associated with Climate Change are another area that Napaimute has concerns about. The Native Village of Georgetown conducted a Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment and workshop in which NVN participated. Some of the projected changes for the Middle Kuskokwim Region are summarized in the table on the right. These changes over such a short period of time will have significant effects on the subsistence resources we all rely so heavily on. Napaimute is interested in collaborating with other Villages to conduct a larger assessment for the region that will identify adaptation strategies.

Get in touch.

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Historical Trends (1949–2016)

- Temp. ↑ 4° F on average
- Temp. ↑ 2° F in summer
- Temp. ↑ 8° F in winter

By mid-century (2050s)*

- Average temp. ↑ 9° F
- Summer temp. ↑ 6° F
- Winter temp. ↑ 12° F
- Precipitation ↑ 20%
- Snowfall ↓ 5%
- Moisture deficit ↑ 16%
- Frost-free days ↑ 34 days/yr.
- Change in dominant vegetation potentially with an increase in forest cover
- Increase in wildfire
- Thawing permafrost throughout much of the region

By late-century (2080s)*

- Average temp. ↑ 13° F
- Summer temp. ↑ 9° F
- Winter temp. ↑ 19° F
- Precipitation ↑ 32%
- Snowfall ↓ 19%
- Moisture deficit ↑ 17%
- Frost-free days ↑ 57 days/yr.
- Change in dominant vegetation potentially with an increase in grasslands and prairie
- Increase in wildfire
- Little permafrost left in the region

* Compared to the historical period 1961–1990



2017 : another low water, uneventful break up on the Kuskokwim River



Environmental Director's Report—Environmental Assessment

Climate Change: Is this our future?



Low water break ups



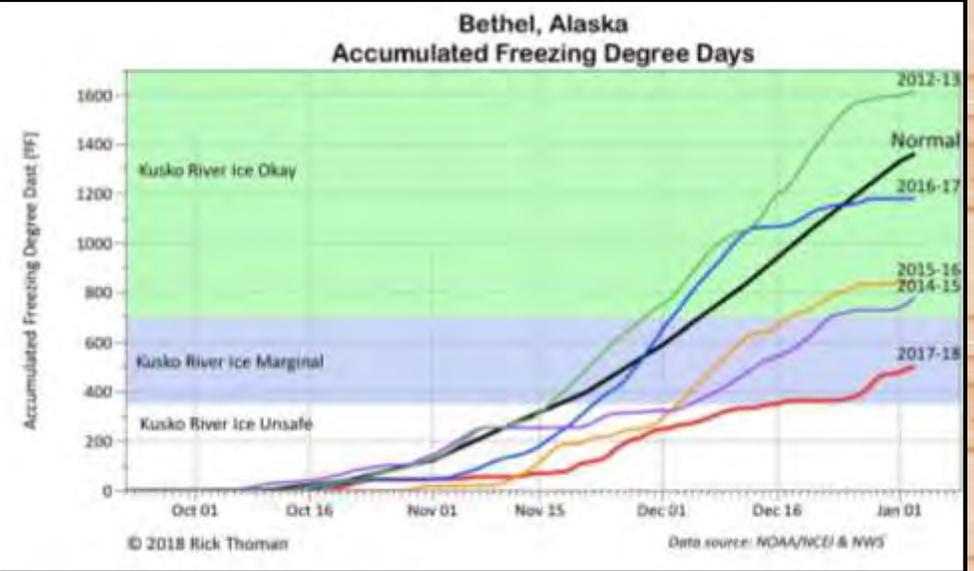
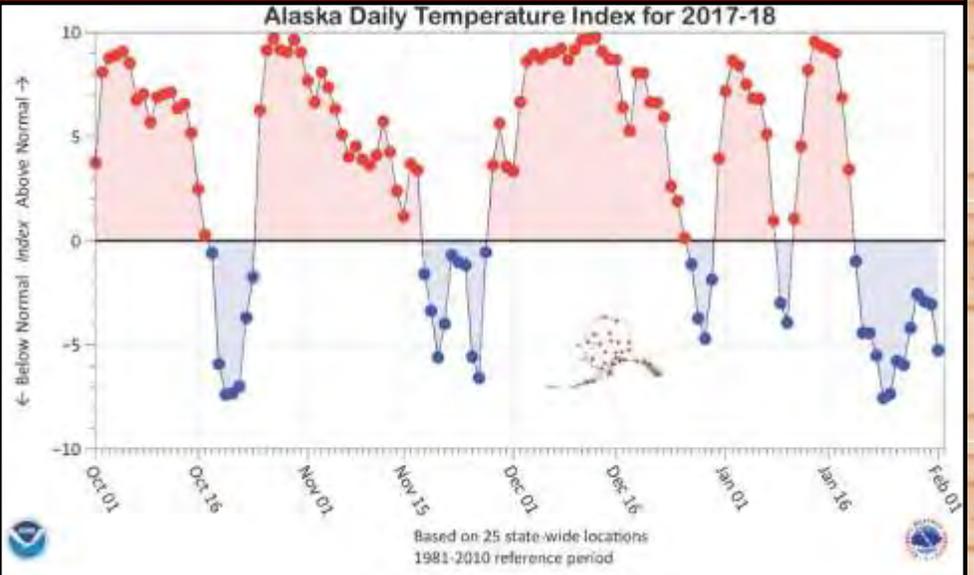
Wetter Summers



High Water Freeze Ups



Warmer Winters with less snow and...



...More Open Water



Environmental Director's Report—Solid Waste Management & Forest Stewardship



Stewardship – Removal of hazardous waste and material that doesn't belong in our landfill is a priority for Napaimute. In 2017, in partnership with the Green Star Program we identified and staged materials at the landfill and around the Village that are planned to be backhauled and properly disposed of in 2018. Proper disposal of these materials minimizes the risk of accidental contamination of our waters and lands.

In 2017 Napaimute enrolled in the Green Star Community Program. The Program supports Alaska communities that wish to practice waste reduction, energy conservation and pollution prevention.

Communities that meet the Green Star Community Standards are recognized for their accomplishments, and can receive support through the USDA Rural Development Program.



One potential method of back hauling solid waste



One of my duties as the Environmental Director is to provide oversight and technical assistance on natural resource related activities Napaimute may be involved with. One such activity is the land use permit issued to Napaimute by The Kuskokwim Corporation (TKC) for commercial timber harvest on 400 acres of TKC lands. The permit required that Napaimute develop a reforestation plan for the harvested area. The reforestation plan we submitted to TKC for approval meets all of the objectives identified in the TKC Forest Stewardship Plan, and complies with the Alaska Forest Practices Act and Regulations (FRPA).



Environmental Director's Report: - Forestry Stewardship cont'd:

The plan requires Napaimute to survey the harvested area to determine if forest regeneration is occurring at an acceptable rate. In 2017 we completed our first survey of previously harvested areas. The map to the right illustrates sample sites that currently meet regeneration requirements (green balloons), and those that do not (red balloons). The FRPA requires that regeneration be met within seven years after harvest, which we appear to be on track to accomplish.



THE KUSKOKWIM

Drift

Fall 2017

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Keep Drift with us and support our mission.

Napaimute brings new industry, reforestation to the TKC Region

From the salmon running up our rivers, the moose foraging in our lands and the berries bursting from the bushes, people in the Middle Kuskokwim have long recognized the value of our natural resources. Our land is rich with resources and there are many opportunities to utilize these gifts if we exercise balance. With this spirit of understanding, the Native Village of Napaimute (NVN) discovered the benefit of wood resources to the development of economic opportunities for the Middle Kuskokwim and has used this resource to bring industry and reforestation to the area.

This economic opportunity started at a small sawmill and has since evolved into a timber harvesting project that has brought jobs, industry and affordable housing to our region. It has also led to a first of its kind reforestation program, a partnership between NVN, TKC and the Natural Resources

Conservation Service (NRCS) that will allow the seeds of the original forest to be harvested and used to plant new trees on TKC land. At the forefront of every decision on this project is the belief that the region's resources are meant to be managed to benefit The Kuskokwim Corporation (TKC) Shareholders while also protecting the environment.

When you look around the village of Napaimute, nearly all of the tribal buildings and homes have been built with the assistance of a small sawmill owned by the tribe. It is also used annually to fill small lumber orders in a way attempt to meet the demand for locally produced lumber. This was the beginning of the project. For more than a decade, we focused on this most basic use of our Middle Kuskokwim wood

Continued on next page >



Environmental Director's Report:

Brownfield Tribal Response Program

The Brownfield Tribal Response Program (TRP) is Napaimute's most recently added environmental program: so what are Brownfield site? The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines them as; real property where expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of the property may be complicated by the presence or the potential presence of hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.



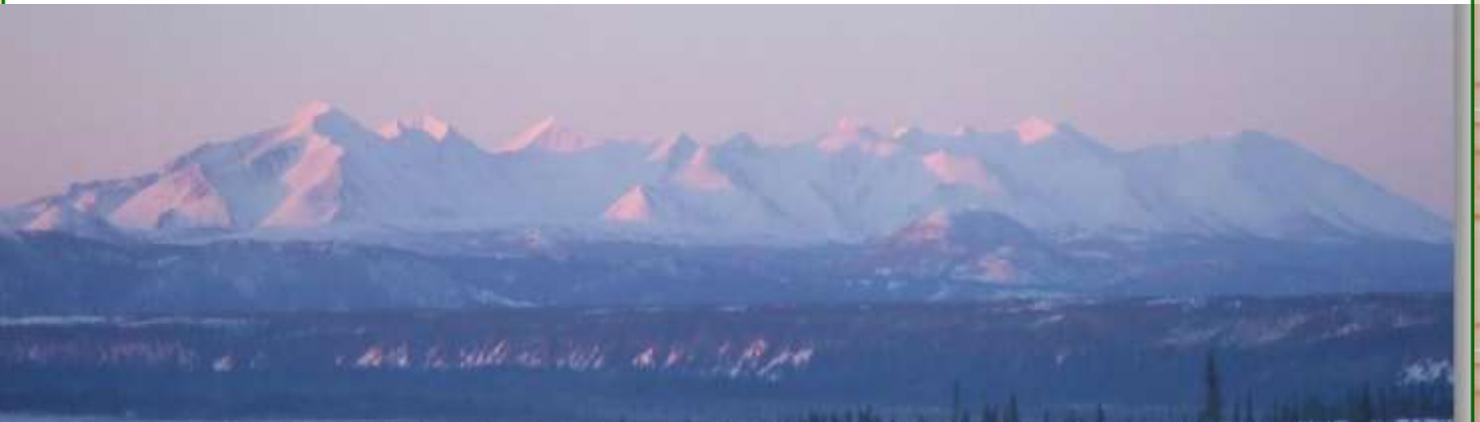
The benefits of redeveloping or reclaiming Brownfield site are:

- ◆ Protect human health and environment
- ◆ Increase property value
- ◆ Reuse existing infrastructure
- ◆ Improve quality of life
- ◆ Wildlife habitat rehabilitation
- ◆ Historic Preservation
- ◆ Economic Development
- ◆ Community Development

The Napaimute TRP goals are to:

- ◆ Be a resource for inventory of potential sites
- ◆ Facilitate training on; site assessment, spill response, regulations
- ◆ Perform community outreach on Brownfields
- ◆ Assist with identification and prioritization of sites for possible clean up

The first year of any new programs requires a great deal of staff training, planning, and coordination with the funding agency to get up to speed. In addition to these foundational tasks the program was able to accomplish other goals that once further developed will be a great asset to communities throughout our region. Specifically, several databases identifying past industrial activity were integrated into a common interface, hosted on a temporary website. The site allows people to view past activity through a map interface and add additional detail to the database, or run queries on the existing data; we hope to have a fully functioning site up next year.





Environmental Director's Report: Partners in Fisheries Program

Partners in Fisheries Monitoring Program

The Partners in Fisheries Monitoring Project (PFMP) funded through the US Fish and Wildlife Service Subsistence Division. The program strives to build local capacity for involvement in fisheries management by; developing monitoring projects, employing local hires, conducting outreach with local subsistence users and youth, participation in management discussions and the regulatory processes, facilitating the exchange of information sharing between managers/researchers and local stakeholders.



The late Greg Rozicka, strong advocate for subsistence, addresses a Kuskokwim Salmon Management Working Group Meeting

Successful incorporation of local knowledge and perspectives into management decisions depends on local people willing to give their time, share their knowledge, and consider all points of view when making a decision. Sadly last year we lost one of our strongest voices who exemplified these traits, Greg Rozicka. Greg's depth and breadth of knowledge related to natural resource issues was nothing short of remarkable. His wisdom and commitment to finding solutions that both conserves the resource and provides for the people who depend on it will be deeply missed.

Another outreach tool we use in addition to our website and Facebook postings is to local residents in four of the Middle Kuskokwim River Villages to act as Fisheries Resource Information Technicians (FRIT). These positions provide a linkage between the people tasked with managing the fisheries and those who rely on them. The FRIT's collect and share in-season fisheries information with other fishermen in their villages and provide feedback to Fisheries Managers. In recent years conservation concerns for Chinook salmon have resulted in in-season management actions, complicating what was once amounted to an unrestricted fishery for subsistence users. Contributing further to the confusion about where and when people can fish is the split (at times) of jurisdiction between Federal and State management authorities in State vs. Federal waters. The FRIT Program is intended to minimize some of this confusion and provide clarification to subsistence users on regulations so they have every opportunity available to them to meet their subsistence needs.

Fisheries Summary

Forecast of Chinook salmon returns in 2017 to the Kuskokwim were slightly better than previous years but still not expected to be sufficient to meet both escapement and all subsistence needs. A conservative management approach was warranted until in-season data from the test fisheries and monitoring weirs was available to assess the actual run strength. Being conservative during these years of rebuilding Chinook salmon stocks, and protecting headwater stocks is critical for the long term sustainability and continued harvest opportunity of Chinook salmon on the Kuskokwim.





2017 Fisheries Summary-cont'd:

Management – Chinook salmon conservation actions and strategies for 2017 included: early closure (May 20th), tributary closures, time-area-gear restrictions, allowing only fishing opportunity that allowed live release of Chinook salmon, meeting the upper end of the escapement objective (120,000 fish), and allowing a harvest objective of 40,000 Chinook salmon.

The Federal Subsistence Board adopted a Special Action to close the Kuskokwim Chinook and chum salmon fishery to non-Federally qualified users within the boundary of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (YDNWR), beginning June 12th. The USFWS managed the subsistence fishery within the Yukon Delta NWR until July 6th, at which time ADF&G resumed management of the entirety of the Kuskokwim River. Several short open periods of fishing using gillnets were allowed throughout the closure by both Federal and State Managers, and all mainstem restrictions were removed on July 27th.

Only three short commercial fishing opportunities directed at coho salmon were provided in the Kuskokwim resulting in well below average harvests. Participants were commercial fishermen who had registered with ADF&G as catcher/sellers, and had secured their own markets.

Salmon Run Timing and Escapement

Chinook Salmon - The preliminary Kuskokwim River total run estimate is approximately 165,102 Chinook salmon (95% CI: 128,864–211,530), slightly lower than last year’s run size. The Kuskokwim River drainage wide escapement goal was likely achieved, but will not be fully known until all the harvest data has been analyzed. Run timing was slightly later than average.

Chinook salmon escapement at Kogrukluk and George River weir exceeded their established sustainable escapement goal (SEG). The Kwethluk River escapement was within the established SEG. Of the seven tributaries having aerial SEGs, five were within in their established goals.

Year	Chinook Salmon Escapement						Salmon (Pitka)
	Kwethluk	Tuhksak	Salmon (Aniak)	George	Kogrukluk	Tatlawiksuk	
2007	12,927	374	6,255	4,011	*	2,032	*
2008	5,276	701	2,376	2,563	9,750	1,075	*
2009	5,744	362	1,656	3,663	9,528	1,071	*
2010	1,667	201	*	1,498	5,812	546	*
2011	4,079	288	*	1,547	6,731	992	*
2012	*	555	*	2,201	*	1,116	*
2013	*	193	625	1,292	1,819	495	*
2014	3,187	320	1,757	2,993	3,732	1,904	*
2015	8,163	709	2,285	2,281	7,639	2,095	6,736
2016	3,555	909	*	1,663	7,056	2,494	6,326
2017	^b 7,404	609	2,446	3,671	9,984	2,174	8,003
SEG	4,100– 7,500			1,800– 3,300	4,800– 8,800		
Average 2007–2016	5,575	475	2,486	2,371	6,508	1,382	6,531

* Weir did not operate or counts were incomplete

^b Preliminary numbers subject to change.



2017 Fisheries Summary-cont'd:

Sockeye Salmon - Sockeye salmon run timing appeared late based on Bethel Test Fish (BTF). Overall, sockeye salmon escapement was again well above average throughout the drainage. The Kogrukluk River weir has the only established sockeye salmon SEG which was exceeded. The Telaquana weir observed the highest escapement of sockeye salmon since the project began in 2010.

Year	Sockeye Salmon Escapement						Salmon (Aniak)
	Kwethluk	Tuhksak	George	Kogrukluk	Tatlawiksuk	Telaquana	
2007	5,148	352	65	17,211	25	*	2,189
2008	2,451	188	92	19,675	39	*	1,181
2009	4,230	686	54	22,826	39	*	1,366
2010	4,185	437	113	17,139	28	72,021	*
2011	2,031	130	43	7,974	15	35,105	*
2012	*	189	79	*	9	22,994	924
2013	*	394	150	7,508	37	27,806	966
2014	3,778	514	156	6,413	9	23,820	894
2015	8,975	824	139	6,362	0	91,164	1,461
2016	20,495	1,509	2,778	20,087	240	82,706	254
2017	^a 30,925	4,070	912	16,328	59	138,400	1,440
SEG	4,400-17,000						
Average							
2007-2016	6,412	522	367	13,944	44	50,802	1,154

^a Weir did not operate or counts were incomplete
^b Preliminary numbers subject to change.

Chum Salmon - Chum salmon run timing at BTF was also late and all escapement projects showed a below average run. Escapement at the Kogrukluk River weir however exceeded the the only established SEG for chum salmon on the Kuskokwim.

Year	Chum Salmon Escapement						Salmon (Aniak)
	Kwethluk	Tuhksak	George	Kogrukluk	Tatlawiksuk	Aniak	
2007	54,913	17,286	61,531	52,961	83,484	696,801	25,340
2008	20,030	12,550	29,396	44,744	30,129	427,911	9,459
2009	32,191	13,671	7,944	82,483	19,975	479,331	9,392
2010	19,222	13,042	26,275	69,258	87,737	429,643	*
2011	18,329	10,011	46,650	76,823	88,202	345,630	*
2012	*	16,981	33,310	*	44,569	*	*
2013	^a	12,911	37,879	65,644	32,249	*	7,723
2014	17,941	8,726	17,148	30,763	12,455	*	2,890
2015	23,039	6,337	17,415	31,657	10,008	*	5,392
2016	22,914	5,868	20,834	45,329	10,564	*	817
2017	^b 55,052	22,395	38,159	59,232	28,638	*	9,010
SEG				15,000-49,000	222,000-480,000		
Average							
2007-2016	26,072	11,738	29,838	55,518	36,937	475,903	8,716

^a Weir did not operate or counts were incomplete
^b Preliminary numbers subject to change.

Coho Salmon - High water again this year complicated efforts to assess the coho salmon run at escapement projects throughout the drainage. Coho salmon passage at the Kwethluk River weir met the SEG, counts at Kogrukluk River weir (the only other system with an established SEG) are considered incomplete due to high water.

Year	Coho Salmon Escapement					Salmon (Aniak)
	Kwethluk	Tuhksak	George	Kogrukluk	Tatlawiksuk	
2007	19,473	2,807	28,398	26,423	8,500	*
2008	48,049	7,457	21,931	29,237	11,022	10,974
2009	21,911	8,137	12,490	22,289	10,148	6,351
2010	*	1,525	12,639	14,689	3,773	*
2011	*	*	29,120	21,800	14,184	*
2012	20,895	4,407	14,478	13,421	8,015	*
2013	*	6,490	15,308	21,207	12,764	2,797
2014	43,945	13,797	35,771	52,975	19,814	8,254
2015	24,367	7,158	33,642	29,277	17,319	*
2016	28,852	1,857	*	*	11,897	560
2017	^b 46,577	28,921	20,616	*	*	*
SEG	>19,000			13,000-28,000		
Average						
2007-2016	29,642	5,959	22,642	25,702	11,744	5,787

^a Weir did not operate or counts were incomplete
^b Preliminary numbers subject to change.





Other NVN Fisheries Projects:

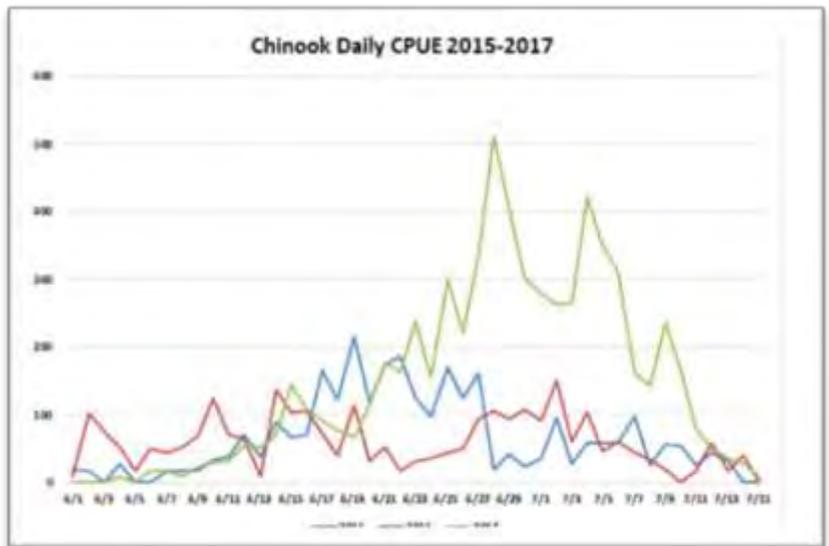
Projects

Napaimute is continuing to work with state and federal agencies to conduct monitoring, natural resource education, and outreach activities. These partnerships are providing employment for local residents and opportunities for them to become more engaged with the agencies in management activities, while providing local perspectives on the issues.

Aniak Test Fishery - operated for its third year from June 1st - July 15th with funding from the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. The Aniak Test Fishery employs methods similar to those used in the Test Fishery near Bethel. However, because of the differences in location the numbers between the two fisheries are not directly comparable.

The daily catch per unit effort (CPUE) information is sent to Managers to be considered when making decisions on fisheries openings and closures.

These time sensitive decisions both conserve Chinook salmon, while providing opportunity for harvest of other species. Without the information from the Aniak Test Fishery these decisions could have been much more conservative.



Graph Showing the Past 3 years of Data from the ATF

Typically only about 10% of the Chinook caught in the test fishery results in mortality, most are released. Those that did not survive were distributed to the communities of Aniak, Chuathbaluk, Crooked Creek, and Kalskag. In the third year of the project we saw a significant increase in the CPUE, respective to the previous two years. This was unexpected since other indicators of abundance were not suggesting a high abundance of Chinook salmon entering the river. The Kuskokwim was however experiences some of the lowest waters levels on record for that time of year. We theorized that two things could be going on that could explain the high catch rate; (1) that the extreme low water was increasing our capture efficiency, or (2) that we were recapturing previously caught and released fish, causing us to essentially double count fish. To test this we began marking all the fish we captured and released, it became quickly apparent that we were indeed recapturing about 10% of the fish we were releasing. Identifying the anomaly in the data and then quantifying it was critical so that a correction factor could be applied. As to the cause of the recapturing, we suspect that the low water was slowing upstream migration, and that fish were milling around tributary confluences, possibly seeking cooler water temperatures.



**these are proposals submitted on behalf of NVN*



Other NVN Fisheries Projects—cont'd:

Salmon River Weir – this salmon escapement monitoring project was also funded by Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, with support from the ADF&G Commercial Fisheries Division.

It was decided due to the history of this weir being unable to reliably operate during high water that the operational period would be shortened and just focus on Chinook and chum salmon escapement. As it turns out this was a good decision, since most of the other salmon counting weirs throughout the region became inoperable shortly after we pulled out on August 7th.

Despite the shortened season the crew was able to count 90% of the Chinook, and 85% of the chum salmon escapement, more than enough to allow for estimating the total escapement with good confidence.



In-Season Subsistence Harvest Surveys – this is a cooperative project funded through ADF&G Subsistence Division and the USFWS. The purpose of the project is to characterize subsistence salmon harvest for several Middle River Villages in-season.

The information is provided to better inform Managers and to consider when making their decisions on the need for taking management actions. Specifically, Managers are seeking input on if subsistence needs are being met, and more fishing opportunity needs to be, and if possible can be allowed.

Youth Outreach – For the second year, two projects aimed at youth education and outreach were funded by ADF&G and the USFWS.

The first was Napaimute's support of the Kuspuk School District (KSD) Math Science Expedition (MSE), and post-expedition classroom follow-up. The MSE is a 10 day raft trip down the Salmon and Aniak rivers in late summer during which students are mentored by Professional Biologists and Educators.





Environmental Director's Report—Future Projects & Final Thoughts

Youth Outreach—cont'd

Students participated in a variety of hands-on math and science activities as well as events to develop leadership and team building skills. In 2017 they set a new record with 30 students participating, many for the first time.

The second project was the George River Internship (GRI). In partnership with the ADF&G and the Kuspuk School District Students spent nearly a week as paid interns collecting; water quality data, discharge measurement, and stream profiles on the George River. They also identified; critical habitats, juvenile fish, and macro-invertebrate.



Students also learned valuable lessons about biological and hydrological principles of riverine ecology, and about career opportunities in the field of Natural Resources.

To see short videos of both projects visit: <https://www.facebook.com/EXCELAlaska1/videos>.

Future Projects (2018)

The following projects are ones that are currently in development (with a high likelihood of being funded), have been funded, or are awaiting funding approval in 2018 from the funding sources. These projects include: the IGAP Program, the Partners in Fisheries Monitoring Program, EPA Brownfield, the Aniak Test Fishery, Salmon River Weir, In-Season Subsistence Harvest Surveys, Math Science Expedition, and the George River Internship, and a Tribal Wildlife Grant proposal to establish a stream temperature modeling protocol for the entire Kuskokwim River. As in the past, Napaimute will be recruiting locally to fill positions that support these projects. Job openings will be announced on our website and Facebook page as openings become available.



Final Thoughts...

In closing, I wish to thank the many folks out here that support our program in so many immeasurable ways, and that share our vision of preserving one of the greatest unspoiled ecosystems found anywhere in the world . With your continued support we will do our best to stay informed and engaged...for the benefit of us all.

If you wish to contact me about any of our projects please do so at: dangillikin@gmail.com.





2017 Napaimute Spirit Camp Report by Audrey Leary

The week of Spirit Camp has become one of my favorite weeks out of the summer, and the long hours of preparation-I think for all staff involved-instills a sense of anxiousness leading up to the first day of camp kick off. Although I coordinate the camp, it is important to recognize all participants who help make this camp possible. From the cook to the boat drivers, mentors, guests, elders and youth, the success of this camp is built upon the foundation of all those who dedicate their time to attend and help.



In comparison to last year, youth began arriving on Saturday (a day before Spirit Camp began) and camped in a tent in my yard. Sunday brought heavy rain, however, excitement was still found on the faces of youth and camp guests arriving at the boats. Together, two boats-loaded in gear and people-traveled to Napaimute with one quick stop in Chuathbaluk. We arrived on the beach of our village drenched in fresh rain-water, and ran up to the Community Building to prepare for the opening celebration!

Samuel Johns, an Ahtna Athabaskan from Copper Center, attended Spirit Camp to hold the opening ceremony. After going over the rules, introductions, and handing out camp goodies (backpacks, sweaters, tooth brushes, tooth paste, water bottles, flashlights, and beanies), Samuel held a speech on decolonization and ended it with a song sang in Athabaskan. Samuel remained at the camp for two more nights, and acted as a mentor to the youth. He was awesome to have at Napaimute, and very eager to be a part of everything.





2017 Spirit Camp Report—cont'd.

With the incorporation of team building games, hearing from our elders, learning about travel safety, a hike to Little Mountain Village, learning to cut fish, make Athabascan birch bark baskets, dream catchers and Yuraq drums, two of the most monumental take away's that occurred at this years Spirit Camp embodied yuraq and a hike to the historical Stone Woman.



For the first time in roughly 100 years, Napaimute's first Eskimo song was made. Byron Nicholai was a returning attendee this year, and guided the youth in creating a song entirely in yugten about moose hunting with their dad in Holokuk River (Alugak).

Thanks to the knowledge and skills of Mark Leary, we now have our first piece needed to make a dance group: the drums! The boys of camp each made a drum entirely from start to finish, bent their own wood, tied on their own material, and even wood burned animals onto the handles. This is--hopefully--the start of something awesome, and I'm so excited for the different hands these drums will touch. The Yup'ik drums will go towards the Anyaraq Youth Dance Group, which has its first practice on August 31st, and the song created at Spirit Camp will be one of the leading songs for the dance group.

After spending 3 days in Napaimute, the youth and all camp staff loaded into three boats and traveled up the Holokuk River to our designated Spirit Camp site. We spent one night at camp, and ended the trip with a hike that very few people get to experience in their lifetime.





Spirit Camp Thank You!

Quyana Cakneq to everyone who gave time and donated to Napaimute's Youth Spirit Camp!

Youth:

Troy Morgan, Aniak

Agatha Sakar, Crooked Creek; Lori Evan, Kalskag; Aaliyah Williams, Chuathbaluk; Scott Sakar, Aniak; Jason Steeves, Aniak; Ethan Morgan, Aniak; Amira Byrd, Kalskag; DeShaun Sakar, Chuathbaluk; Ryan Steeves, Aniak; Jayce Rohde, Napaimute; RJ Murphy, George Town; Sherman Kelila, Aniak; Cyra Phillips, Aniak

Camp Helpers/Boat drivers: Jacob Wise,
RJ Morgan, Mark Leary

Camp Cook: Shelly Leary

Guests:

Samuel Johns; cultural performer, hip-hop rapper and motivational speaker.

Byron Nicholai; I Sing. You Dance.

Megan Leary: The Kuskokwim Corporation

Elders:

John Browski, Napaimute Erich & Lucy Morgan, Chuathbaluk

Camp Mentor/Advisor: Brianna Sherer

Camp Coordinator: Audrey Leary Native Village of Napaimute Tribal Council

Lisa Feyereisen, NVN Executive Administrative Support

Calista Corporation, Donlin Gold, Aniak AC, AVCP Workforce Development, TANF and EET&CC Departments, Crowley, YKHC Dental, & The Kuskokwim Corporation for your generous donations to our camp!





Executive Administrative Support Report:



From the salmon running up our rivers, the moose foraging in our lands and the berries bursting from the tundra, people in the Middle Kuskokwim have long recognized the value of our natural resources. Our land is rich with resources and there are many opportunities to utilize these gifts if we exercise balance. With this spirit of understanding, the Native Village of Napaimute (NVN) discovered the benefit of wood resources to the development of economic opportunities for the Middle Kuskokwim and has used this resource to bring industry and reforestation to the area

2017 was a busy year with my work focused on supporting our Director in two major projects, The ICDBG Project and the Re-Forestation Project. Napaimute's firewood business brings a new industry to the region, at the same time we have a responsibility to return the land to the pristine beauty prior to having been trod upon. This economic opportunity started at a small sawmill and has since evolved into a timber harvesting project that has brought jobs, industry and affordable housing to our region. It has also led to a first of its kind reforestation program, a partnership between NVN, TKC and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), that will allow the seeds of the original forest to be harvested and used to plant new trees on TKC land. At the forefront of every decision on this project is the belief that the region's resources are meant to be managed to benefit The Kuskokwim Corporation (TKC) Shareholders while also protecting the environment.



Joey Davis with a pine cone picked for our Middle Kuskokwim Seed Bank

Executive Administrative Support Report –cont'd:

When you look around the Village of Napaimute, nearly all the tribal buildings and homes have been built with the assistance of a small sawmill owned by the tribe. It is also used annually to fill small lumber orders in a weak attempt to meet the demand for locally produced lumber. This was the beginning of the project. For more than a decade, we focused on this most basic use of our Middle Kuskokwim wood resources – firewood production, transportation and marketing to the Lower Kuskokwim and Coast. This resulted in a 1,000-cord firewood contract with Coastal Villages Region Fund (CVRF) and we learned many lessons along the way, including:

1. Timber harvesting and production of wood products in any form (firewood or lumber) needs to occur as close to the Lower Kuskokwim with its large population and demand as possible.
2. Timber harvesting and production of wood products needs to be located near a full-time Middle Kuskokwim community where there is a large employment pool to draw from.
3. Only TKC lands are suitable for long-term timber harvest operations in the lower section of the Middle Kuskokwim. There are only a few small, lightly timbered areas of Federal or State land adjacent to the river downstream of Aniak.



With these lessons in mind, NVN approached TKC about a timber sale agreement on 400 acres of heavily timbered land three miles downstream of Lower Kalskag. In 2012, NVN and TKC signed the Timber Sale Agreement, providing jobs and firewood to people across the region. Since the agreement, Napaimute has built a customer base of hundreds. Middle Kuskokwim firewood can be found providing families with warmth in every village from Chefnak to Tuluksak.

While the timber provides heat for homes it also provides many families with much more. We employ good, reliable employees that get to go home every night to their families, and their jobs provide food for the table. Our firewood products are transported to the Lower River year-round – by barge in the summer and truck in the winter. A safe, reliable ice road is an added benefit to all residents of the Middle Kuskokwim River, due in large part to our Kalskag timber harvesting operation and our need to move wood down the river in winter.





Executive Administrative Support Report –cont'd:

With this growth and success, Napaimute continues to invest in better equipment and in our Kalskag employees through training. NVN's leadership has also begun to expand their vision for the use of Middle Kuskokwim wood resources beyond just firewood. Realizing that there is a desperate need for affordable low-income housing in the Middle River, Napaimute developed a business plan to purchase the Nelson Brother's Sawmill, and the HUD Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG) looked like our best option. We received formal notice of our award in fall of 2016.



The *ICDBG* project from 'Timber to Homes' aspiration is to put local low income tribal individuals to work using indigenous renewable resources in direct support of providing affordable lumber/log home packages throughout the Yukon- Kuskokwim Delta. The progress of any construction project in remote rural Alaska is dependent on many factors but none more significant than the change of seasons. Timber to Homes project's progress affirms the above rule as in each phase of the project the crew is required to travel back and forth to the work site by a boat on the river and/or vehicle on the Ice Road. There are three of phases (work sites) outlined in this project; The disassembly of the purchased sawmill and buildings (Chuathbaluk); Mobilization of the disassembled sawmill and buildings' materials to the new mill site (50 miles of Ice Road); and, Reassembling the various buildings and sawmill (Kalskag Harvest Site).

The *Disassembly* Phase: Napaimute hired 6 additional employees to take apart and ready for transport, the Wood Drying Warehouse, Saw Mill Building, Generator Shack, Planer Building, and Maintenance Hanger. After the Removal of Special Conditions was issued on October 7, 2016, and Napaimute advertised and hired the disassembly workers for the Chuathbaluk work site. In Mid- December, after the Kuskokwim River Freeze-up, and the ice became thick enough to travel on for safe access the old sawmill site. The disassembly of the saw mill and assorted buildings began. It took approximately 5 weeks of actual work to disassemble everything, stage it, and package it for transport, however, work was stopped at different times due to the frigid sub-zero temperatures of -20 or colder.

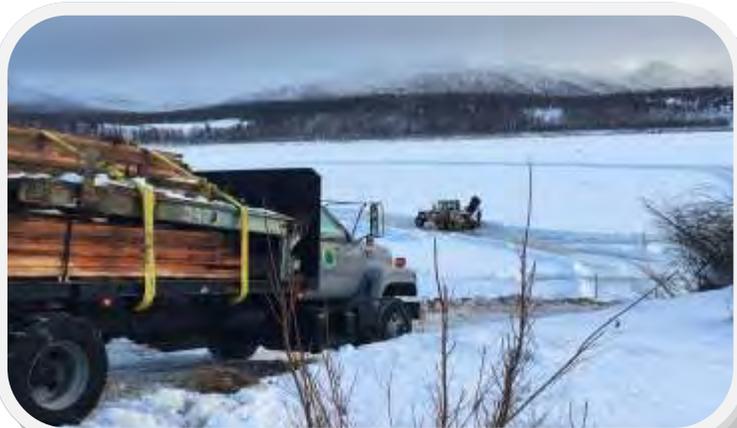




Simultaneously while the Chuathbaluk Crew was disassembling the sawmill, Napaimute advertised and hired on several more workers for our Kalskag/Aniak Crew. The Kalskag Crew busily set about assessing ice depth, marking hazards, clearing obstacles/berms, and constructing a 50-mile tortuous Ice Road needed for mobilizing the materials from the historic sawmill site to its new home downriver. The road and all our equipment needed for mobilization, reached the Chuathbaluk mill site approximately one week before the disassembly work was completed on the wood drying warehouse. Immediately we set about building an Ice Road Ramp from the river to the staging area. Until the ramp set up, we used chains to bring the mobilizing equipment up the ramp.



The Second Major Phase of our Project was the *Mobilization* Phase. This involved: Construction of a 50-mile Middle Kuskokwim Ice Road; Building a temporary access ramp from the Ice Road to the Sawmill Site, Purchasing equipment which was needed for both the mobilization of the sawmill and materials but also in support of our future business and product distribution; Loading, strapping and transporting disassembled sawmill parts and building materials to our new mill site; and, Finally, unloading and staging the mill and materials at the new sawmill site below Lower Kalskag.





Executive Administrative Support Report –cont'd:

This was perhaps the most exciting phase as it involved blizzards, broken down equipment, convoys of heavy equipment vehicles loaded with materials and day to day logistics challenges never before tackled by our crew. Every time we were able to accomplish a successful mobilization trip of materials down to our new site, we were tired but felt successful. Our goal was to perform at least one of the 100-mile round mobilization trips per day. This phase began towards the beginning of February and our crew

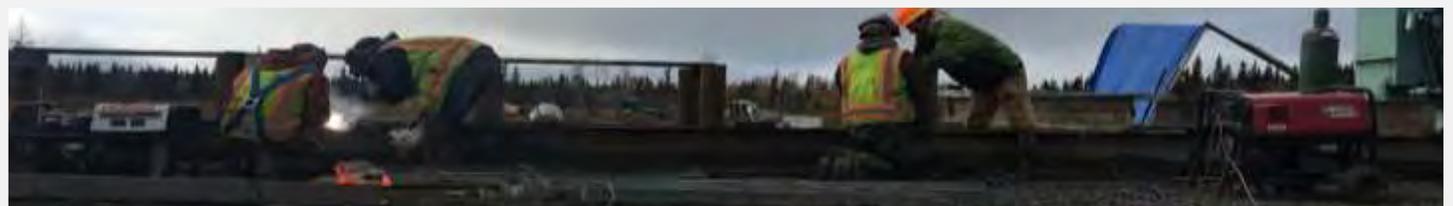


completed this phase before the mighty river's ice road became too dangerous to travel on with heavy equipment, late March. After this phase it was a matter of waiting for the river ice to break-up in order to access the new sawmill site by boat and begin the assembly phase of the saw mill. The early part of June, our crew was able to access the Kalskag Harvest Site and new home of the Napaimute Sawmill.

The *Assembly* Phase of the sawmill began in earnest the middle of June 2017. Crew were hired, supplies were procured, and equipment was readied for the construction of the Wood Storage Warehouse, Wood Planer Building, Sawmill Office, and Generator Building, along with the reassembling our massive green sawmill. Due to the condition of the land after break-up, we focused the first month of assembly on land improvement at the site (clearing and constructing a enormous building pad) and construction of the new Native Village of Napaimute Enterprise Office Building.



By middle July, we were setting up a portable sawmill, finishing up the dirt work, underway in the construction of the Lumber Storage Warehouse, and harvesting timber needed for the construction of our new buildings. The Crew chose to start with the construction of the Wood Storage Warehouse building as it was a similar shell construction model with identical materials as the future sawmill building only at a smaller scale. September rolled around, and Napaimute began the re-assembly of the actual sawmill itself.





Executive Administrative Support Report –cont'd:

When we disassembled the sawmill originally, much of the wooden support structure was rotted and non-usable. With this issue in mind and knowing NVN needed to completely procure new material for the sawmill support structure, decisions were made to re-build the sawmill foundation on a structure consisting of iron. I-Beams, along with angel irons, and iron cylinders were used for this new structure. Over the months of September and October two to four of our workers spent 8 hours a day welding the new structure together. Concurrently, other workers continued harvesting and milling replacement lumber for the actual structure of the building. While disassembling there was approximately 25% loss of lumber due to rot in the corners, around windows and lumber nailed to the seal beams. All the other lumber from the disassembled buildings was re-used including 1 x 1 planks which now grace the interior walls of the saw mill office building. The on and off dirt ramps to the pad were finished and constructing the walls of the new sawmill building proceeded. As winter approached and the work site needed to be readied for work stoppage

What is left to accomplish? It is estimated that we have approximately 640 works hours left to complete the project. The tasks these hours speak to is: finishing the construction of the new sawmill building; and, training our crew on the actual production of commercial grade lumber.



Napaimute has been busy working with TKC to ensure our timber harvests are sustainable, responsible and environmentally protective. The timber sale agreement with TKC requires NVN to carry six different types of insurance, put up a performance bond, and pay a stumpage fee for the wood we harvest. We are also required to submit a harvest plan of operations to both TKC and the State of Alaska Division of Forestry each year prior to commencing the next year's harvest. The TKC forester inspects the site each fall at the end of the current season. Together we developed a Reforestation plan to address restoration of the harvested areas.

Thank you,

Lisa Feyereisen, Executive Administrative Assistant



The Life of an Ice Road Driver by Stanley Morgan

Hello my name is Stanley Morgan and last year was my first time driving a big rig (vehicle with more than 4 wheels). First thing in the morning after you wake up is to of course make coffee but you don't know how long you'll be out there—could be a whole 2 days or even a week before you come back home and there's no coffee pot in the truck (unless you bring a little stove) so I always bring my 6 cup mug with me—don't really like bringing a big Thermos around. After that you think of what could happen on the river while you're out there and just think you're more then 20 miles away from home. So what I bring with me is my leatherman, flashlight, battery charger for phone, headphones, extra gloves, black tape, a small snack, water, and my sunglasses. After I pack a little I see what my boss



has planned for the week so if I have to bring a lot of wood on the ice road I check my trailer on the truck make sure its clean and hooked on tight. The I check my brakes and the usual lubricants. After that I start the truck and sometimes its not just turn the key and your ready to warm up. Sometimes its a 20-45 minute job just to start it after all the temps go into the -10 to -20's. It can be a whole day just to start the big rig. After all that time starting it I let the guys at the worksite load me up with the wood that's going to keep people warm in the cold dark winter. After I'm all loaded up I let my family know that I'm on my way and especially my bosses. When I'm driving in the dark (sometimes if you're lucky to get the truck started in the early morning) I always get excited because you get to travel to different parts of the river and see places you never seen on a boat. You're actually getting paid to see the beautiful sunrise and that's just awesome plus all the work you just did you get to enjoy the time just to take in the little things. But I'm not saying that's all you do is drive. Every 10-20 minutes I check my wood and make sure its tight and snug because there's no heavy equipment that's going to go near a 50,000lb plus truck just to put a few logs or bags of wood back your trailer and we've worked hard on bringing that wood. After you get used of seeing the ice crack right in front of you, you start to go faster (the fastest I've went with a load was 38mph) but you have to keep an eye on the markers because sometimes they change. The trail could change in an hour and that's not the exciting part. Sometimes you have to go over an old open hole that froze over just a couple weeks ago and sometimes you drive past one that's still open. Sometimes there's shell ice and out of all that danger I am not afraid because the people that have been doing this for so many years pretty much know what they are doing....you finally reach your destination, you're tired, grumpy, hungry and sleepy. But you've done only what others have seen on T.V and you feel somewhat of an accomplishment but most of all you're happy that people that can't or don't have this GOLD (wood) will have. So there you have it a day in the life a Ice Road Driver.

P.S. I say driver because the name ice road trucker is taken.





Nickolai Savage: Logger & Ice Road Truck

Hello, my name is Nickolai Savage. I'm from the best place on earth Kalskag, Alaska.

My life as a logger is nothing I thought I'd be growing up, but you'll never know until you know. I love what I do for a living and I love the people who I work with, I can't thank them enough for what they do for me and taught me, especially Tim Alexie. If it wasn't for Tim, I'd never be where I am today as a young native man in charge of one of the biggest and most organized wood logging companies in rural Alaska. He taught me so much things about logging and thinking in and outside the box. I became a logger at 18 years old in the year 2014. Tim stopped by my parent's house one day. I didn't really know him much at the time. The very first thing he told me was. "Do you like money?" I smiled and said "Yeah" and he says. "You know your mom and dad won't support you with money your whole life, do you want to work for me as a SYETP?" I said yes. I've never worked so hard for 10 dollars an hour.

One day, Tim and Joey Evan was teasing me that I'll be there boss one day. I smiled with small knowledge and doubt. Two years passed by, and guess what? I became the supervisor of the timber wood harvest site. I earned it by working very hard every day, showing up every day and listening to those who teach.

There are days that are very difficult for me to handle. But I have a great crew that helps me get past it. Most days are fun, but tiring being rather very cold, very hot or very wet and muddy chucking split wood, sawing 10 foot logs and flipping or carrying them into stacks. If it's not that then it's something breaking. We just love it when something breaks especially some of the older equipment that we have a hard time finding parts for. But we will always have a memorable time fixing stuff. We won't like it at first but as we go along there will be teasing and joking around. What I learned is that when you're frustrated with something, you don't think as good as when you're happy, the ideas are better. So I always try to lighten the mood with some teasing and jokes. There are rarely any bad days. We come to work happy. Leave work happy.

Another big step up I've had was operating the harvester. It's a tractor that cuts down the trees, limbs the branches and takes off the bark. Oh man how fun that thing is. When I first started I was thinking to myself, "What the heck is that thing?" Later that morning Joey jumped in it and I was amazed with what it does. It looked so complicated to operate but after a summer of learning the other equipment I was getting the hang of safety, maintenance, and which lever to pull I thought to myself, "I bet I can operate that harvester now." I thought that because the other equipment I operated such as the logging skidder, loaders and dozers. I asked Mark. "Can I operate it?" With no hesitation he said no. I tried to explain that I can watch and learn from Tim operating it. The answer was still the same. He said that I'd have to go training for that one. I said I can be trained by Tim. He still said no. I figured he was getting annoyed of me saying I can learn by watching and learning so I stopped asking. He said. There are so many things you'd have to learn about it. You'd have to go down to Washington to learn how to operate it. I don't like flying at all and didn't want to leave Alaska so I thought to myself, "I'm never gonna operate it."

November 2016: Leaving Alaska for the first time to Washington for harvester operating training for two weeks with Andrew Kameroff, Jr, Stanley Morgan and Mark Leary. Wasn't that one heck of a trip? But there was so much for Stanley and I to see and experience. Andrew has been down states before so he was already used to it. Mark was right though about that there were so many things I would need to know before operating the harvester. We came back to Alaska as certified harvester operators - possibly the only certified Alaskan Native harvester operators in the world.



**Nickolai Savage -cont'd:**

Ice road trucking is a lot more fun but dangerous. But we do it anyway. There are villages that don't grow any trees at all so we make our own ice road ourselves to truck our wood down to Bethel for those villages that buy our wood.

My life as an ice road trucker is amazing. There are so many things I've learned about the Kuskokwim River. My first year on making the ice road was a big experience. Although, I haven't operate any big trucks and equipment but I watched and learn. What I had to do was put up reflected markers and carry fuel, tools, etc. The second season of ice road trucking was one of the best years of my life. This time I got to help plow the road, drive big flatbed trucks up and down the river with huge loads of wood. This year 2017 Andrew Kameroff, Jr. and I broke the record of the fastest time trucking wood down to Bethel but without a trailer. We hit 55 miles an hour with 8 super sacks of wood. Mark and the others couldn't believe it. The last time of ice road trucking Stanley and I broke the record of bringing the most wood down to Bethel: 12 cords of wood plus about another cord of wood spread out between the cords and 2 super sacks of chopped wood. Oh boy, wasn't that a scary trip.



One time my coworker Stanley Morgan and I didn't know too much about which way to go, we usually follow our crew. There are so many different ways to go to different villages in the Bethel area. We knew the trail from Akiak on up because it was mainly one road and we knew our markers. Anyways, one day Mark told us best way to learn the ice road is to go by ourselves and teach each other the way down to Bethel and back up to Kalskag. So we got ready for our day trip of trucking wood down to Bethel. We made it in one try because there was day light. We finished our job in Bethel and didn't want to stay the night. We told Mark we will go back home and he said okay, but text me when you're passing a village. We made our way out of Bethel. It was around 11 or 12 at night and we were making our way back home. Maybe half hour or so we reached a village and came up to a trail that came up onto the land. It didn't seem familiar so we turned around and went to the other trail that leads to the village. There were lights up near the bank and I said, "That can't be Kwethluk. Kwethluk is further back in the tree line." So I took my phone out and see where we were on my GPS. We were in freaking Napaskiak! I texted Mark saying we were in Napaskiak and he laughed so hard. Here we went more downriver. That was the most, funniest memorable time on the ice road.

After trucking down so much we learned the way, even where each bump is and to always, always dress warm and bring extra warm clothing. You never know when the heater for your truck breaks in a 30 below weather with blowing wind. Stanley and I learned the hard way, but learning the hard way is the best way to learn so that you know which is harder, carrying extra stuff or being cold. Nothing beats being warm on the ice road.

There is still so much for me to learn and I have the best crew in the world to learn from. From all the experience I had, I learn to not be afraid to do something. It can be the future of your life. Don't be afraid to take that step up towards success. It can be difficult but the key is to have someone there to teach you, but you'd have to always pay attention to every detail they give you. Don't tell them it's too hard of what their trying to teach you or else they won't teach you at all. Learn young. Be brave. And listen with ONE ear. Ask lots of questions if you need to. Then once you do that - you'll have a similar or better experience than me at this age. I wasn't even supposed to be a supervisor for this logging operation due to being too young at 19 years old, But Mark saw the work in me to be able to run it. If one can do it. All can do it. You just have to work hard for it.

Here I am today, standing at 22 years old. 2 1/2 years of being the Napaimute logging supervisor. Smiling at Joey Evan and Tim Alexie for teasing me unknowingly I'd be their boss. It is one heck of a trip but I love it, logging is in my blood. Traditionally, my Ap'a Sam Savage rubbed a wood worm in my hands when I was a baby and my parents Seraphim and Martha Evan for traveling me everywhere to know and love the outdoors as a baby Nickolai. I want to give a big shout out to them for giving that to me and my crew for the knowledge I know today also to the Native Village of Napaimute for giving me the opportunity of this job and my position I'm in and for the people I'm working with. That's my life of a logger and an ice road trucker. Thank you for reading my story.



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