

# Alaska Native Fund

## 2014 Gathering Report



**Honoring Katie John  
Philanthropy & Subsistence**

**Anchorage, Alaska  
May 21-23, 2014**

## Alaska Native Fund Hosts 2nd Biennial Gathering

By Loren G. Peterson, ANF Program Coordinator

Every other year, the Alaska Native Fund (ANF) program at the Alaska Conservation Foundation (ACF) hosts **The Gathering** to bring our grantees, foundation representatives, and partners together and increase our collective capacity. The theme this year, selected by the Alaska Native Fund Steering Committee was **Honoring Katie John, Philanthropy & Subsistence**.

### Biography of Katie John

*On May 31, 2013, the Ahtna elder, matriarch and icon, Katie John, passed away at the age of 97. Katie John gained fame as the lead plaintiff in a series of lawsuits aimed at ensuring Alaska Native fishing and rights. Her legal actions polarized public opinion between those who believed she was entitled to take salmon from her traditional land, which the state had closed to fishing, and others arguing that such taking amounted to special treatment. The resulting court rulings led to major changes in how wildlife is allocated in Alaska. The Katie John litigation, more than any other subsistence case exemplifies the contentious battle waged between federal, tribal and state interests over jurisdiction of Alaska Native subsistence fishing rights. With Katie John's passing, her determination to protect and preserve the Alaska Native subsistence way of life will live on. She is an inspiration to all Native peoples and to all people who believe in right and justice.*

During the biennial gathering, held from May 21-23 in Anchorage, a series of panels and discussions explored the key question underlying this theme: How can we further protect and advance subsistence ways of life in Alaska and what are the role for grantees, funders, and partners within this space?



*Katie John, 1915-May 31, 2013*

As part of the ANF program, the Gathering has been identified as a critical strategy of the program because there are currently few quality forums for Alaska Native leaders and organizers to come together and discuss impacts, share successful models, or develop collaborative strategies for addressing critical issues and strengthen Indigenous voices. In addition, the gap in understanding between foundations which are primarily western, non-Indigenous institutions and Alaska Native Tribes and nonprofits is quite significant, so by simply bringing these two groups, including partners, together we can begin to increase



*Sitnasuak Native Corporation Representative Jenny Miller reviews the Gathering program.*

capacity and support Alaska Native organizations in their efforts to secure foundation funding.

The goals of this year's Gathering were to:

- Develop an understanding of Philanthropy and Subsistence: how it is affecting Alaska Native communities and the work being done to address these issues;
- Foster relationships to strengthen capacity (of funders and Alaska Native organizations) and
- To learn about the Alaska Native Fund's history, framework, and projects being supported.

According to attendee evaluations, the Gathering was indeed successful. The evaluations showed the ANF program fulfilled its intentions listed above. However, it would not have been as much a success without the contribution and support from each of our participants.

### Opening of the Gathering

The ANF Gathering officially began with a Welcome Banquet. Attendees were welcomed by Dena'Ina Chief of Eklutna Native Village, Stephen Lee. It is customary to have a leader from the original territory invite and welcome all to their ancestral homeland. During the evening, Anne Henshaw, Programme Officer of the Oak Foundation, presented the audience in "Embracing the Alaska Native Fund and direct support to Alaska Native organizations."

Ms. Henshaw's speech was eloquent and all inclusive with regards to philanthropy and Alaska Native ways of living. "The Alaska Native Fund highlights the importance of indigenous led philanthropy. What I mean by this is that the Alaska Native Fund Steering Committee is in a position to support the people and organizations that align with their values and the unique framework that defines the fund. There are only a handful of models out there like the ANF so it is unique and is in a position to set an important precedent for indigenous philanthropy globally. By directly supporting these organizations and communities, Oak believes Alaskan Natives can better represent themselves in the policy-making arena and play an active role in shaping their own futures – some might call their right to self-determination," said Anne Henshaw, a major funder and partner to the ANF program.

Following Anne Henshaw's presentation was Keynote Speaker and granddaughter to Katie John, Kathryn Martin. She shared her story on the legacy of the matriarch and reiterated the need to continue advocating for traditional hunting. Audience members were well educated on the legacy of Katie John and the battle she endured so that her family and Alaska Native tribes can continue to fish as they have always done. In her speech, Kathryn states "Ahtna people continue to stand and protect our Native rights for hunting and fishing. Right now, Ahtna has federal legislation being introduced to protect Ahtna Native customary hunting. Alaska Natives Claims Settlement Act distinguished customary and traditional rights of Alaska Natives. It was brought back



*Attendees learn about the Legacy of Katie John.*



*Keynote Speaker Kathryn Martin shares Katie John's Legacy.*

in ANILCA (Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act) under Title 8, which is how my grandmother won her case against the State. Alaska Natives need to continue to find a permanent fix to this problem.” The presentations and insight from Anne Henshaw and Kathryn Martin were sobering and opened the event perfectly highlighting the theme of philanthropy and subsistence relevant to Alaska Native communities and life ways. The Welcome Banquet ended with Alaska Native Traditional Dancing performed by the Alaska Native Heritage Center Dance Group, an eclectic group of individuals from various tribes statewide.

*“Having Heather Kendall Miller and Gov. Tony Knowles at the meeting, giving first hand experiences and facts was huge,” said Michael Opheim of the Seldovia Village Tribe.*



*Heather Kendall Miller and Governor Tony Knowles share their experiences working with Katie John.*

### **Prominent Speakers Shares Their Stories**

It was uplifting to hear Governor Knowles’ story about his change of heart in the subsistence case. Back in 2001, Governor Knowles announced his decision not to pursue the litigation case against Katie John. The state would not appeal the case to the Supreme Court after all. He had met with Katie at her fish camp in Batzulnetas and empathized with the challenges of rural life. In expressing deep respect for the Athna elder, he stated the appeal would only divide rural and urban Alaska residents. It is reassuring to know that a high ranking official can be influenced by indigenous knowledge and ways and ultimately convinced that attempts to take away cultural ways of life is not the right way to increase conservation. Governor Knowles stated that supporting tribes in co-management of Alaska’s resources is the pragmatic approach in conservation. Working together with tribes results in healthier communities and therefore more effective conservation measures. The former governor also spoke to the fight against Pebble Mine: “So what is the future of a coalition of subsistence and cultural advocates and conservation proponents? I think that the spirit and legacy of Katie John puts a strong wind in the sails of that effort that began more than three decades ago. Look at today the remarkable change in Pebble Mine an enormous open pit metallic sulfide mine at the headwaters of Bristol Bay which has the largest run of wild red salmon in the world. Faced with the economic and political clout of a cartel of international mining companies a group of nine tribes and a regional Native Corporation demanded a review of EPA to do the science of protecting their waters. Echoing the passion of Katie John, they championed their cause with the cry of “salmon first”. They were joined by a coalition of conservation groups and individuals, sport and commercial fishing organizations and individuals, and businesses. Against all odds they have turned the tide and all but one of the giant partners have now backed out of the mining claim. Victory is within our reach.”

Heather Kendall Miller, who shared her personal experiences working on the Katie John case for nearly 30 years and discussed the critical issues surrounding Alaska Native ways of life. According to

the research conducted by Miller and her associates at NARF, the state assumed management of fish and game in 1960 and in 1964, the State closed down the subsistence fishery at Batzulnetas and a majority of the traditional fishing sites in the upper Copper River and its tributaries under the guise of conservation, although no documentation proved the need to do so. As a result, Batzulnetas became a vacant fish camp. Nevertheless, Katie John and other Mentasta residents returned regularly to visit grave sites and to continue the spiritual and cultural connection of where they were raised in their ancestor's homeland. Traditional fishing practices were protected under federal law of aboriginal title, however, like so many cases, these protections were ignored by the State. As Kathryn Martin mentioned, the ANSCA passage of 1971 ended any theoretical or formal protection of indigenous subsistence uses, but in 1980 the subsistence Title of the ANILCA was passed, recognizing protection under federal law of customary subsistence uses by Alaska Natives and other rural residents. Both Heather Kendall Miller and Governor Knowles answered questions following their presentations. Their advice to identify, support and vote for political candidates who would best serve Alaska Native interests resonated with attendees.

## Unpacking Conservation & Subsistence in Alaska

Another panel that was intended to further educate conservation funders was the Unpacking Conservation & Subsistence in Alaska panel. Panelists included Kimberly Williams, Lisa Wade, Della Cheney and Victor Wade. It was intended to provide a mechanism for those struggling with the contrast of the two to come away understanding the two are actually more harmonious than conflicting.



*Evon Peter moderates ANF Grantee Panel including on Conservation & Subsistence including Lisa Wade, Victor Lord, Della Cheney (and not pictured: Kimberly Williams).*

ANF grantees, as panelists, shared how their projects and experiences living cultural ways of life support conservation. The concept of not taking more than is needed was emphasized and conveying the innate connection Alaska Natives have with their environment was powerful. Della Cheney brought samples of her weaving work using sea otter pelts. Victor Lord shared dried smoked salmon and offered it to Kathryn Martin in respect to her grandmother. Lisa Wade unveiled the struggle she fights every day to protect her community from resource extraction and Kimberly Williams reinforced the threat to salmon in Bristol Bay. Alaska Natives life ways are not a threat to natural

resources. Instead, many times indigenous peoples are the protectors ensuring the resources are there for future generations so that the traditions and spiritual connections with the land continue. Although the panel was intended to educate funders that may have some issues or conflict with harvesting fish and wildlife, it reinforced the continued support of indigenous people and the responsible stewardship in their cultural history is still very much needed.

## Native Americans in Philanthropy

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day, the momentum for the Gathering was still growing strong. ANF grantees and affiliates were graced with Carly Hare's presentation. Carly Hare is the Executive Director of Native American in Philanthropy (NAP). NAP strives to power reciprocity and increase investments in First Nations and Native communities by growing the circle of nonprofits, tribal communities and founda-

tions committed to the beliefs, traditions and values of all Native peoples. NAP's board and members hold a vision of healthy and sustainable communities enhanced by the Native spirit of generosity. This vision inspires and motivates member engagement through their mission to advance philanthropic practices grounded in Native values and traditions. To advance the mission of NAP, their framework for the future is centered on the following three strategic directions: Engage, Education, and Empower. Not only did attendees learn that the NAP is a valuable resource but Ms. Hare provided sobering statistics. For instance, according to Foundation Center, the average of all grants awarded between 2009-2011, (by a sample of more than 1,000 larger foundations representing approximately half of total giving by all U.S. foundations) Native Americans and Alaska Natives receive only .5% of philanthropic giving.



*NAP Executive Director, Carly Hare meets Donna James of Kawerak and other attendees.*

#### **Funding Ethnic or Racial Minorities**

General (Unspecified)	\$1,141,679,455	6.7%
African-Americans & Blacks	\$329,677,681	2.0%
Hispanics & Latinos	\$254,831,417	1.5%
Native Americans	\$76,876,658	0.5%
Asians & Pacific Islanders	\$61,410,111	0.4%
Other Minorities	\$9,784,318	0.1%

***“The average of all grants awarded between 2009-2011, (by a sample of more than 1,000 larger foundations representing approximately half of total giving by all U.S. foundations) Native Americans and Alaska Natives receive only .5% of philanthropic giving. ”***

Although First Nation's receive only a fraction of giving, Native Americans are still doing really good work and the work being done shows resilience. Here are the strengths of Native led non-profits:

- Active community network
- Asset-based models of community building
- Steady and effective leadership
- Adapt to stakeholder and community needs
- Provides job and training for community members
- 10 largest employers employ over 650 individuals

Lastly, among several enlightening statistics and a great overview of NAP, Ms. Hare shared with the audience some recommendations from a Native Voices Rising (a subsidiary to NAP) to funders when funding in Indian Country. They include:

- Provide increased funding for Native organizing.
- Provide more general operating and capacity-building support.
- Make long-term multi-year funding commitments.

- Fund grassroots Native organizations directly
- Invest in leadership development.
- Support Native intermediaries that are solidly grounded in Native movements.
- Support income-generating activities such as social enterprises.
- Support development of the telecommunications/media infrastructure.
- Provide on-going operating support to voter engagement organizations beyond national election cycles in order to sustain progress and momentum.

Incorporate interdisciplinary grant approaches that draw funds from multiple foundation program categories to support organizations and projects conducting work at the intersection of those programs, e.g., culture and environment. Remarkably, many of these recommendations coincide with the ANF program.

### **Current Policies Impacting Alaska Native Ways of Life**

It was well delivered that our communities would benefit significantly by being more cognizant of policies impacting Alaska Native ways of life. ANF Steering Committee member Liz Medicine Crow provided a panel to address *Current Policies Impacting Alaska Native Ways of Life*. Having learned about the Katie John litigation and the ongoing battle Alaska Native communities continue to face to protect subsistence and way of life can be daunting. One way to fight this battle is to learn what the current policies are and how collectively, among the Native communities, this can be tackled. Attendees were informed of the critical importance of turning out to vote and to identify the candidates who would best serve Native communities. 2014 marks another election year. The current governor of Alaska had intended to reopen the Katie John case in the hopes to overturn it, taking away fishing rights for Alaska Natives. Fortunately the Supreme Court turned it down. At least four of the Supreme Court's nine justices must agree to hear a case in order for it to be considered.



*ANF SC Member Liz Medicine Crow speaks to the Alaska Native Fund Program next to Della Cheney, Christy Cincotta, and Anne Henshaw.*

A handful of legislation moves through both federal and state governments each year that would further remove Alaska Native rights and voices. Recently, known as one of the worst bills this year in the Alaska State Legislature was HB77, also

known as the Silencing Alaskans Act. If passed, it would have given authority to the Department of Natural Resources Commissioner to issue permits for development in waterways, while preventing Alaskans and tribes from the opportunity to testify on resource developments projects. Another nasty bill was the Voter Suppression Bill, which fortunately failed as well. It would have required photo ID's in rural areas where several residents don't have state issued ID's. Additionally, a majority of Alaska Native communities have been



*Oak Foundation Programme Officer Anne Henshaw reviews 'Native Vote 2014.'*

without early voting opportunities, which is supposed to be required by law. Furthermore, there is a lot of controversy of how certain ballot measures will impact Alaska Native communities. There are layers and guises that are in place to disenfranchise the Native communities when it comes to public policies and voting. The audience was informed of the critical importance of Get Out The Native Vote (GOTNV) efforts and to identify the candidates who would best serve Native communities. Everyone can play a role as a conduit of information sharing. The concept of the GOTNV effort is one way to collectively work towards more adequate Alaska Native representation, ultimately resulting in candidates and policies that support and enable our communities towards self-determination.

## Workshops & Collective Capacity Building

Many ANF awards went to first time grantees this year. They did not expect as much support from the ANF program through the Gathering. Many times, grants may be awarded to Alaska Native NGO's, however support for collaboration to increase capacity doesn't come with the grant. 99 percent of ANF 16 grantees were able to attend from all across of Alaska. Having grantees at the table, sharing their stories and projects, reaffirms the good work through the ANF program. In areas of collective capacity building, the Gathering began with a workshop in *Grant Writing and Project Management* for ANF grantees and interested affiliates. The course provided an overview of grant writing and project management in what normally takes 2-3 days and squeezed into a one-day workshop. For some, the workshop may have been review of skills but was very valuable to others, especially those with less grant writing skills. A grantee, who wishes to remain anonymous, stated "learning how to properly manage grants was the most useful part." The ANF program also offered a *Sustainability Model* workshop instructed by former ANF Steering Committee member and now MLA Rural Specialist at Foraker Group, Jonella Larson White. While the program has learned capacity building is in demand for the Alaska Native community in areas of technical writing and project management, it is also understood more capacity building can be offered to funders supporting indigenous philanthropy. Many times, western funders are challenged with understanding cross cultural worldviews. Simply by being at the event, outside funders and partners have a better understanding of indigenous worldviews. Participating at the Gathering, funders have the opportunity to analyze western approaches of philanthropy and how supporting indigenous efforts can be more accommodating, rather than imposing western models on indigenous communities.

Overall, the Gathering was very successful. It proved to be more than just an event where people come together to build capacity and foster relationships. "It was most valuable to see interest among funders to promote sustainability and resilience to Native communities under the umbrella of the ANF program and around the broad topic of subsistence" stated Dr. Chuck Smythe, the Director of Culture and History Department representing the Sealaska Heritage Institute, a 2014 ANF grantee. It provided a space for ANF grantees to be open about their concerns and share their stories candidly. Jonella Larson White of Foraker shared "Spending time with you (all) this week was good medicine for my soul. You are all wonderful and I'm thankful for and appreciate all of you! Igamsi for all of the work you are doing for our communities." The Gathering reinforced the important and valuable work we are all doing as funders, grantees, and partners for Alaska Natives communities.



*2014 ANF Gathering Attendees in a Roundtable Discussion.*

*To view more photographs of the Gathering, copy and paste the following link on the web:*

<http://www.shutterstock.com/lightbox/view.sfly?fid=7802e34afd813640031ecd658bfd733>