



President's Message

Vivian Korthuis, Chief Executive Officer



It's hard to believe that less than a year has passed since we were together at the last AVCP Annual Convention. 2017 has been an amazing and energizing one for AVCP and I am excited to share our accomplishments and plans with you.

When I was introduced as your CEO last October, I shared my experience as a young girl accompanying my father and the interactions we had with others from outside of our region who were there to help us. I knew even then, as a young girl, that the best people to help us are the people who are already here in our region. Over the past year at AVCP, we have embodied this concept that I call "growing our own." Our focus has been on realizing and leveraging the talent in the YK-Delta region to grow our programs and expand our services. During this year's Convention, you will see how living this value has changed the mindset and the operations of AVCP.

The first place this will become apparent is in our new strategic plan. At last year's convention, you gave us your top three priorities. Our Executive Board took those priorities and worked hard to develop a comprehensive 5-year strategic plan. It has been ten years since AVCP last engaged in strategic planning, and never has the process been so lengthy, thorough, and involved input from every corner of our region. The result of this process is a tool that will focus our work over the next few years, allow us to evaluate progress and plan our growth in a focused and organized fashion. On Day Two of Convention, our Executive Board will present the final Plan. One of the main features of the strategic planning process was updating AVCP's mission statement and the creation of a vision statement. The vision statement is this year's convention theme and reflects not only the priorities from last year, but our core values as Yup'ik, Cup'ik and Athabascan peoples.

Last year there was also a heavy emphasis on protecting our children and promoting the wellbeing of children and families in our communities. As you will learn during our program reports and through our panel presentations, AVCP is building on an already robust child welfare program, to develop a comprehensive child welfare service delivery model. You will learn how our Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Department employs village-based ICWA workers, provides case management, and supplies legal representation for ICWA compacts and how AVCP plans to

leverage that model to expand services and available supports at a sub-regional level.

AVCP's Tiwahe Project is also transforming the way we provide services to children and families, by allowing AVCP to develop a single entrance for families to access all the resources and support they may need, and to eliminate the need to go through several application processes.

Our staff has worked hard on many other projects that you will learn about during Day One and Day Two of the Convention, including enhancing compensation for tribal administrators through our Aid to Tribal Government Memorandums of Agreement and opening Job Centers throughout the region.

In addition to expanding our program offerings, AVCP has also remained dedicated to improving *how* we deliver our services. During year two of our Quality Improvement Process, we have continued to focus on financial and grant compliance, begun to lay the groundwork to elevate our technology capabilities and have dedicated time and resources to renovating and repairing our buildings so that our clients and staff can interact and work in a safe and pleasant space.

Lastly, I want to share something I have heard over and over during the Unit Meetings that have been held in the last six weeks. So many of you expressed appreciation for the opportunity to communicate with us directly and learn what was happening at AVCP. It was also an invaluable experience for me to be able to hear from you directly in smaller settings. As a result, I will commit now to making better communications a priority in the coming year. We will revamp the Unit Meeting process to meet with each other on a more frequent and regular basis, by incorporating teleconferences in addition to location visits and by scheduling throughout the year to better accommodate schedules and weather conditions. Also, in addition to the quarterly newsletters which began this past year, you can expect to see a newly designed website with complete information about the programs and services AVCP provides, and a frequently updated Facebook page. There is so much happening at AVCP, but I know that for this to matter the members – the Tribes – must know about it.

I want to say thank you to all those that have given me words of encouragement in the past year. I am very proud of the staff at AVCP. Their commitment and strength is truly my commitment and strength. I could not do my job without them.

During this year's convention, please visit our program booths, please talk to our staff, and please ask me questions. We want to show our members that, as always, AVCP is working for you and for our region – to make a better life for



Vivian Korthuis

CEO

Subsistence Bird and Egg Harvest Survey of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta

Natural Resources

This fall and winter will be the first time in three decades that Alaskan residents (and only Alaskan residents) with permits will be able to hunt the emperor goose. Since 1987, this particular bird has been rebuilding its population on the Alaska Peninsula, Kodiak Island and Aleutian Islands. Since their habitat is so vast, it is hard to predict their exact survival rate and how much it has recovered in 30 years, but based on data collected last year, federal agencies estimate the safe harvesting of 1,000 emperor geese across Alaska this year. The Yukon-Kuskokwim (Y-K) Delta has been allocated 125 geese. Next year, up to 25 geese will be set aside for sport hunting.



Emperor goose photo courtesy of Alaska.usgs.gov

At the same time, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services reports an alarming number of beached seabird carcasses (at least 800) since early August of this year. Species include northern fulmars, shearwaters and kittiwakes; species that migrate long distances to spend summers in Alaska. The cause is yet unknown, but it is being investigated. Sample data (necropsies on 10 of the carcasses from Shishmaref, Gambell and St. Paul Island) indicate drowning and severe emaciation. Their stomachs and intestines were empty. There was no evidence of disease or toxin-related abnormalities. Reports of masses of starved birds, such as the puffins found last fall off St.

Communities selected for the 2017 survey in the Y-K Delta (pending consent) include:

- Platinum
- Tununak
- Alakanuk
- Pilot Station
- Aniak
- Bethel
- Tuntutuliak
- Chevak
- Mountain Village
- Lime Village
- Tuluksak
- Napakiak
- Kipnuk
- Hooper Bay
- Red Devil
- Kwethluk

Paul Island and the Pribilofs, have recently been associated with unusually warm marine waters. Surveys are continuing and experts believe the carcasses washing ashore are only a fraction of the drowned birds.

Every year, the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-management Council (AMBCC) randomly selects villages and households to participate in a survey. They survey and document the yearly bird and egg harvest patterns in five regions of Alaska. AMBCC uses the sample data they collect from this survey to predict next year's harvest. The more representative data AMBCC collects, the better they are able to extrapolate how much is safe to harvest of a particular population in the following year.

If a local tribal council is randomly selected to participate in the survey, they are contacted in advance for approval. In November and December, local surveyors conduct the community and household visits, if they have chosen to participate.

The Harvest Assessment Program was created in 2004 and the survey itself is coordinated by the Division of Subsistence of the ADF&G, on behalf of AMBCC. AMBCC was formed three years earlier, in 2000, and includes the Native Caucus with representatives from ten subsistence regions. Each region has its own regional bird council.

Jennifer Hooper, Director of AVCP Natural Resources, works closely with AMBCC. She attended the AMBCC meeting the week of September 18, along with Roland White, Chair of the WCC. Meetings also include representatives of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). Working together, their objective is the conservation of migratory birds and to support sustainable subsistence harvest opportunities.

To learn how to collect data yourself, share your observations with researchers and resource management agencies, visit Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COASST) at www.coasst.org or contact COASST at 1-206-221-6893 or coasst@uw.edu



Tribal Council Roles & Responsibilities, Goal Setting & Decision Making

Training Hosted by AVCP Tribal Services

Tribal governance expert, Malcolm Bowekaty (Zuni Pueblo), visited Bethel to facilitate a training for ATG Compacted Tribal administrators, hosted by AVCP Tribal Services Department in partnership with the Native American Resources, LLC.

Over four days of training, the 30 attendees discussed tribal council and board member goal setting, strategic decision making, long-range planning and problem solving strategies.

Bowekaty's presentations and exercises emphasized the responsibilities of those serving on the tribal councils. He broke down the very specific function of a mission

statement. He spoke to the importance of constitutions. They discussed the different types of tribal governments; traditional tribes, treaty tribes and IRA tribes. Attendees were reminded that the duty of legislature is to maintain justice, create written and unwritten laws, protect cultural values and promote efficiency while ensuring stability.

During the first few hours of training, Bowekaty highlighted some "convoluted areas," where governmental agencies interface. He addressed a question on the division of tribal and city jurisdictions, which lead to a discussion emphasizing the utilization of sovereignty. Bowekaty added that it is crucial to exercise as much sovereignty as possible "in the beginning, to create boundaries," before other jurisdictions take precedence. Once other jurisdiction are established, their authority is hard to undo.

When faced with these convoluted situations, Bowekaty noted the importance of tribal councils meeting with city councils, for example. "But it's expensive, because you have to hire attorneys," he noted, adding that this is when to rely heavily on AVCP services, programs and resources. He used recent-past examples to illustrate points, including the struggle which spurred the Indian Child Welfare Act in the 1970's and early 80's.



Photos courtesy of Michael McIntyre

Incorporating Plants for Food and Medicine

Healthy Families



The Healthy Families team plans to tie plants, as food and medicine, in to whole health. Their vision is big.

In June, the AVCP Healthy Families Workshop incorporated plant knowledge in to their curriculum. Qasgiq Elders brought samples of plants, available throughout the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, sharing personal and family experiences of healing.

Next year, Healthy Families hopes to create two workshops focused on plants; one in the spring and a second in the fall, because that is when workshops will be the most hands-on, due to the availability of plants to harvest. The genesis of this new goal is heavily guided by Elders' recent emphasis and enthusiasm for the sharing of plant knowledge.

All Healthy Families program development is driven by Qasgiq mentorship.

Melanie Fredericks is also partially inspired by past plant symposiums, held by the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) in Anchorage.

The first ANTHC annual symposium Melanie attended was awesome, but wants to provide much more than what she experienced in Anchorage. She and her team want Elders to have the opportunity to directly share hands-on knowledge about the respectful harvesting of plants and want to include nature walks.

Healthy Families emphasizes sharing as a traditional value, and wishes to continue this practice by disseminating the collective plant knowledge of the Qasgiq, because using our plants as food and medicine empowers us to become healthier people. Using our abundance of natural resources engages us in healthy family activities, improves mental health, creates awareness and fosters confidence. Plant knowledge both fits in and fortifies the maintenance of whole health.



Photos courtesy of Melanie Fredericks (top) and Michael McIntyre (bottom)

Protecting the Lands of People Who have Passed

Realty

Melanie Charles is a probate specialist, so she spends a lot of time tracking down people who will potentially inherit land after their relatives pass on. She heavily stresses the importance of creating a will, as soon as possible.

A hypothetical scenario that really stuck out to Melanie was, say, if a married man (let's call him Joe) dies, all Joe's property will go to his wife before it goes to their children.

Without a will, the first \$100,000 of an estate will always go to the spouse under Alaska interstate statutes.

Now, let's say this widow gets married one week later and mysteriously dies the day after her wedding. In this case, her new husband will get most of what Joe owned, instead of Joe's children.

The hypothetical case of Joe is an extreme example only used to illustrate the importance of a will. In a more likely case, a will simply conveys the wishes of the decedent, ensuring that those wishes are respected without controversy.

Another situation that highlights the benefits of a clear will, is based on the fact that cultural adoptions are not recognized in Alaska, and therefore not recognized by the Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA).

Without a will, culturally adopted family will not receive a share of their parents' estates, even though it may be their adoptive parents' wish. Similarly, in cases where a will has not been filed, the adoption decree of an adopted child must include a provision specifically stating their ability to inherit from their biological family, in order for the legally adopted child to inherit anything.

Creating a will is a three-step process. (1) You write a letter to the AVCP Realty Department, requesting the creation of a will. (2) A land ownership search is generated, which is an inventory of all the land you have rights to and the documentation. This search is conducted by AVCP Realty staff. (3) The documentation proving that you own your land is returned to you, and then you can take it to either the attorney(s) of your choice or Alaska Legal Services Corporation, to write up a will that will not be challenged.

In an emergency, you can create a handwritten will; legally referred to as a holographic will. Holographic wills require the signatures of two disinterested witnesses who have watched you sign your will. In other words, these two witnesses must not be named in the will and, ideally, should not be closely related to anyone who is named in the will.

Homemade wills do not have to be notarized, but the AVCP Realty Department staff highly recommend it. Notarization just provides another layer of evidence that the will was properly executed and protects the wishes of the decedent from controversy.

Registering your will with the Alaska Court System includes a one-time \$40 fee, which allows you to change your will as often as you like for no additional charge. Once your will is in the Alaska Court System, the only people who have access to it are you and whoever you designate as your executrix or executor. If you keep your will at home, AVCP Realty Department staff recommends keeping it locked up with other important documents. Feel free to make copies to distribute to your family members, but never let your original will out of your control!

As the original owners of allotments



Photo of Lime Village, courtesy of Michael McIntyre

pass on, without a will in place, Native restricted land is automatically divided among the next generation. The problem is that fractionation of land ownership is increasing at an exponential rate. Imagine, if every family has an average of five children, the second generation will own $1/5^{\text{th}}$ of their parents' land. If each of the second generation also has five children, the third generation will own $1/25^{\text{th}}$ of the original allotment, and so on.

As the number of owners increase exponentially, so do administrative costs. Further, there has been some speculation that with more and more owners each generation, the possibility of agreement on how the property should be managed and enjoyed by all owners becomes increasingly complicated.

Melanie Charles once had a case where “there must have been 30-plus landowners for a townsite lot— a lot that is just large enough to put a house on!”

Tonya Charlie, Director of AVCP Realty, added that the more hands you throw in a pot, the more complicated the management of the land becomes. When processing a land transaction in scenarios with numerous landowners, just one person can hold up hundreds of hours of several peoples' work.

Upcoming Events

Oct. 4-6

Tribal Code Development Training

Hosted by AVCP Tribal Justice & American Indian Development Associates, LLC

Oct. 10-13

Healthy Families Workshop

Hosted by AVCP Healthy Families

Oct. 19-21

Alaska Federation of Natives Annual Convention

For more information visit nativefederation.org/annual-convention

Oct. 24-26

Healthy Families Workshop

Hosted by AVCP Healthy Families

Nov. 14-17

Healthy Families Workshop

Hosted by AVCP Healthy Families

Dec. TBA

Tribal Court Workshop for Judges and Clerks

Hosted by AVCP Tribal Justice

For more information contact Denise Nerby 543-8552

Dec. 12-15

Healthy Families Workshop

Hosted by AVCP Healthy Families

Jan. 16-25

Rural Facilities Maintenance Technician, Workplace Fundamentals

Hosted by AVCP Employment, Education, Training & Child Care

For more information contact Beverly Turner 543-7434 or Steven Aluska 543-7433

Jan. 26-30

Rural Facilities Maintenance Technician, Fleet Maintenance & Operations Fundamentals

Hosted by AVCP Employment, Education, Training & Child Care

For more information contact Beverly Turner 543-7434 or Steven Aluska 543-7433

Jan. 31 - Feb. 19

Aluminum Welding Certificate Program

Hosted by AVCP Employment, Education, Training & Child Care

For more information contact Beverly Turner 543-7434 or Steven Aluska 543-7433