

PUBLIC SAFETY

YUKON- KUSKOKWIM DELTA

Outcomes Document
2018

Association of Village Council Presidents

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Introduction

At the 2016 Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) annual convention, tribal delegates from AVCP member tribes in the AVCP region identified Public Safety as the number one priority. On August 1-2, 2018, AVCP hosted the Public Safety Summit at the Yupiit Piciryarait Cultural Center. The theme of the summit was Public Safety: Addressing Barriers and Identifying Solutions in the Y-K Delta. The public safety summit provided a forum for tribal leaders and public safety providers to guide our work in addressing public safety issues and improving the well-being of our communities. The summit was open to tribes, city governments, corporations, public safety providers, emergency responders, service providers, court judges and staff and community members. Agencies in attendance included: Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Alaska State Troopers (AST), National Guard, Alaska Department of Public Safety (DPS), Alaska Department of Law, Bethel Police Department (BPD), Bethel Fire Department, Lower Kuskokwim School District, Tundra Women's Coalition (TWC), Recover Alaska and the Alaska Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. There were also representatives present from Senator Murkowski's and Senator Sullivan's offices. One hundred (100) individuals from across the region and different agencies registered for the event and one hundred-twenty (120) were in attendance.

Break-out Discussions

There were seven (7) different break-out discussions over the two days of the summit that provided a forum for participants to discuss their experiences and provide information. The break-out discussions were facilitated and recorded by AVCP staff. After the break-out discussions, the outcomes were presented to the summit attendees and documented by each group and typists.

The break-out discussion topics were:

1. What is Public Safety?
2. Current Status of Law Enforcement – Alcohol and Substance Abuse
3. Tribal Courts/Circle Sentencing
4. Parenting and Community Based Solutions
5. Success Stories: What is working for our Communities? What do we want Public Safety to look like in our region?
6. Public Safety Priorities by Unit
7. Community Based actions and Solutions

Responses heard from those break-out discussions are presented below as follows: [What is Public Safety?](#), [Common Themes](#), [Public Safety Priorities by Unit](#), [Challenges](#), and [Solutions](#).

What is Public Safety?

- Protecting those who cannot protect themselves
- Caring about the people you serve – helping those that need help
- Search and Rescue – volunteering, being involved and giving back to the community
- Taking care of our own people

- Feeling safe in your community
- Law enforcement having community interaction, engagement, and connection with the people
- Share love and respect with everyone
- Taking the wellbeing of children into consideration
- More than law enforcement or enforcement of crimes – safety within communities, road systems, the overall region
- Respect of individuals, the youth, the elders and listening
- Prevention – working with the public and children to educate them
- Communicating with others about resources needed to provide a safe environment to the community
- Installation of fire alarms and smoke alarms
- Shelters or safe homes for women and children
- A drug- and alcohol-free community
- Walk around without the fear of being abused by anyone
- Protection from natural disasters
- Zero tolerance for hard drugs
- Elders talking to the kids
- Parenting - disciplining of children and being their first teacher – teaching children wrong from right
- Raising awareness and prevention within our own communities
- Accountability – everyone needs to be held accountable

Common Themes

- Public Safety begins at home, within your own families
- Before we had public safety officers, our elders and parents would instruct us; Elders to educate community
- Respect for others and help others in need if we are able
- Feeling of being safe is a basic need for all of us
- Lack of activities for youth leads to further problems
- Hold parents and leaders accountable

Public Safety Priorities by Unit

Unit 1. Kotlik, Hamilton, Bill Moore's Slough

1. Increase VPSO's, VPO/TPO funding
2. Tribe and City to work together to budget for extra public safety personnel
3. Search and Rescue Funding Capabilities

Unit 2. Mountain Village, Pitka's Point, Andrafski, Algaaciq

1. VPSO to float in unit and VPSO housing/transportation
2. More community involvement/ unit working together to support Public Safety and Members
3. Need Firetruck in Pitka's point
4. Personal responsibility for home and family

Unit 3. Aniak, Chuathbaluk, Crooked Creek, Georgetown, Lime Village, Upper Kalskag, Lower Kalskag, Red Devil, Napaimute, Sleetmute, Stony River

1. Law enforcement in every community – or floating/roving law enforcement
2. Increased funding for local law enforcement
3. Transition training for new teachers
4. Enforcement of city ordinances
5. Housing for law enforcement and public safety building
6. Public safety committee of representatives from all communities

Unit 4. Akiachak, Akiak, Kwethluk, Tuluksak

1. Prioritization of public safety – funding and funding opportunity exploration
2. Improve communications in Unit
3. Unit villages working together to coordinate and plan for public safety
4. VPSO housing/officers/public safety building
5. Stop drugs and alcohol from entering villages
6. Elders at the local schools – increase drug awareness in schools

Unit 5. Napakiak, Napaskiak, Oscarville

1. Start Healthy Families workshop in communities
2. Train volunteers on “How to Respond”
3. More VPSOs and TPOs with housing

Unit 6. Atmautluak, Kasigluk, Nunapitchuk

1. Unify unit villages with Tribal Codes
2. Unify unit Tribal Courts
3. Training for TPOs and tribal court judges
4. One VPSO for unit villages

Unit 7. Kipnuk, Kongiganak, Kwigillingok, Tuntutuliak

1. Support each other and think carefully before you act. Love one another
2. Retention of public safety officers is vital - No VPSO in this unit
3. Traditional knowledge – teach our children what we have, go back to what we know
4. Support our youth so they are prepared to lead our communities
5. Partnerships between villages to enforce public safety

Unit 8. Chefnak, Mekoryuk, Newtok, Toksook Bay, Tununak, Umkumiut

1. Controlling alcohol from getting into the villages
2. Training for TPO's and having trained TPO's
3. Established Tribal Courts
4. Public safety facilities
5. Debriefing opportunities for first responders
6. Development of a public safety youth academy to provide early exposure to public safety careers

Unit 9. Chevak, Hooper Bay, Paimiut, Scammon Bay

1. Public safety funding
2. VPO/TPO training equivalent to VPSO trainings and Bethel Police Academy
3. Address alcohol and juvenile offenses
4. Hold entities accountable, improve communication and work together
5. Debriefing for officers and health aides
6. Unit working together for public safety

Unit 10. Eek, Goodnews Bay, Platinum, Quinhagak

1. Increased number of VPSOs, VPOs and TPOs
2. YKHC to provide health aides – at least two (2)
3. Improve parenting skills

Unit 11. Orutsararmiut Native Council – Bethel

1. Provide TPOs
2. Public service entities collaboration
3. Culturally relevant youth activities
4. No drugs in community

Unit 12. Pilot Station, Marshall, Ohogamiut, Russian Mission

1. Corporation, City and Tribes work together
2. Law enforcement presence
3. Stop drugs, alcohol and homebrew presence in villages

Unit 13. Alakanuk, Chuloonawick, Emmonak, Nunam Iqua

1. Decreased importation of drugs and alcohol
2. Stop domestic violence/elder and child abuse
3. Increased number of public safety officials (VPSOs, TPOs and VPOs)
4. Unit tribes working together

Challenges

- **Alcohol and Drugs**
 - o Alcohol and drugs contribute to most of the crimes in our communities
 - o Most people die from alcohol and drug related incidents
 - o Most people in jail are there because of alcohol
 - o Community members don't report alcohol and drug crimes
 - o Damp or wet villages near others see increased abuse and bootlegging
- **No law enforcement (VPSO, VPO, TPO)**
 - o Barrier crimes - Alcohol and drug use or importation
 - o Physical requirements – VPSO recruit must pass strict physical test
 - o Access to training for VPOs/TPOs
 - o 15-week ALET academy for VPSOs – long time to be away from family/community
 - o Low recruitment – high expectations

- Approximately eight months to hire a VPSO/additional three months to train
 - Requirement of communities to have a Public safety building and holding cell/housing
 - Smaller community requires arresting family and friends
 - Alaska Police Standards Council certification doesn't apply to TPOs
 - ICWA workers responding with no support
 - Search and rescue responding to law enforcement emergencies
 - Difficulty enforcing sentencing
 - Lack of support for banishments
- **Lack of support for Law enforcement**
 - Thankless job
 - On-call 24/7, no time for family or subsistence
 - Officer burnout
 - Officers suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
 - Support for law enforcement after traumatic event is necessary
 - Lack of training for law enforcement
- **Decreased National Guard Presence**
 - Many prior VPSOs were in the National Guard
 - Recruitment has decreased
 - If numbers increase, will move a unit back to Bethel – currently Bethel is a detachment
 - Infantry skill ties into the skills required for law enforcement
- **Law enforcement service is a normal service that is provided throughout the rest of the country**
 - Many of the communities in our region don't have this regular service
- **Lack of Funding**
 - Lower funding level from state
 - COPS grant for TPOs limited to three years – many requirements
 - Lack of funding means lack of response
 - Short hours for current law enforcement
- **Deficient Tribal Courts**
 - Continued intervention necessary for some alcohol abusers
 - Elders need to be involved with Tribal Courts
 - Community service and fines for offenders
 - Tribal Council acts as court for some Tribes
 - Lack of funding for Tribal Courts
 - Less Tribal courts – Tribal Council has too many responsibilities
 - Minimal training for Tribal Courts
 - Lack of resources and personnel

Solutions

- **Healthy families**
 - Talking about our strengths to be healthy and well. Talk about the history of the region and what happened to our grandparents, our great-grandparents

- Healthy Families elders are leaders passing experience and knowledge to next generation
- Workshops available for Tribes upon request
- Increases elder involvement with communities/youth
- Encourages practice of taking care of each other with love, courage, and discipline
- **Public Safety Starts at home**
 - Discipline begins at home; Positive parenting starts at home
 - Talk to children in the morning when they can stop and listen to what you have to say
 - Teach children the difference between what is acceptable and what is not acceptable
 - Encourage participation in school activities and church
 - Parents are the first teachers for their children – need to take care of their children and provide emotional support
 - When parents have children, they become elders
 - Give children rules to follow
 - Teach children subsistence way of life – acts as therapy, teaches independence, and keeps them out of trouble
 - Encourage education and formation of two parent families
- **Increased Community involvement**
 - Starts at home but extends through the rest of the community; Takes an entire community to raise a child
 - Use culture to raise resilient children
 - If you see a child doing something wrong, correct them
 - Community cook-outs and eskimo dancing brings community together
 - Need good leadership for communities to be successful
 - National Guard soldiers act as coaches and mentors for youth and provides career opportunities
 - Fundraising to provide law enforcement
 - Support for Search and Rescue
 - Knock and Talk – law enforcement confronting individuals believed to be involved with illegal behavior to let them know that they are aware of the behavior
 - Community river patrol by local law enforcement
- **Tribal Courts**
 - Positive alternative to formal punishment
 - Civil Diversion agreement – allows tribal courts and the state to work together to handle low-level criminal violations – if case is successful through tribal court, it is not filed in state court
 - Further development of Tribal Courts – enforcing fines for importation/violations
 - Unit or Sub-regional Tribal Court
 - Early prevention for victims
 - Hold tribal members accountable for their actions
 - Increases tribal sovereignty
 - Allows community to have deeper connection with their people
 - Community service for offenders – increased connection with elders
- **Increased Collaboration**

- Community governing bodies, village corporations, CVRF and Calista working together to increase public safety at community level
- Develop and retain partnerships with other agencies/communities/tribes
- Funding from CDQ and Corporations to supplement Public Safety
- Working together with nearby communities to police villages
- Communities can get involved with youth camps such as CVRF youth-to-work, Campfire, or SYETP
- Provide opportunities for children to start a career

- **Training**
 - Yuut Elitnaurviat providing VPO training academy (needs training officers)
 - Training for Tribal Court personnel and judges increasing
 - Develop training for VPO's/TPO's similar to VPSO training
 - Start training youth young
 - Develop youth track for public safety careers

- **State Involvement**
 - Rural Community Commitment Team Trooper concept (to travel to communities that don't have law enforcement to provide law enforcement presence and provide mentorship on grant writing and training.)
 - Notify Troopers when importation is excessive/occurring
 - Development of community emergency response plans and hazard mitigation plans
 - Public safety action plan developed for state
 - Request training for public safety from State
 - Remain involved with State compact for child welfare

- **Support for current law enforcement**
 - Allow officers time for subsistence/time off to take care of themselves and their family
 - Involve law enforcement in community activities
 - Increase retention of current law enforcement
 - Provide VPSO for each unit
 - Bring food and volunteer with public safety officials and search and rescue teams

- **Further development of community programs**
 - Develop fire departments and other first responders
 - Development of youth department to provide opportunities and education to youth
 - Community volunteers when there is no enforcement
 - Consistent funding, constant involvement and intervention
 - Culture-based camps to teach children values through activities
 - Encourage youth to become VPSOs
 - Youth public safety academy to provide exposure to law enforcement careers
 - Teen centers and additional youth activities
 - Develop a public safety committee in communities
 - Provide playgrounds to keep kids out of trouble

Conclusion

A survey was provided to public safety summit attendees at the end of the summit. The response from the surveys was overwhelmingly positive. Participants indicated that their overall understanding of public safety in their community and region was greatly increased after the summit and that they left with new ideas for addressing public safety in their region and community. Participants also felt that they developed a stronger network of support and resources for addressing public safety in their community and region. Participants realized that most communities in the region are facing similar public safety issues and that TPOs have power that they didn't know they have and need additional training. Attendees appreciated the opportunity to speak their minds and that there was a safe place to do it.

It was recommended that there are additional summits to follow-up on topics discussed, incorporating culture, adding another day, and allowing more time for discussions. Another recommendation was to include more elder and youth in discussions. Participants also requested a presentation or handout of financial resources for public safety grants and opportunities.

Participants gained experience from hearing each other share what is working in their community. They felt that networking with other tribes and agencies was beneficial.

Participants felt that there was an overwhelming commitment for improvement and dedication to each other.

An important topic that stood out was that public safety starts at home, within their own families.