

## INTRODUCTION

As an Alaska Native, Yup'ik tribal citizen, I try my best to improve conditions for our Indigenous Peoples, the natural world, our allies, and future generations. My employment, studies, and dedication to Tribal communities, especially regarding the decision-making ability of Indigenous governments in natural resource and land-use spaces, remains of utmost importance to me.

Originally from the mouth of the Yukon River Delta and Bering Sea coast, and the oldest of nine children, I value living traditionally. I was born "off the grid," having witnessed all forms of modern society including electricity, phones, television, and natural gas furnaces enter our homes and communities for the first time. I lived a subsistence (hunting, fishing, gathering, preservation and storage) reliant way in life in our community of 600 people until high school graduation in 1994.

FEDERAL INDIAN LAW ASSIMILATION POLICIES, THE ALASKA NATIVE CLAIMS SETTLEMENT ACT (1971), THE INDIAN SELF-DETERMINATION ACT (1975), and ME

As a student at Northwest Indian College, I would learn about boarding schools and assimilation policies related to Indigenous communities. My parents are first and second generation boarding school graduates, and do not speak of this time at all. They both speak Yup'ik but refused to teach our language to their nine children. I understand a lot, I can read and write in Yup'ik, but my speaking ability is very limited.

I was one of a handful of students in our Yup'ik community to be the first "Headstart students," taught by our own Yup'ik teachers. I would become a pillar valedictorian and athletic high school graduate of our rural and district communities, as a model to the US government, that Yup'ik communities can educate our own people. In 1994 I was the number one chosen Hearst Scholar, representing the top of two students in Alaska, in Washington, DC. Twenty years later working for Washington Tribes, I realize how valuable being educated by your own community of teachers, and living your culture is.

Of utmost value to me, I am a Yup'ik granddaughter, daughter, mother, sister, niece, aunt, and friend. I am productive, Yup'ik, and a valuable woman of my community, and of the greater community in the US.

My goal pursuing a Master's in Environmental Studies with a focus on Energy Policy, is to simply provide real-world tools that can be utilized by any rural Alaska citizen who is paying exorbitant costs to keep the lights, electricity, and heat on.

When people in poverty are stressed, all they see is what is right in front of them, which are bills. This provides unnecessary stressors on the family and especially, children - to learn, do homework, and get enough rest to go to school the next day.

## ANCSCA AND MY ROLE

By analyzing the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), I depict how complex exercising Tribal sovereignty is for Alaska Native citizens.

While 44 million acres of land is managed by Alaska Native village and regional corporations, limitations exist including taking new land into trust on behalf of tribes, prevention of tax collection, and exclusion of tax exemptions on Native trust lands.

With the average price of rural Alaska delivered fuel ranging from \$5.50-10.00/gallon in 2023, and Alaska being prioritized for energy development in 2025, I want to explore energy policies and options for rural Alaska Native citizens to exercise Tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

The goal of my research will be to outline options for reducing energy costs for rural Alaska Native citizens that may include: 1) proposing amendments to ANCSA and ANILCA, 2) uniting regional village corporations and tribes for purposes of bulk fuel compacting and preparation for energy development, 3) exploring renewable energy options, and 4) exploring avenues that boost rural economy, i.e. proposing that school districts and utility companies purchase fuel directly from village corporation fuel distributors.

Fifty-four years after the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (the largest Indigenous land claims in US history), and 50 years since the Indian Self-Determination Act (1975), rural Alaska Native citizens still top US Census statistics in the highest cost of living, lowest educational scores, and highest poverty rates. The goal of my research is to highlight practical tools that can be applied by tribal citizens, leaders, and organizations working with our communities to reduce energy costs.

For the last twenty years, I have been a professional student of Washington Tribes. When the Boldt Decision was passed in 1974, and the Magnuson-Stevens Act was passed in 1976, this created a new avenue of natural resource and energy depletion for existing companies in the US, from Alaska Natives, who are the original stewards of their homelands and waters.

While natural resources (salmon and oil) are being depleted, what is not portrayed, is our resilience and the vitality our cultures. As a Yup'ik people, our language, culture, ceremonies, traditional and cultural relationships to land, water, and one another remains intact. We are blessed to remain connected to our homelands and waters.

Education remains a luxury to me. I am requesting time to study, research, and outline options to help my rural Alaska Native communities navigate intense challenges regarding energy policies. *Quyana* thank you for considering my application.