Progress toward our goals requires advocacy across multiple fronts. One of the methods we use is quantifying, or measuring, the economic value of our contributions to Fairbanks and the region.

A new report tallies the results and it’s getting overdue attention. “The Economic Impact of Interior-based Alaska Native Organizations” was commissioned by FNA, Tanana Chiefs Conference, IRHA, Denakkanagga, and Doyon, Ltd. The analysis is based on 2010 data.

The report’s sponsors want politicians and policy makers to pay attention. For too long they’ve been dismissive of Alaska Natives methods and means when it comes to addressing conditions in rural Alaska.

Speaking at a news conference to introduce the report, Steve Ginnis said he thinks policy makers need a wakeup call. “This report needs to be viewed very seriously, said Ginnis.

When the jobs and wages of the sponsoring organizations were tallied, we learn that more than $100 million were attributed to these five Alaska Native entities. The regional numbers are equally impressive: $300 million and 3,500 jobs in the Interior.

As a group, we are among the region’s fifth-largest employer. Measured as jobs and wages our employee numbers are larger than the both the State of Alaska (minus the university) and the Fairbanks North Star Borough. Looking more closely we learn that:

Statewide, Interior Native organizations had an economic impact of nearly half a billion dollars in 2010.

Interior Native organizations spent $287 million within Alaska in 2010, 43 percent of which was for goods and services purchased from local vendors.

Interior Native organizations paid more than $3.8 million in property taxes to the

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Additional property taxes statewide totaled $5.5 million. Charitable contributions totaled $2.5 million in Fairbanks, $500,000 in Interior villages and $670,000 in the rest of Alaska.

Angela Foster-Snow, FNA’s Planning and Development director, said the numbers speak for themselves. “The importance of this document is the clarification that it provides as to the true influence that our Native organizations have in our communities economically.”

The report is available at our website. See: www.fairbanksnative.org.

Bill Abbott heads up Human Resources

Bill has joined FNA as our director of Human Resources. He was born and raised in Juneau and is a graduate of Hoonah High School. He earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration from the University of Alaska Fairbanks in 1998, with an emphasis in human resource management.

Bill continued his studies at UAF, earning an MBA from UAF in 2000. In 2003, he attained certification as a Professional in Human Resources.

Bill started his career in human relations with the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC), where he worked as a HR generalist in Sitka. Additionally, he was the HR / Transportation Coordinator at Head Start with Tlingit & Haida Central Council. He was also an HR staffer with Alaska Pacific Bank and the HR director for Goldbelt, Incorporated.

Bill returned to SEARHC as its human relations manager, with a primary responsibility for benefits and compensation for over 700 employees throughout Southeast Alaska. His last position prior to arriving here was with Coeur Alaska, a gold mine company based in Juneau.

Bill is married; he and his wife have five children. They like outdoor activities and enjoy exploring local trails. Bill played city league basketball when he lived in Juneau.

FNA employees ride their talk. Getting up and moving during lunch breaks is key to happier, healthier and more effective employees.

L-R: Robyne, Jennifer Eskridge, John Stowman, and Krista Wilkinson set an example for their colleagues.
Cancer is a scourge that devastates families and communities. Until recently, its effect on Native Alaskans was largely the domain of doctors and researchers. Now, thanks to greater willingness on the part of survivors, the disease and its consequences are the topic of discussions in community forums and small group sharing sessions.

Called ‘Hopeful Connections’, the project is a collaboration between FNA and the Center for Alaska Native Health Research (CANHR), a research center based at the University of Alaska. Launched in 2010, Hopeful Connections initially gathered information from community forums held in Fairbanks.

Earlier this year at the TCC Convention, the project’s leaders reported on its progress. Freda Williams, FNA’s director of Community Services and Ellen Lopez, a public health scientist, described a series of 28 interviews they conducted with cancer survivors in the local area.

The interviews provided perspectives that opened the topic of cancer survivorship to a growing number of people. Based on information provided by these survivors, Hopeful Connections is now focusing on small group support and sharing between survivors and their loved ones. If funding requests are successful, the project plans to move to regional villages via teleconferences.

At a recent Hopeful Connections meeting, about a dozen people, mostly women, gathered at the Hannah Solomon building. It’s a time when friendships are renewed, to share and catch up on each other’s passage through diagnosis, treatment and survivorship. Some people are caregivers, some are in cancer treatment, others are in remission and getting healthy.

Williams and Lopez guided the discussion, keeping to an agenda highlighted on a large poster board. Talk moves from a child’s plans for the school year, to side effects of a drug, to laughter, sadness, and back to laughter. In the exchange, in the flow of ideas and compassion, there is magic, healing and the power to prevail.

Lopez has previous experience in this field. Prior to coming to Fairbanks, she worked with cancer survivors in Florida and North Carolina, many who are counted as minorities. Among the obstacles to dealing most effectively with cancer, Lopez says, is “a shroud of silence” that can keep people from exchanging ideas and emotions.

According to Lopez, the interview series highlighted the importance of subsistence foods in people’s lives. Nutrition, it turns out, is a primary feature of any cancer treatment plan. Hopeful Connections’ food advisor is Sarah McConnell. She manages the Troth Yeddha' Nutrition Project at the university and brings expertise in nutrition education.

“[Hopeful Connections] shares what we've learned about traditional foods for health with the Rural Nutrition Services program at the university...there’s a lot of positive energy that comes together,” McConnell said.

Additional information about Hopeful Connections is located here: http://canhr.uaf.edu/project/cancer.html

To learn more about Hopeful Connections, contact Freda Williams, 452-5225, or via email: fwilliams@fairbanksnative.org or Ellen Lopez: edlopez@alaska.edu

Protection and comfort for the coming winter; Homeless people find value in free clothing

Community Services organizes a free clothing event several times a year. Clean, used clothing is collected and offered to anyone who needs it. In August, the event got underway on a weekday morning. Staff from Community Services arranged the clothing, separating it for men and women. Heavy-duty outerwear, boots and other clothing is not a substitute for warm shelter, however, it is small effort and makes a difference in the lives of many. If you have clothing you’d like to donate to Community Services, call 452-3225
Family fun dominates activities at FNA’s picnic; games, drawings, good food and good company

We recently sent a performance survey to all Fairbanks Native Association members. It’s designed to determine how familiar and satisfied our members are with FNA services.

We also want to identify better ways to assist the membership with the challenges facing the larger Native community.

Fairbanks Native Association considers members to be any Alaska Native or American Indian that has completed 30 days of continuous residence in the Fairbanks North Star Borough with the intent to maintain that residence. Members who are 18 years of age or older hold voting rights in the organization.

The survey will take about five minutes to complete. An outside agency, Information Insights, will collect the data. All individual information will be confidential.

After the surveys have been collected and the data processed, a report will be created that will be shared with our Board of Directors.

People who complete a survey, and are willing to provide contact information, will be entered into three drawings ($250, $100, $75) for a fuel certificate.

Please return surveys to: Information Insights, 212 Front St., Suite 100, Fairbanks, AK 99701.

Surveys may also be faxed to: (907)450-2470.

To learn more or to request a survey, contact Christina Rowlett. Phone 452-1648 ext 6235.

Pearl Henry, FNA’s cultural specialist at GRAF, was a winner of a drawing at the picnic. A fish cooler and outdoor cooking gear—good gifts just as the salmon start to run. Pearl is accompanied by her daughter, Bessie, and gentleman friend, Luke.