

## Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community

---

Valerie Davidson:

Starting again in about a minute. We're going to go ahead and take our seats, if everybody can take their seats, we're going to start with Panel 4 and so if I can ask my friends Jill to have a seat and other folks to have a seat, we're going to go ahead and get started. I'm learning my trick from Sally Smith, a Tribal Court Judge, incredible tribal leader. I was at a meeting once where she was calling the meeting to order and she said, "Well, if Valerie Davidson could have a seat, then we'll go ahead and get started." And boy, let me tell you, I never sat down so fast in my life. And from then on, every time she said, "We're ready to get started," those of us who had been the recipients of her culturally-appropriate training were always called to order really, really quickly.

Thank you everyone for coming back. We're going to go ahead and continue. We're really excited about the next panel and this panel is about Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community. And so the members of Panel 4 include: Elsie Boudreau, Licensed Master Social Worker and Director of the Alaska Native Unit within Alaska CARES for Southcentral Foundation. Elsie could you, *quyana*. Lynn Hootch may not be able to be with us today; I don't think she's going to be able to join us. The great news is that this Advisory Committee traveled to Emmonak and we were able to visit with her in Emmonak and to be able to hear from her in her home community, and that's always of course the best way to hear from folks.

We wish we had been able to travel to all 229 federally-recognized tribes in the state to be able to offer you the same courtesy. We apologize we weren't able to do that. So we're just going to proceed on with the best that we have.

We also have Tami Jerue, Director of Social Services from the Native Village of Anvik, and she's also a member of the Anvik Tribal Council. And so tribal leader, if you wouldn't mind—so that folks know, will recognize you.

## Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community

---

And then we also have Diana Blin, the Director of Program Services for Covenant House in Alaska. And then, again, we're going to repeat what we did earlier, so about 15 minutes of testimony—we do have a timekeeper—Jerry's going to be the timekeeper again. If we'll go ahead and we'll listen to your testimony first and then we'll open it up for questions from the panel. So, Elsie, would you mind going first? [Speaking NATIVE LANGUAGE @ 3:00\_1006].

*Elsie Boudreau:*

[Speaking NATIVE LANGUAGE @ 3:03], Valerie and members of the Advisory Committee [speaking NATIVE LANGUAGE @ 3:09\_1006]. I am Yup'ik; my Yup'ik name is Abucan. I am named after my maternal grandmother, whom I've never met, but I feel her spirit when I speak. I am very honored to be here. My English name is Elsie Boudreau. I am the youngest daughter of the late Edgar and Theresa Frances of St. Mary's, the granddaughter of the late Alfred and Nastasha Francis of Pilot Station, and George and (inaudible @ 3:49\_1006) Peterson of (inaudible).

I am married and have two sons and a daughter. My daughter will be graduating from college next May. I'm a proud mama. And in introducing myself, I have to say that I am also a survivor of clergy sexual abuse. And I am also a licensed social worker. So I'm really, really grateful for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the endemic number of Alaska Native children who experience violence at alarming rates. And it is with that that I ask humbly for guidance from our Great Spirit to give me and all the people here the right words, words that will make a difference in the life of even just one child.

For me, I didn't find my voice until my daughter turned ten, the same age I was when the abuse began. So let us make a difference before it is too late for another child. I sit here proudly, as I come from a long line of peaceful and proud Yup'ik people, who lived according to what our ancestors called *Yuuyaraq*. The way being human. *Yuuyaraq* assured a balance and an interconnectedness in relationships to each other, to nature, to animals and the universe. Children were put in a place of honor and they were taught

## Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community

---

compassion, they were taught humility, humor and a strong sense of spirituality.

One thing I remember is that when children were out, going to go play outside, they were instructed to be compassionate to others. That was a way of being human. The Yup'iks you see today are trying desperately to rid themselves of the aftereffects of the boarding school era, where many were physically and sexually abused. We're also ridding ourselves of what we call the "great death" of the early 1900s, where in some situations whole communities died. Because our ancestors believed that they had offended the spirit world and were therefore being punished, they replaced the world view of interconnectedness, of *Yuuyaraq*, with the concept of sin and the concept of hell and the idea of individuality as a path to salvation. And this opened the door for another blanket of trauma—clergy sexual abuse. For me, I had to relearn or shift what it means to be human, to be Yup'ik, as a result of the sexual abuse I suffered by a Catholic priest from when I was 10 until I was 19.

Since then, I have adapted to a world where Father Poole is no longer my father, my brother, my friend and my lover, as he would tell me he was. I have had to grapple with the fact that the church hierarchy knew long before I was even born, that Father Poole had problems with young girls and did nothing to protect me and the 20 or so other girls who have come forward since.

According to the bishop accountability, there have been 44 priests, nuns and representatives from the Catholic diocese of Fairbanks accused of sexual abuse since the 1960s. The Catholic population within that diocese is that of 14,500, with almost half living in urban Fairbanks. There are 36 parishes spread among 410,000 square miles, most of which are within Alaska Native communities. By contrast, the archdiocese of Boston, with a Catholic population of 1.8 million, has named 243 named perpetrators. If the archdiocese of Boston had that same rate of abuse reported, there would have been allegations made against 5,462 priests. The risk of being a child victim of sexual abuse as an

## Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community

---

Alaska Native living in Alaska Native communities is substantially higher than anywhere in the U.S. and that speaks true for those that were abused by clergy.

So we know that the rates by which children experience violence is horrific. And I am really honored to be here to speak on behalf of the children, whose voice—many of whom whose voices will never be heard. I have worked with over 300 abuse survivors. Many of them have had relatives commit suicide. Many of them have had to keep silent. So we know the rates are high and I know many people in the panels yesterday have spoken about the statistics. And what I want to point out is that being—having worked with adult survivors and working currently with children who have experienced sexual abuse and serious physical abuse, that the number of children that we're seeing at the local child advocacy center, between 2009 and 2013, 38% were Alaska Native, American Indians, when only 17.7%, according to the 2012 census, were Alaska Native children. So Alaska Native children comprise only 17.7% of our Anchorage population, but represent 38% of the children that come through the local child advocacy center.

And we heard also that 63% of our children in out-of-home placements were Alaska Native, and that number can be consistent for months, for years, where we, as Alaska Native, our children represent consistently over 50% of the children in out-of-home care.

Our children are hurting, and we see it every day in their eyes. We see it every day when they come and they have nowhere to turn.

So what do we do? And I would like to echo Liz Medicine Crow in her statement yesterday, to acknowledge colonization. I think of the Holocaust in a similar way—that we, as Alaska Native people have gone through a process of colonization that has frozen our hearts to *Yuuyaraq*, to the way of being human. And I believe in this process, what we are doing is shedding light. We are warming this frozen heart and we have to do that collectively. We were hurt

#### **Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community**

---

collectively as a native people and the only way that things will change is if we heal collectively. There has to be a collective acknowledgement of this hurt, of colonization, of clergy sexual abuse, of institutional abuse.

And at the same time, we, as Alaska Native people—we have to acknowledge that we are a resilient people and that we can use the strength as the foundation to resolve any of the past grief, any of the pain. We need to grieve collectively. We have a term—we all call it historical trauma. It's a term, but we live it every day.

We have to look honestly and holistically at the effects that historical trauma and the unresolved acknowledgement has on our communities, our families, individuals and especially our children. And we must see also, that sexual abuse has deep, deep historical roots that permeate into the lives of our children today.

We have to acknowledge the fact that many of our relatives—and I'd like to say that we are all related—were sexual abused. We hear that way too often. I work with families who children have been sexual abused and what I hear most often from a non-offending caregiver is, "That happened to me too." So we must acknowledge that many of our relatives were sexual abused and many of them by clergy. And we must understand that when the abuser is a parental figure that also represents God, the spiritual world and the eternal, the betrayal leaves the victim nowhere to turn.

We must encourage victims to come forward and support them in that process. Talking about the abuse is part of breaking the silence and telling the truth about what happened. Ignoring, minimizing, denying, hoping it will go away, or not talking about it, does not help a child begin a healing process. It will not help us as native people to deny colonization anymore. We must speak the truth. We cannot deny this reality anymore. And we must believe what we see and what we hear from survivors, particularly our children—no matter how painful. We have to believe them.

#### **Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community**

---

And we must provide means for people to cope with the stress and the trauma of sexual abuse. One way of doing that would be to support funding for all the child advocacy centers throughout Alaska. And we must be open to integrating all forms of intervention, particularly for our Alaska Native children who live in rural areas of the state.

What we know is that trauma informed treatment for children is a standard to help children heal and we must include cultural interventions as well. What we know is that it's difficult and expensive for children to receive the appropriate services that they need to heal on any level. So for example, if a child in rural Alaska were to receive treatment, they would have to fly to an urban area and a caregiver would have to fly with them. So a round trip air ticket from a village could cost up to \$600 per person. If they were to travel once a week for the recommended 16-20 sessions, the total amount in just airfare alone would be upwards of \$24,000. And then you would need to take into account money for food and lodging, transportation, and not to mention that this child and the caregiver most likely would not make it to treatment and back home in just one day. This would mean that they would have to take two days out of every week to get the help this child needs. And then if you think about that, multiply that by the astronomical number of Alaska Native children who experience violence in any given year—think about that.

And I like to indicate that we as people, as Alaska Native people, as American Indian people, as indigenous people around the world, as all people, that we are all related. That when one child is hurt, we all hurt. It affects all of us. And we have to know that the opposite is true as well. That when one child is protected and loved, put in a place in honor, is taught *yuuyaraq*, taught compassion, that we all benefit.

So we must acknowledge the possibility of healing. Time is now. So I ask, what should the government's role in holding institutions responsible for the cleanup of sexual abuse and I would add the aftermath of colonization. To give an

#### Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community

---

example, we make toxic polluters clean up their oil spills.

Shouldn't the Catholic church and other institutions that either knowingly or negligently allowed child sexual abuse to occur, be required to pay for the services survivors need to heal?

There are ways we can do this. There are programs throughout the state. Many people have started to look at these issues for generations and I appreciate this Advisory Committee, the task force that was developed, and I appreciate the time. We are standing at this point in time on sacred ground. We have no time to lose. Our children are waiting. We have to hold the hearts of our children closest to us. We have to build a way so that our people are healthy and strong, that can lead the way. And we can do that by grasping the wisdom of our elders to help them, to help define who we are while we acknowledge the connection to our land, to each other and our values.

We understand in order to ensure, regain and restore healthy communities, we need to find and regain that connection, that connection to spirit and all that is sacred, and the basis of who we are as native people, as human beings. We must ensure that all our people are within that circle of community. *Quyana*.

*Valerie Davidson:*

*Quyana*, Elsie, not only for your testimony but also for having the courage about an issue that is not necessarily well-received in communities. Speaking against and speaking the truth about institutions in our state is a very, very intimidating thing to do and for those who are not from Alaska, you should know that the way that a lot of the church brands—for lack of a better term—happened in this state, was by agreement in advance. Okay, this region, you're going to be Moravian, this region, you're going to be Catholic, this region, you're going to be Russian-Orthodox. And those were agreements made by other people, not by us.

And so those institutions and communities were really institutions of great power. They were also institutions that had food, that had ways to be able—many times the only

#### Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community

---

way for people to be able to access food and resources before other institutions came, were through those churches. And so any time an institution has the ability to be able to do harm, not necessarily by sanction but by looking the other way, horrible things can happen to children and we can't let that happen.

And at the same time, when children do speak up—maybe they can't as children because they don't have the power to do that—and they finally have the courage and have the support of their family and their friends and their community to speak the truth, like you have, Elsie, that's when change happens. And I know that from your own experience, that has not been easy and I know at what great sacrifice that has come to you personally and to other people who do have the courage to speak out. Because when you do speak, you're speaking for people who aren't able to speak for themselves, people who may not be alive anymore, people who have committed suicide because they just can't handle it.

And it's also a really important message about how we do programs that are culturally appropriate and are really about honoring people's indigenous spiritual understanding—whether it's *yuuyaraq* or something else that's appropriate for their community. And sometimes in our country's history, there have been federal programs that have encouraged partnerships with faith-based organizations and unfortunately, given our experience in Alaska, when that encouragement to partner with faith-based organizations gives you extra points and a grant application process for example, what message are we sending individuals who have been abused by those same institutions? And are the individuals who are going to be accessing those services going to be safe in those programs? And I think that's something that we need to consider and we've heard it yesterday, we've also heard it today that we just need to indigenize these grant processes and ask people in the local community what they need and as one person said, "Just get out of the way and allow us to be able to get our work done." And so, with that I just wanted to say, *quyana*, Elsie for your courage.



**Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence  
in the Home and in the Community**

---

And now we're going to turn to Tami Jerue.

*Tami Jerue:*

Can you hear me? (Speaking Native Language @ 27:50\_1006) Tami Truett Jurue. I live and work and am a tribal member of the Anvik tribe. I'm not a Council member, although I'm married to the Chief and I have been for 23 years, so I think I have a little experience there. So [LAUGHS], so yeah—is that better? Okay.

I have—I'm the mother of four children, I have four grandchildren. I'm also the aunt to over 40 nieces and nephews and I'm fairly active with all of them. I was thinking about this last night and I have Yup'ik, Eyak, Aleut, Athabascan, Tlingit and Vietnamese nieces and nephews. So we've got the whole gamut in my family in terms of the Alaska Native tribe—it's covered. And, oh, Yup'ik—I have Yup'ik nieces and nephews too.

So you know, I've worked in this field of child protection, domestic violence, sexual assault, mental health, substance abuse and education for over 34 years, and all of my work has been in rural Alaska, not just in Anvik. I've also been a teacher for many years for adult trainings and things like that. I do work for the Anvik Tribal Council. I went back to—I go back and forth with them and again, with my husband's position, sometimes I have to take a break. But I am the Director of Social Services and we do do it all—ICWA, domestic violence, sexual assault response. We do everything from enrollment to tribal court clerk to just about everything else that comes along. We're a small tribe but we're mighty, as they say.

I'd like to refer back to a testimony that was given by Jerry Isaac yesterday. And when I was thinking about this—you have my written testimony—but I was thinking about this and I was thinking about how Jerry described, very eloquently, how his experiences as a child affected how he became an

#### **Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community**

---

adult. And I want to talk, tell you about—talk to you about that, because this isn't in the past. This is currently, today.

And I want to talk to you about a story about a boy. And this boy has witnessed many things in his life—suicide, domestic violence, a lot of drinking, I would suspect also sexual assault. And this boy, from a young age, called and cried for help. He would always reach out and try to get help for him, his younger siblings and his mother. And any time that—oftentimes I would get those calls, and so I would go to him if I could in any way, and I would go to his house or my husband would respond—we didn't have law enforcement in the community at the time and hadn't for years. So one of us would go down to him because he was reaching out. And I think the first time he was five. He knew how to dial the phone. And then he got on the VHF radio and everybody in the community and far as Holy Cross and Grayling could hear him. "I need help. I need help." That's all he would say.

So we would go to him and we would try to sort it out at that time. We'd try to figure out, you know, how we could help at that point. And we would usually take the kids and take them home, take care of them. Law enforcement would be called, but because of the prioritizing and the many, many places the law enforcement needed to be, that wasn't the priority, was a small child's cry for help.

So we would keep going. Until one day, several years later, I got a call and it was on the VHF radio. "He's torn out the phone. I can't call. Help! He's shooting. Help!" And I knew who it was. My husband wasn't there. No one was around from the Council, so I raced down there on a snow machine. I got into the house and this gunshot went through the floor, right by our feet. I went to the back bedroom and I literally threw out the mother, who had been drinking at the time, threw out the children, jumped out myself and started to run through the snow—it was 30 below. We didn't know where to go. Nobody was close by. I have one snow machine and I had five people. Somebody else had heard the call and they came and I was able to get the kids to safety, but I had

#### **Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community**

---

to go back. I had to go back because this is also, this young man also needed help, the one that was doing the shooting. I was able to convince him to throw out his gun. And then he cried. Alcohol had been fueling it for him. He didn't want to hurt his family.

So that was—incident was resolved. But as the boy grew, other things became important to him—his friends, drinking, marijuana, until one day I get another call. "Help! They've had an accident." He's on this four-wheeler, drunk, hit a guy wire. I had to hold his head together until we could get a Medevac. This is a beautiful, young man. He lived. Thank God. And there were consequences.

I love him very much and I still think of him daily and pray for him. He's a young adult now. He's doing somewhat better. He's working. He's trying to muddle his way through life with all the questions. But this is the consequences. This is the consequences of violence that children experience and see. This is the everyday occurrence. This is what we have to fight on a daily basis. This is the conversations that I'm having with young adults about why they feel the way they feel. And I can go on and on about the cases that we've seen.

We're a small community. We have law enforcement today. Two years ago, we were able to get a COPS grant and so we have a tribal law officer. We also filled a VPSO position, so now we have two officers—and I still get calls in the middle of the night. "Can you come with us?" So I do. And a lot of it is because normally it's about kids and they need somebody there to help calm those children. And I take them home, because we're a safe place and I nurture them and I take care of them and then I have to give them back. The hardest part about all of this is that we're all such wonderful people and the resiliency—these children are so resilient.

You know, I was looking at my son, my youngest son is just graduated from eighth grade or whatever they call it—promoted. So he's going to start high school. And they had

#### **Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community**

---

done some books on their beginnings in terms of their family trees and that kind of thing. And Belle Deacon, who was an elder from—originally from Anvik but then lived in Grayling all her life—translated, she always says, "Where the story begins." And that's what we have here, is where the story begins. When do we and where do we begin the story of healing?

I see this as a journey and I'm hopeful and I'm grateful that you all are willing to listen to us. There's many people doing good things around the country and in Alaska, but we need help to really do those good things. And I know that when I wrote in my written testimony that there were many barriers—and it's always easier to look at the barriers to what we're faced with—and I'm just going to go ahead and repeat those because I do believe that we have the answers and with assistance, we can make change.

Some of our needs are the alcohol/drug treatments and assessments, the ability to have access to those programs. That's imperative for any kind of real change to happen. Counseling, whether that's through cultural means or otherwise, for our children and our families. More wraparound types of services, so that our families know that they have someplace to call, just not me. It's hard. It's hard work. It's exhausting. Available foster care and family care so that we're not sending out children out wherever just because we need a home for them because they can't be where they're at. I told my husband, he's going to have to build four bedrooms on the back of the house.

Parenting support and classes. That doesn't necessarily mean it may be—we can use traditional means. We have that capability, if we have the confidence and we encourage people to have the confidence to do that. Domestic violence information, classes, resources. Mandatory classes for perpetrators—right now in this state, perpetrators only have certain options and that's in the big urban areas that cost money, time, place, travel. We do not have those capabilities in our own communities and/or programs that we

#### **Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community**

---

can deal with perpetrators. We don't want to lose all our men. We need them.

Lack of law enforcement—huge. And I won't even go into the stories about the lack of law enforcement. General lack of knowledge, training of the effects of violence when children are exposed. Lack of training for the tribal courts and tribal councils and the effects of violence and what would be most appropriate for our intervention.

Lack of OCS State of Alaska children's services respect for and utilization of tribes as a resource. Lack of resources to aid children who have been habitually exposed to violence, whether it through counseling or intervention services. And suicide and bullying prevention education— again, those could be traditionally based, but we need those types of options. That's a barrier to us.

I don't know how much time I'm actually—usually I talk and talk and talk. I'm trying to be mindful of time here.

Some of the things that I recommend for systematic and for dramatic changes—that education on what exposure to violence does to children and young people, how this affects their future and also the future of our community. We cannot, we are not alone in this. Our children are not raised in eggs and then hatch and then go off on their own. Our communities are critical to our children's health and well-being and they are really our greatest resource because we're not going to survive unless they survive. And the education needs to be done on all levels, with families, communities, law enforcement, the state, tribes, tribal organizations. The knowledge of the risk our children in has to be brought to the forefront. We cannot keep this quiet anymore. We have to continue to talk about this in public.

Intervention services that can reach families and children at the local level, be it tribal or state. We need the resources to help communities solve some of the issues at the local level. Through intervention services, counseling, parenting, tribal court intervention, healthcare and alcohol substance abuse.

#### Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community

---

Collaboration of services, whether local or in an urban setting. Tribal and state cooperation and education in the legal system, courts, law enforcement, probation and youth services.

Healthcare education and prevention related to the effects that children exposed to violence or abuse have many more health-related issues, and help in facilitating interventions.

Foster family care and education to help facilitate healing and advocacy for children. The education system and training for teachers and staff in our schools. Encouraging and supporting local knowledge and initiatives to facilitate change at the community level.

We're at a crossroads here. We get to go left or we get to right, or we can keep going on the way we are. I don't think that our community can survive going the way on, the way we are. I know our children are tired already. It's hard to continue to be resilient when at every fork in the road, you're being turned back every time. We need your help and we appreciate your listening. Thank you.

*Valerie Davidson:*

*Quyana, Tami*, for your powerful testimony and letting us know what it's like firsthand when you live in a community and the impacts that violence has on children in a very, very meaningful way. I think sometimes it's—when we talk about children who are exposed to violence, it's really easy for us to talk about the data and how many more times, etc., etc., and X-percentage and etc., etc. But when you bring it down to an individual that you know, I don't know that person but I can see his face.

And one of the things that really haunts us as we're doing this work is that we know in our communities, these aren't statistics, these are real people that we are talking about. These are individuals. And we are always trying to be really mindful that—we can work really hard, we can have really great recommendations, but are we passing the real person test? The real life test? And that is, are there individuals that we know by name, who we recognize their face—are

## Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community

---

they getting access to the services that they need? And are the tribes who are responsible for helping them to get the services they need and get them through this, so that the pattern doesn't repeat itself—are they being supported in a way that those programs are sustainable and continue over time so that we can stop this. And we can turn left or we can turn right, and we don't have to keep going forward on a path that we know is not working. So with that, I want to say, *quyana*, Tami, we really appreciate it. And now we'll hear from Diana Bline.

*Diana Bline:*

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this Advisory Committee and ensure Covenant House Alaska's efforts to keep vulnerable and at-risk youth safe and provide opportunities for youth to have a brighter future.

Covenant House Alaska has been providing a continuum of services for homeless, runaway and trafficked youth in our state for over 25 years. Our mission is to serve suffering children of the street and to protect and safeguard all children with absolute respect and unconditional love, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity or religious affiliation. Our doors are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Through our core programs and services, we are able to meet the basic needs of youth at a critical time in their lives, as well as provide support that helps facilitate their journey to become healthy, self-sufficient and contributing members of our society. As an organization, we have evolved from offering emergency shelter to youth who need safety and warmth and a place to sleep comfortably, to providing a full continuum of services to help support youth as they move towards independence—from street outreach and emergency shelter services, to employment and education services, counseling and wellness, transitional living programs and ultimately stability and success. Covenant House Alaska serves homeless, runaway and at-risk youth, ages 13 to 20. Since 1988 when we opened our doors, we've served over 20,000 young people. In 2013, just last

#### **Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community**

---

year, we provided services to 3,756 unduplicated young people, with 69% of those receiving some sort of residential services.

Through our street outreach program and our drop-in center, 1,888 youth were provided 35,449 services. We provided 8,683 bed nights, 1,725 sack lunches, and 2,178 health services. The young people we serve come from communities statewide and represent diverse backgrounds. Over the past eight years, the characteristics of the youth we serve has remained primarily steady. 54% are male, 46% are females. 40% are Alaska Native; the year prior, 50% were Alaska Native youth. 33% are Caucasian, 20% African-American. So the primary population that we serve is Alaska Native youth.

We've heard a lot about the statistics of the issues in our state with alcoholism, sexual abuse, etc., so I will spare us repeating that—people who stated that much more eloquently than I.

Over the years, Covenant House has continued to see an increase in the influx of young people who come to Anchorage from rural communities. A majority of the youth we serve arrive in Anchorage with a history of victimization, family alcohol abuse, have limited education. Although extended family often provide space in which the teen can "crash" for a few days, the youth finds little stability, often having to move repeatedly from one overcrowded house to another. In this rootless environment, continuing high school becomes impossible and life on the streets start to look better, like a better option than life with family.

As a magnet city, Anchorage's homeless youth population is 45% greater than the entire rest of the state. With high rates of abuse, paired with harsh weather conditions, our youth are at extreme risk for sexual abuse, prostitution and exploitation.

The number of youth and the needs of those who come to Covenant House continues to increase each year. The youth we serve typically have a myriad of challenges to navigate. Those include living on the streets, being in jails and hospitals



## Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community

---

or at other shelters before arriving at Covenant House. 40% of youth had been in residential mental health treatment. 46% of the girls report that they have been sexual abused. 33% of youth had been in foster care.

In 2010, 33% of the girls we served already had children of their own. 14% of the youth that we served had been arrested in the last three months and among those 18-20 year olds, 66% had not finished high school. Our youth typically have histories of early childhood complex trauma.

We've heard the word trauma a lot and I'd like just to take a moment and discuss what that really means. Through science, we have learned that a child's developing brain is physiologically rewired when they are exposed to early childhood complex trauma.

When children are overloaded with stress hormones, they're in flight, fight or freeze mode. They can't learn in school. They often have difficulties trusting adults or developing healthy relationships with peers. To relieve their anxiety, depression, guilt, shame, etc., they turn to easily available alcohol or drugs or activities in which they can escape their problems. Using drugs or engaging in risky behavior leads to consequences as a direct result of this behavior. Youth may go from zero to 60 in .3 seconds for something that would seem so innocuous to someone else.

One night in the shelter, one of our residents exploded, literally, over a spilled glass of milk. I'm sure that wasn't about the milk. That was a trauma response. When one understands trauma, it requires a different way of working with effective use because trauma can be healed and it starts with developing positive, supportive and healthy relationships, particularly with adults.

In 2013, in response to the growing need in our community, we opened the doors to a new Youth Engagement Center, located in downtown Anchorage. The multipurpose facility allowed us to increase our emergency shelter beds from 40 to 60 and also combined all of our residential support

## Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community

---

services under one roof. In addition to street outreach and drop-in center, emergency shelter and transitional living programs, we currently provide access to healthcare, mental health counseling, substance abuse services, educational achievement, employment assistance and placement, housing assistance, case management services and youth enrichment programs such as art, music and physical recreation, advocacy and pastoral ministry.

Covenant House has built programs that develop, build resilience in the lives of the youth and surround them with positive influence to encourage their growth and development. We believe we can be most effective if we use evidence-based practices in our work with the youth.

Covenant House is a trauma-informed agency, utilizing the ARC model. Within the ARC model, A stands for attachment—back to those relationships—positive, supportive, healthy adult relationships. Once they have that, they are able to move to self-regulation, where they can learn that would be a trauma response, I don't need to go there again and they begin to self-regulate. And then they're ready to be able to begin competencies, to gain skills for everyday living, to be able to get a job, and more importantly, they're able to keep a job.

In addition, Covenant House uses motivational interviewing as a technique to strengthen an individual's motivation and movement for change. That also allows us a measurement to see if what we are doing is effective. If they go from pre-contemplation to an action step, that's beautiful.

Covenant House's goal is to build on each youth's strengths and assets, to restore their confidence and a sense of competence, cultivate life skills and strategies that result in positive and healthier choices in their lives, provide opportunities to develop healthy relationships and connections based on trust, and create a non-judgmental and secure environment that promotes strong, physical and mental health. Youth begin to heal their trauma.

#### **Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community**

---

In addition to working directly with youth, our leadership and staff have worked tirelessly to build strong relationships and partnerships with community members, local businesses and other social service providers, law enforcement and schools. This serves as an important step in ensuring the community is educated about the needs of the population, are knowledgeable about the services we provide and can refer a young person they know who may need help. One of our most important partnerships are those that we have developed with the Anchorage Police Department and our local FBI office. In part, through collaborative work, there has been an increase and awareness and education around sex trafficking in Alaska and in Anchorage.

We have invested significant resources in learning about sex trafficking and how to work effectively with victims. Since 2001, there has been six prosecutions in our state for sex trafficking. These six cases involved a total of 105 victims, 20% of whom were Alaska Native. 40% of the total victims were minors.

In 2012, the State of Alaska Task Force on the Crimes of Human Trafficking, Promoting Prostitution and Sex Trafficking was established by legislation to begin to address sex trafficking in Alaska. Authorities testified that trafficking is notoriously under-reported. Among the most vulnerable are chronic runaways, whose own parents have quit looking for them. Authorities testifying said the other highly vulnerable targets are Alaska Native girls from rural communities.

Our leadership and staff, along with 60 other people from across the state, attended the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children training developed by Rachel Lloyd, national expert and founder of Girls Education and Mentoring Services in New York. In the fall of 2013, following the training, our staff identified 27 young people known to Covenant House working with Covenant House, who were victims of sex trafficking. Twenty of them we knew really well. The other seven were in and out and our job with them was building the relationships and the trust

## Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community

---

because without that, a young person will tell anybody anything. The majority of those 20, 55%, either had previous involvement with child protective services and the juvenile justice system. 85% reported being physically assaulted. 30% reported being assaulted with a weapon. 25% reported being held captive, either being kidnapped or held hostage. In addition, 100% of the youth had mental health issues. 100% reported substance abuse. And 100% reported experiencing a sexual assault at some point in their lives. 40%, again mirroring our general population, were Alaska Native youth.

One quote from a victim of sex trafficking who was involved with one of the prosecutions said, "He made me feel special. He found me when I was broken, he built me up, broke me back down and built me back up again to where I thought he was my everything."

We have worked with the FBI's Innocence Lost Task Force in the Anchorage Police Department's Vice Unit to not only provide an alternative for homeless teens and young adults who are at risk for sex trafficking as well as those who have been identified as victims of trafficking. Our outreach staff work hard to engage with the young people who are vulnerable.

In addition, street outreach staff work actively to create partnerships with entities in the community who may encounter a young person who is being trafficked so that they are aware of the warning signs and know what to do to help the victim to safety.

I want to tell you a brief story about a young lady that we met on outreach and began to develop a limited relationship with her. She was from a village. So over time, over probably about two months, she became familiar, where our team became familiar to her. And one day, one night she revealed she was involved, she was being trafficked, she wanted out. Our team did what our team does, they put her in the marked van, took her to Covenant House. Within an hour, the pimp

#### **Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community**

---

had called her and said, "If you don't come out, we're going to kill your family." She left and we thought we lost her. Through consistency and persistence over the next few days, we continued to see her and she said, "I really want out. Please help." We were smarter this time. We put her in an unmarked vehicle, and took her in through a back door. The Anchorage Police Department's response was phenomenal. Through their own time, came, along with the FBI, interviewed the young lady, we pulled resources and we got her back home. I neglected to tell you that she came to Anchorage because she had turned 18, didn't know her dad, wanted to know her dad, and it didn't work out.

In Anchorage, there are some hallmark characteristics of human trafficking cases. They typically include the following: Number one, primarily internet-based. We believe that through the internet, trafficking has gone underground. You no longer are able to drive down a street so much and find victims of trafficking or prostitutes. Victims are recruited directly by the trafficker; drugs are involved. Promises of a better life and money are used to entice victims. Victims are isolated and removed from their families.

Over the years, we've seen an influx of young, Alaska Native victims from rural Alaska, who are coerced and vulnerable to predators. Typical cases from rural Alaska looks a little bit different. They usually include that they are lured to Anchorage by family members or boyfriends. This referred to as "tundra pimping." Something other than money is used in exchange for sex, typically illicit substances. There is a history of prior victimization. The average age of entry into human trafficking is between 15 and 17 years old. Alaska Native youth from rural communities are particularly vulnerable because they may not be familiar with the city of Anchorage, have little or no support systems in Anchorage and are unaware of the resources and help available to them. Couple this with the knowledge that Alaska Native youth are valuable to traffickers, as they can be sold as any number of exotic ethnicities.

#### **Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community**

---

Obviously, homeless youth represent those at greatest risk and exploitation of victimization. In fact, our outreach team have identified that one out of every three youth will be approached by someone looking to exploit them within 48 to 72 hours of being homeless. Many victims are targeted because they are vulnerable. They nearly always have a history of abuse and/or substance abuse. Covenant House has seen some disturbing trends. We've seen predators attempting to recruit young people who are coming to Covenant House to receive services, both by waiting and loitering outside of our facility, and by sending in other youth to recruit. The scope and magnitude of the problem is very difficult to quantify. However, law enforcement officials are very clear that this is an epidemic and that human trafficking is notoriously underreported.

So in terms of recommendations, to really oversimplify the issue, we have two things that we need to look at. One is preventing further traumatization of our youth and the second one is healing. Healing our families, our communities, our children, of their trauma. A couple of the recommendations that we absolutely echo what we've heard over the last 24 hours is the consistent funding of services and programs.

Street outreach I've spoken quite a bit about. That is a very important service as well as the emergency youth shelters. They are services that meet the basic needs of youth—clothes, food and shelter. They are the first step in the continuum that begins identifying vulnerable and at risk youth and beginning the process of engagement—beginning to build that relationship, beginning to build that trust. With an increase in human trafficking, particularly among the Alaska Native youth, it is critical that consistent funding to support street outreach efforts and emergency youth shelter is available.

Studies have identified that the primary needs of traffic victims include the following: Safe and secure housing, emergency, transitional and long-term housing, food and clothing, individual counseling and peer support, substance

#### Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community

---

abuse treatment, medical services, legal assistance, job training and placement, and education. It is really important to note that services need to be available when that young person says that they want to access them. If they need to wait a month to get into residential substance abuse treatment, a month is probably way too long.

Another recommendation is to promote trauma-informed services in the delivery of whatever service there is. As I spoke about earlier, when you understand trauma, they understand you need to take a different approach.

We need to increase education and awareness about the issues. We've heard spoken about education and awareness in our schools, that we also need our law enforcement officials and our judges to be aware and informed about the human trafficking.

We also need to pay attention to our caregivers because for our staff, it is very difficult when you hear the stories of trauma from multiple youths in a day. The impact on our caregivers is severe. Burnout rates are high. We need to take care of them as well.

And I'll leave with one thought. We've all heard it said, it only takes one person to change a life. As an individual, I can be that one person—you all can be that one person. As an organization, Covenant House can be that one. As an Advisory Committee, you can be that one. As a society, we can be that one. Let's all be that one. Thank you.

*Valerie Davidson:*

*Quyana, Diana, for your testimony, for the incredible work that you do at Covenant House and making sure that our young people have a safe place to be when they have no other option. And I want to especially thank you for highlighting the issue of sex trafficking, because a lot of times at the community level, at the village level, I think what families sometimes think is—and I'll just use a generic name—sometimes families think, "Well Mary moved into Anchorage, she's living with her boyfriend." And because the issue of sex trafficking in Alaska is*

**Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence  
in the Home and in the Community**

---

becoming talked about, people are becoming more aware of it, when we hear that a family member, somebody in the community has moved to Anchorage to live with her boyfriend, people are beginning to ask: Who is her boyfriend? Has anyone in the family met her boyfriend? Has he ever taken the time to reach out to no other family members? Has he come to the village to visit? When we go to Anchorage to visit, has anybody had any contact with her? And so highlighting the issue of sex trafficking is helping people to begin to ask those really hard questions, because sometimes we just don't know. So with that, I want to say thank you again for your testimony and for the great work that you do. And I'm going to go ahead and open the floor to questions from the Advisory Committee members. Go ahead, Anita.

*Anita Fineday:*

Thank you for your testimony. I have a question for Ms. Bline about Covenant House. I'm interested just in ballpark numbers, how you are funded? Federal, state?

*Diana Bline:*

We, I think are very unique in our funding, in that it used to be—and the percentages are going to be a little bit different now, but it used to be that we were basically in thirds. That a third came from state and local grants, a third came from federal grants and then a third came from private fundraising that we do. We are extremely dependent on our community support that we receive.

*Valerie Davidson:*

Go ahead, Dee.

*Dolores Bigfoot:*

If I could just ask a follow up. Are you able to bill any federal sources for reimbursement for your services? Are you a licensed, anything?

*Diana Bline:*

We are a licensed childcare facility by the State of Alaska. We receive—it's a very small amount from the State—for residential services. We do have two grants currently with the Administration on Children and Families. One is for a basic center, for the emergency shelter, and the other right now is for a maternity group home, one of our transitional live-in programs, is for pregnant or parenting teens. This



#### Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community

---

year, unfortunately, we lost our street outreach grant, which was devastating to us. We reapplied; we're hopeful that we're funded again.

*Anita Fineday:*

Thank you.

*Dolores Bigfoot:*

I want to say thank you for the work you're doing. My son was abused as a child that I had no idea about and ended up on the streets in California. So I'm always grateful for those that have stepped up and been helpful. So my question is, is there contact back with the family? Is there efforts to, for re-notification? Is there—I recognize that there are some harsh circumstances that families encounter and children are running away from things, whether it's you know, their own perceived abuse or you know, like with my son, who I had no idea had been abused and was fighting all kinds of personal demons because of it. So—and then how are you serving the youth that come into your Covenant House and gathering the statistics and you know, I'm grateful that you're talking about—all of you—that talked about a study and trauma-informed care and recognizing evidence- based practices.

So as you—you know, we're here to learn, we're here to figure out how are you making things work, you know, that's what we want to know. How are you making things work. And so, you know, the details about how you're making a program function and the community level involvement you have, how do you engage the community to provide that kind of support? We can talk about funding with ready funds for grants and federal grants or state grants, but how are you bringing that community involvement and are there—are you seeing siblings that come through from families? I mean, and I think that's pretty discouraging when that occurs. And then, you know, how long can these kids stay with you and as you transition them out from this level of need, how are they being successful at other levels when they're able to get their GED or they're able to get long-term housing. So help us understand your success so that we can think about how that can be replicated.

## Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community

---

*Diana Bline:*

Thank you. There's a lot of questions in there, so [LAUGHS] please ask the ones I don't answer, again. Which may be a lot of them. I want to say that kids that come to Covenant House are the most courageous, incredible youth on the planet. We know how hard it is as an adult to ask for help. You know, that the longstanding joke about a man who won't stop and ask for directions, which in my case, with my husband, is true. And for a young person, especially a teenager, who knows everything typically, right? Teenagers are challenging and there's actually brain research that explains all of that. They are the most courageous kids.

Not everybody makes it the first time. Our average length of stay is about 18 days. We have some who are with us for 24 hours or less, and then we have others who are with us for several months as we're working on a plan with them. It often will take a youth multiple times coming back in, which is where trauma-informed services come in, where we give them another chance. And one of the premises behind trauma-informed care is what can we do differently as adults that will cause that young person to go "oh" and begin to shift their way of thinking—to teach them that not every adult is somebody who is going to be out there to harm them. Because that's a lot of their experience. Some of the kids come into Covenant House because they got grounded and they can't play their PlayStation. We say, "Go home." Sometimes it may require a family meeting and look at what the issues are between the parents and the child, come to agreements, that youth goes home. We are mandated by the State of Alaska as mandatory reporters, so depending on the circumstance that the youth comes in, we may be making reports to Office of Children's Services. Our number one goal is to reunite with family if it's a safe place, and we make great efforts toward that. And what were some of the other questions you had?

*Dolores Bigfoot:*

About the community engagement, the support you get from the community. And is it broader than Anchorage? Is it broader than the state? I mean, is it, you know...

## Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community

---

*Diana Bline:*

It is. It's broad. What I didn't say initially, that I was going to, is that Covenant House Alaska is one of 21 sites of Covenant House International. Covenant House International encompasses 21 different sites, with four sites in Latin America and two sites in Canada. One of the beautiful things about Covenant House and what we've heard so much talking about communities developing their own solutions, is that Alaska Covenant House develops solutions to meet the needs of our population. We're not you know, cookie cutter by any means. We have relationships with our federal delegations, with our representatives and senators. It's all about relationships—relationships with our community partners. I think one of the part of our success, and our Executive Director, Alison Kear, years ago said, "We want it all done for our youth, but we don't want to do it all." So for our substance abuse counseling, we have collaboration with Volunteers of America. They are experts, they provide clinical supervision through a staff who is on site with Covenant House 40 hours a week. We don't have to send that youth somewhere else.

Through some of our mental health providers, Anchorage Community Mental Health in the state, will start providing 20 hours a week of mental health counseling. Southcentral Foundation has been an amazing partner, where they too come in and provide mental health counseling for our youth. So we don't want or need to be everything. As the Director of Programs, I am not a clinical supervisor, substance abuse or mental health. So we rely on the expertise, so the collaboration is paramount, I think, and a really good service delivery system.

With our local people, again, it's about relationships. We invite people in, we educate them and then we also I think, is paramount upon us because of the community support that we have, is that we do the very best we can. We don't get to get to save every youth. And what we tell our staff is something that you may say today—you think may just go completely—you don't know when and when that seed begins to germinate and grow, also requires a lot of patience.

#### Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community

---

*Joanne Shenandoah:* Yeah, my question is for Elsie. You may be aware there is a legalized effort across Canada for financial restitution for those who were abused in boarding schools and also the church, various churches. Yesterday, a woman came up to me, a Native Alaska woman who is a reverend here, and she actually visits those who come into the hospital locally, and she asked if the task force had addressed religion. And you know, while that's also included in part of our description of what we call historical trauma, I would like to ask you specifically, what would you see as a healing approach to those who have been abused for Alaska Natives with faith-based organizations? If you've thought that through in respect to how we can go about making restitution and how America can help heal that. That's my question for you.

*Elsie Boudreau:* Thank you for the question. I think it's really important on any level, just to acknowledge that clergy sexual abuse has happened and that religion has played a role in the level of trauma that our Alaska Native people experience. And in just acknowledging that and finding a way when you're standing in front of someone who has been abused by clergy—acknowledging that and knowing that there are other forms of spirituality that I, as a Yup'ik person, relate to my Yup'ik spirituality. And embracing that and allowing a way for people to heal without imposing faith-based, unless that is something that they are agreeable to. And I would, you know, I'm thinking about—I mean, when we think about holistic healing—Walt Monegan talked about the blanket toss, right? And what I would add to that is that as native people—we have to look at what the blanket toss really is and look at the people holding the blanket toss, right? We want healthy people, healthy leaders that are holding that blanket toss and we need to provide a way for healthy leaders to emerge. We want to support children who experience trauma, but as healthy adults that are strong in who we are as native people in *yuyaraq*, right?

So it's building that—it's we have to build that leadership development, build that blanket strong as a foundation so that when we do offer up our children in a way for them to

#### Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home and in the Community

---

see the world for their fullest potential, they have a place to land, right? Every piece of that blanket toss can mean something if you think about it.

And so—I mean, I'm proposing, you know, a leadership capacity development program for transformational change. And we need to invite leaders of every sector of the community. Not just the service providers. We need to invite leaders from every sector—from the schools, from the churches, from behavioral health aides, from the Chief of Police from any type of law enforcement. They can come together and go through a leadership development piece and then they can go back into their communities and invite more people to go through this transformational leadership development. And that's a way to build that strong blanket toss.

I don't know if I'm creating a good picture of that, but I see it in my mind, there is, it is possible. And we need to have those leaders for our children to be able to grow and flourish. And one—I know, you know, in talking to one of the elders and in reading a book about why, who we are as native people—we talk to you because we love you. You know, our parents talk to us because they love us. Frank Andrew indicated that leaders were chosen because their minds were accurate or intelligent and they had good intentions and they encouraged people to lead good and peaceful lives. That's what we are seeking. We want those people at our blanket toss. And there is a way to do that through the transformational change and the leadership development. I don't know if that answers your question.

*Dolores Bigfoot:*

I'm glad you mentioned sort of the characteristics of good hearts and good people. With the—my husband was Cheyenne Chief and he would—he said that his role as a Chief was to be a servant to the people. So he said that he was—you know, as Cheyenne Chief, they were to be the last person served; in fact, they were supposed to serve others and you know, bring them plates or bring them food and they were supposed to be good listeners and they were supposed to be aware of the needs of others. And I think one of the things that when we use the word "leadership," we think that that has a different connotation within the bigger universe.

---

**Panel 4: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence  
in the Home and in the Community**

---

But really, within the bigger universe, it's this indigenous way of thinking about how we treat one another. And I remember when there was commentary on Nelson Mandela after he died and there was news broadcasters that were saying, "Well, you know, he was a Chief in his village, but he didn't act like a Chief." You know, he didn't—he was very humble and he, you know, was very reserved and he never called on his Chiefness to you know, be prominent. And so they were really making comments about how they thought he should be and he was a very humble man. So the idea of what it means to be a leader has been transformed. So I think that you know, your definition I would like to see even clearer here, that your words be even more reflective of all those qualities and traits that we think of in terms of our indigenous was of thinking of leaders and what that means. So if you get an opportunity, I would like for you to make the—articulate that more in your written presentation or add to, because I think that's important.

*Valerie Davidson:*

Thank you. If there are no other questions, I think we're going to— Thank you again, very much for your incredible testimony and we're going to go ahead and take a break for lunch and we'll resume at 1:30, so *quyana*.

[END PANEL 4]