

Alaska Native Heritage Center

Sharing the Diversity of Alaska's Cultural Groups

The Alaska Native Heritage Center (ANHC) operates under the distinct mission of sharing, perpetuating and preserving the unique Alaska Native cultures, languages, traditions and values through celebration and education. An award-winning cultural center, it provides visitors a unique opportunity to experience the diversity of 11 Alaska Native cultures in one location. ANHC conveys the rich heritage of Alaska's different cultural groups through engaging workshops, demonstrations, and guided tours of indoor exhibits and outdoor village sites. It was established in 1999, and has received more than a million visitors from all around the world.

Nonprofit at Work

A nonprofit organization, ANHC offers a variety of educational and cultural awareness programs on site, as well as in local businesses and schools. One of its key objectives is to pass on the wisdom and principles of Alaska's elders to the younger generation.

"The center seeks to develop cultural pride, knowledge and values in Alaska Native youth to provide a foundation for their lifelong success," said ANHC President and CEO Annette Evans Smith. "By impacting the cultural identity and self-esteem of our youth, the cultural wealth of Alaska Native people will continue for future generations."

ANHC hosts interactive programs to teach visiting students of all ages about Alaska's indigenous cultures. It also presents a free cultural outreach program, called Shavila, inside schools for students in grades kindergarten through six. The 45-minute program uses storytelling, Native dances and other demonstrations to communicate the diversity of Alaska Native cultures.

Recently, ANHC launched the Walking in Two Worlds program to help at-risk Alaska Native/American Indian students with high absenteeism, behavior problems, poor adjustment, or facing



A dance lesson taught by Marcella McIntyre, Education Specialist.

Photo by Matt Hage

disciplinary action such as in- or out-of-school suspension or expulsion. It combines intervention from school staff and parents with counseling, tutoring, mental health and/or social services to put students back "on-track" to graduate. Soon, the program will offer an afterschool component to provide homework time, cultural activities, group discussions and socialization at the center.

Vision is Essential

In the future, ANHC plans to create language immersion summer camps for Alaska Native youth to learn their languages along with art, dance and other cultural information. The camps are vital because many of the Alaska Native languages or dialects are at risk and have very few speakers remaining, according to Evans Smith. She said: "The Alaska Native languages are part of preserving the cultures, and the center has worked on this for many years and with different projects. This new project represents a different approach, and we are very excited about it."

ANHC also conducts a Cultural Awareness Workshop and Cultural Understanding Experience training for businesses, organizations, agencies and other groups.

The fee-based workshops engage participants in active learning through games, interviews, role play, personal reflection, video presentations, dramatic performances, tours and lectures. Training sessions, which can be scheduled for as little as two hours or up to two days, are held at the center or client's location.

Whether it's enlightening adults or youth, ANHC is making a difference by improving the world's understanding and appreciation of Alaska Native people.



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A non-profit organization

For more information contact:

Alaska Native Heritage Center
Annette Evans Smith, President
and CEO

8800 Heritage Center Dr.
Anchorage, Alaska 99504
(907) 330-8000

www.alaskanative.net