



BERING STRAIT SUICIDE PREVENTION

Nome, Alaska

The Land



- Located in Northwest Alaska, the region covers an area encompassing over 26,000 square miles and 15 villages. Nome is the regional hub.
- Daylight in the summer: 20 hours 55 minutes
- Daylight in the winter: 4 hours 17 minutes
- Villages are accessible primarily by air travel

The People



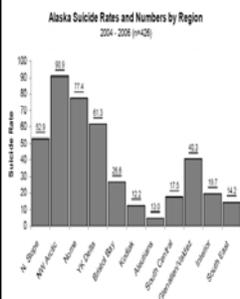
- Approximately 9,000 people live in the region, 3,500 reside in Nome
- 90-95% of village residents are Alaska Native
- 75% belong to one of three distinct groups- Inupiaq, Central Yup'ik, or St. Lawrence Island Yupik
- 45% are 19 years old or younger, 20% between 20 -34
- Evidence of human habitation in the region dates back 10,000 years

The Life



- Strong family and community connections
- Traditional culture is central to identity
- Subsistence is necessary for survival
- Limited housing and job opportunities
- Poverty levels and cost of living in the region are among the highest in the nation.

The Problem



- Rapid cultural transition, high rates of trauma, limited communication, connection, and understanding of contributing factors
- Alaska Natives are taking their lives at alarming rates.
- The suicide rate in the Bering Strait Region is 3x higher than the Alaska rate and 6x higher than the national rate.
- Alaska Native youth account for 19% of the total youth population in Alaska and 60% of the suicide deaths in that age group

*Source: Statewide Suicide Prevention Council, Fiscal Year 2007 Annual Report to the Legislature

Our Approach

- Prevention of suicide through traditional cultural knowledge and wellbeing
- Encourage healthy community connections
- Enable positive relationships between youth, elders, and adults
- Support community initiatives

Camp Igaliq



- 38 youth from around the region came together to share and learn from one another
- Several mentors from surrounding villages participated with the youth
- Games and activities
- Talking circles and storytelling

Youth Leaders



- Each of the 15 villages started a Youth Leaders Program
- Students were asked through surveys, who of their peers they looked to as a leader
- The students identified through the survey were recognized through the program as leaders
- At times those who students identified as leaders were not the same students teachers would have identified

Youth Leaders Training



- Nearly 100 students flew to Stebbins to attend a weekend training session
- Leaders are involved in presentations for fellow students, interventions for students who are having problems, school spirit, and community building activities
- Students selected by their peers have the confidence to model positive behavior

Youth Leader Interviews

How has the youth leader training prepared you?

- "I understand more of what I can do and how I can help people in better ways....how I can save a life"

What do you like most about being a youth leader?

- "What I like about is that we get to help people in every way that we can possibly.....right now we're having a game night for little kids because it's too cold out to play on the playground"

Youth Leader Interviews

How has being a youth leader improved your life?

- "I've changed a lot. I don't care what people think about me"
- "Getting along better with my family....acting a lot more like a family since I started...we are all trying to get along with each other"

What are your future plans as a youth leader?

- "Get bullying out of our school... out of the village"
- "Help people get through their hard times"
