

Txin Kaangu̇ Initiative

Evaluation Brief

In 2015, the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island Tribal Government (ACSPI) established the Txin Kaangu̇ Initiative (TKI), to integrate programs and services and serve the Alaska Native village located in St. Paul Island, Alaska. The phrase “Txin Kaangu̇” translates roughly to “your health and wellness”; because ACSPI’s child welfare cases are centered around domestic violence, child sexual abuse, neglect, or parental substance abuse, TKI offers a holistic healing and wellness package to families. Services offered include cultural activities, behavioral health, youth programs, health programs, victim services, assistance programs, children and family programs, and wellness.

The goal of the Initiative is to provide for the integration of Tribal Government programs, services, departments, divisions, and their employees that provide for the health, welfare, and safety of the Aleut Community of St. Paul Tribal membership and community. Txin Kaangu̇ reflects the desire for a holistic approach to healing and wellness that relies on collaboration and creativity in a broad approach to service provision.

About the Program

The TKI department, under the larger Tribal Government, employs staff in two locations: one office in Anchorage, and another on St. Paul Island. The Tribal Government’s Chief Judge works offsite in Sitka.

The intent of TKI was to “empower our community to build strong and resilient families” through the idea of Ataqakun Anġaġilix, or “living together as one.” By re-centering the approach to

ABOUT THE CENTER

The Children’s Bureau (CB) funded the Center for Native Child and Family Resilience (the Center) to gather and disseminate information about Tribally relevant practice models, interventions, and services that contribute substantively to child maltreatment prevention efforts and family resilience developed by and for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) populations. The Center partnered with five project sites for four years (2019–2022) to design or refine, implement, and evaluate their child maltreatment prevention/intervention programs for AI/AN children and families. This brief summarizes lessons and findings from the project-driven evaluation conducted with TKI in support of building evidence for Tribally led child welfare initiatives.

individual health on each person’s interconnectedness with their entire community (i.e., rather than focusing solely on individual well-being), TKI is returning to traditional values that will help people see their value and role in keeping the entire community safe.

The services included in TKI evolved over several years and include the Healing of the Canoe’s Culturally Grounded Life Skills for Youth curriculum, which incorporates culture to prevent substance abuse and suicide and connects the youth to the community’s Tribal culture, in addition to victims’ services and community wellness activities.



**Center for
Native Child
and Family Resilience**



**ALEUT
COMMUNITY OF
ST. PAUL**

COMMUNITY SAFETY & PEACE



The following graphic presents a list of ACSPI services:

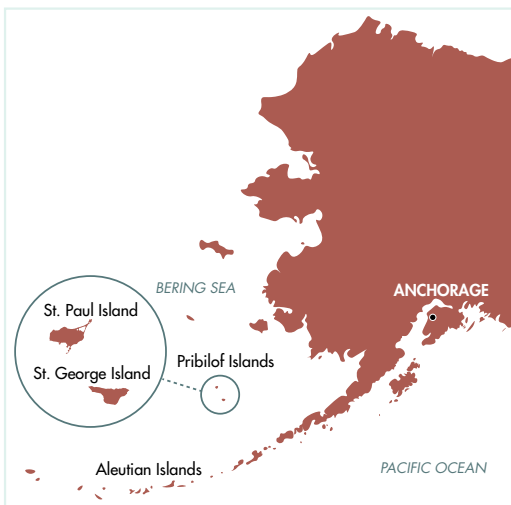
Cultural Activities	Behavioral Health	Youth	Health	Victim Services	Assistance	Children & Family	Wellness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Cultural Camps ◇ Talking Circles ◇ Native Crafts ◇ Maskaraatan ◇ Unangan Tunuu (UTSLT) ◇ Harvesting Education ◇ Subsistence Preservation ◇ Aleut Evacuation Walk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy ◇ Individual & Group Counseling ◇ Pre-treatment for Substance Abuse ◇ Substance Abuse Tx ◇ Aftercare ◇ Crisis Intervention ◇ Sober housing ◇ Prime for Life ◇ ASAP ◇ Healing of the Canoe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Art Activities ◇ Basketball ◇ Sunday School ◇ Youth Tribal Council ◇ Healthy Relationships (teen and adult) ◇ Educational Tutoring ◇ Seabird Camp ◇ Audio/Visual Camp 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Community Health Aide ◇ Emergency Medical Quarantine facilities ◇ FEMA Support ◇ Yearly Clinics (dental, optometry, women's, diabetes etc.) ◇ Medication Disposal ◇ Vaccine Clinics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Advocacy for Sexual Assault/ Abuse & Domestic Violence ◇ Domestic Violence Shelter & Intervention ◇ Victims Rights Assistance ◇ Forensic Interviews/Exams ◇ SAFESTAR ◇ Transitional Housing ◇ Victim Compensation Assistance ◇ Court Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Food Bank ◇ Emergency Medical Loans ◇ Patient Access to Care ◇ General Assistance ◇ Elder Daily Food Delivery ◇ Burial Assistance ◇ Child Care Assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Child & Adult Protection Services ◇ Elder Home Visits ◇ Parents as Teachers ◇ Individual and Family Safety Planning ◇ Parenting Education ◇ Advocacy ◇ Life Skills Classes ◇ Healthy Relationship Classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Quarterly Health Fairs ◇ Annual Color Me Healthy Run/Walk ◇ Annual Marathon & Bike Race ◇ Step Challenge ◇ Field Days ◇ Annual Chili Cook off and Walk ◇ Nutritional Outreach ◇ 4th of July Celebration

Result: Comprehensive community-wide programs and services designed to support cultural resilience, strengthen community and promote wellness.

How We Served the Community

CNCFR offered many services to the community beyond assisting with integrating the Tribal Government entities that provide for the health, welfare, and safety of the local Tribal membership and community. These services include:

- Enhancement of existing program brochures for purposes of dissemination throughout the island and to ensure they are user friendly and accurate.
- Development of personnel recruitment and onboarding policies and procedures and accompanying New Personnel Welcome & Orientation slide deck to assist with onboarding.
- Addition of the onboarding training to the Canvas Learning Management System.
- Development of a Personal Sovereignty Statement for use in the program's mandatory reporting training, when meeting with and sharing with the community at large, and during personnel onboarding.
- Development of a legacy plan to ensure the long-term viability of the TKI service model and the wellbeing of the community.



The city of St. Paul is the sole settlement of Saint Paul Island in the Pribilof Islands, a small island group in the Bering Sea off the west coast of Alaska. St. Paul is a remote, rural, Alaska Native village with a population of less than 600 but is the largest Aleut community in the United States.



TKI's Work With CNCFR

The Aleut Community of St. Paul Island have been revising their child and family serving programs since the year 2000. In late 2000, St. Paul's Tribal Council (Council) began to realize they needed to take a more active role in the lives of their members health and wellness to stem the flow of children into the foster care system. In 2011, the Council informed the nonprofit corporation Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, Inc. (APIAI), the federally recognized tribal organization of the Aleut people in Alaska, that it would be reassuming the Tribes role in self-governing the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) program.

Since that time, a lot of effort went into developing a holistic approach to healing and wellness through updating the Tribal Children's Code, creation of policies and procedures for working with families who needed to have children placed in out of home care, as well as creating a Tribal Court Bench guide. This development helped numerous families be reunited and get the preventative and reunification services.

To support the work of the Tribe and the continued development of TKI, the CNCFR project focused on:

- Preparing information on the TKI's model for dissemination throughout the island to generate interest and curiosity.
- Identifying and developing a personnel system and onboarding process to support the development of a culturally informed staff who are aware of the importance of cultural humility, understand Tribal traditions and values, and recognize how the values and traditions intersect their work within the Tribal child welfare system.
- Engaging the community in embracing and accepting responsibility for individual sovereignty to support healthy children and families. The notion of individual sovereignty was put to use here, though not as you might find in Anglo-American discussions of individual sovereignty. Instead, the concept is deployed a correction to the colonization and enslavement of the people of St. Paul Island; individual sovereignty is about taking ownership of one's self and life so as to contribute to the flourishing of the community.

THE CENTER'S APPROACH TO EVALUATION

Planning and implementing evaluations involved a collaborative and participatory process governed by the Tribal projects, their participants, and communities, with support from the Center team. This included developing culturally grounded and Tribally driven research questions, methodologies, and instruments. Evaluation work was grounded in Indigenous Ways of Knowing (IWOK) and sought to honor Indigenous ways of communication, incorporate cultural values, and integrate traditional knowledge gathering passed down through generations. To this end, the project team engaged with community members; sought the wisdom of Elders; participated in the oral tradition, storytelling, and ceremonies; and committed to keeping community values and context at the center of the work.

Evaluation Process/Steps

The planning of the evaluation of TKI was a collaborative and participatory process governed by the TKI team and facilitated by the Center, with the support of an Indigenous evaluation consultant. Collaboration for the evaluation between the TKI team and the Center began with an evaluability assessment in May 2019.

Meetings between the Center and the TKI team were grounded in the principles of IWOK to honor Unangan ways of communication, culture, and knowledge passed down through generations. The TKI team and the Center collaborated to define the goals of their partnership and activities to support those goals to support TKI's refinement of its service model. The Center team again visited TKI's Anchorage office in August 2019 to collaboratively develop a workplan. The process of developing the work plan was initiated through the creation of a Pathway to Change, which is a process to develop an Indigenous impact or logic model for achieving program outcomes. Upon completion and approval of the work plan, weekly meetings facilitated fully defining each objective and related activities until the project's



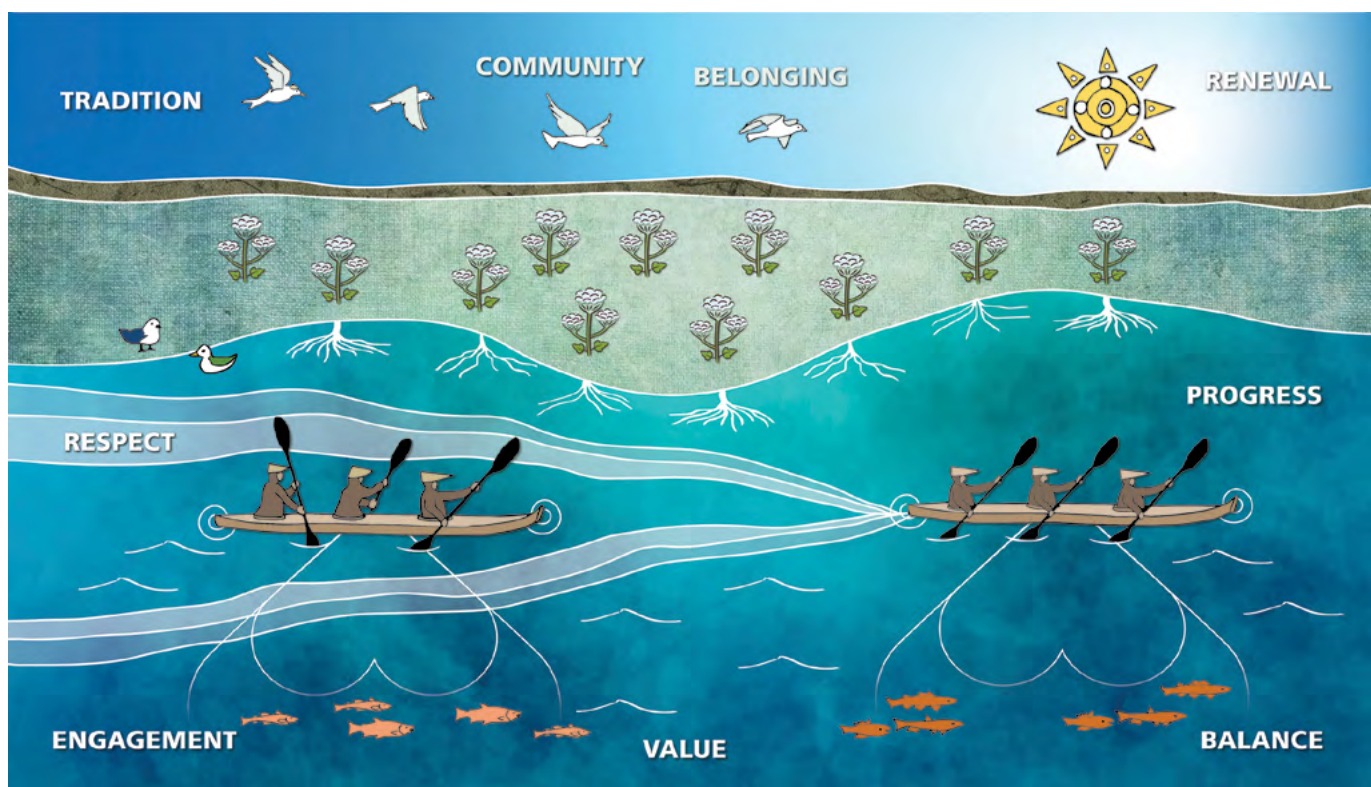
workplan was complete. The workplan described TKI activities and goals for child maltreatment prevention in depth and laid out central tasks of the collaboration between the TKI team and the Center.

Evaluation planning began after the workplan was finalized. The implementation and outcome evaluation questions were crafted over months of bi-directional learning, listening, and planning between the entire TKI team and the Center team. After the approval of the workplan in early 2020, the Center team began

planning an in-person site visit to further discuss the evaluation plan, but quickly had to pivot to a virtual site visit after the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown travel to the island and the Tribal staff were sent home to work remotely, so meeting with the Anchorage staff was also not an option. One of the critical pieces of the virtual site visit was the kick-off of a creative group activity called *Mind Mapping*. The process of *Mind Mapping* is “to draw out” implicit knowledge about a particular topic by tapping into various kinds of knowledge, both “emotional” and “logical.”

SEA OF CHANGE: STORY OF THE MIND MAP

The individuals paddling in the Baidarka demonstrate the importance of working together. When paddlers are not paddling in unison, as shown by the left Baidarka, the journey is more strenuous and frustrating. However, when the struggling paddler has someone modeling in the front and someone supporting them from behind, we move to the second Baidarka, as shown on the right, with everyone paddling together. The wake of this Baidarka serves as a guide for those behind it, leading the way.



The sun symbolizes what the paddlers are traveling toward: light, warmth, energy, love, and life. The poochkis and their roots symbolize the culture, traditions, history, and way of life for people on the island. What is beneath the surface is responsible for all that blooms and flourishes on the bountiful island. This is also represented in the reflections of the hearts that are beneath the paddlers, to remind us that the love and spirit that guides our work, even if not always visible, is always there.



Because of the TKI team's interest in and valuing of artistic vision and expression, Mind Mapping was an effective tool that aligned with the values of this group while supporting the goal of establishing a shared vision for TKI to inform the priorities of the evaluation.

What We Learned

The evaluation was crafted to elevate the voices of the community, just as the program supports and uplifts children and families to help their spirits soar. The evaluation planning created an opportunity to gather respected community service providers and leaders and work towards demonstrating program success with rigor while coming together for the welfare of children. The work reverberated beyond the St. Paul Island community, deeply touching the hearts and minds of the Center team. For members of the immediate and greater St. Paul community that participated in this evaluation, the services provided by TKI are an invaluable aspect of health and wellness. Members of the TKI team and the larger community remain hopeful about the healing that can occur through the revitalization of traditional knowledge, values, and ways and its intersection with modern tools such as parenting skills and education and trauma-informed behavioral health services.

The TKI team took on the evaluation knowing it would be a challenge. The evaluation occurred under difficult conditions, and the pandemic added an exponential degree of difficulty. But a powerful lesson emerged about the level of distrust among families towards evaluation. Families need time—*years*—to build trust with TKI staff as they navigate the ups and downs of their lives and community. Evaluation may also continue to leverage the program's long-lasting ties with the families who have been touched by the TKI team and their services. That is, the TKI team may incorporate the healing journey questions into their ongoing meetings with customers and use these to highlight or uncover



progress towards healing. The TKI team is also currently working to expand their SAFE data system, established as part of the Tribe's Title IV-E reporting requirements, which they use to capture needs and service receipt by families. The refinement of this data system aims to streamline communication across staff on-island and in Anchorage and will inform decision-making to help customers and families reach their personal goals.

In collaboration with TKI staff, several lessons learned emerged from the story of the evaluation that could help TKI further improve its services and make progress towards achieving its long-term vision for the community. Following are those lessons:

1. Be intentional about the array of services offered.
2. Incorporating a combination of traditional and modern healing approaches is critical to successful services.
3. As the COVID-19 pandemic allows, re-engaging with the community in-person should be a main priority as a preventative measure.
4. Within the TKI team, continue to build open, honest (non-punitive) communication.



Acknowledgements

The [Center for Native Child and Family Resilience](#) (CNCFR) includes staff from [JBS International, Inc.](#) (JBS), the [Tribal Law and Policy Institute](#) (TLPI), [Mathematica](#), and [L&M Policy Research](#) (L&M). The Center partnered with five project sites to design or refine, implement, and evaluate their child maltreatment prevention or intervention programs for AI/AN children and families. This document summarizes the Evaluation Report, which was the work of:

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Resources

The following products about the program were developed through the Center/[TKI](#) partnership:

- [TKI Implementation Guide](#)
- [TKI Program Manual](#)
- [TKI Evaluation Report](#)
- [TKI Personnel Recruitment and Onboarding Policy & Procedures](#)
- [TKI Training for New Personnel](#)