

Panel 3: The Role of the Court System: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home, Community, and Juvenile Justice System Response

Joanne Shenandoah: Thank you, Val. Panel 3 now we will hear from. And I wanted to remind you to speak clearly and into the microphone. Because what is happening is we are being recorded and then we can be sure to catch everything that you are going to tell us. So panel 3 is the “The Role of the Court System: Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence in the Home, in the Community, and Juvenile Justice Response.” So again, you’ll have 15 minutes. And we’re going to hear first from Lisa Jaeger, Tribal Government Specialist.

Lisa Jaeger: Jaeger.

Joanne Shenandoah: Jaeger, sorry. Tanana Chiefs Conference. David Voluck, Tribal Judge, Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Tribes. Michael Jeffery, Superior Court Judge, Second Judicial District, Barrow, Alaska. Walt Monegan, Yup’ik and Tlingit descent, former CEO, Alaska Native Justice Center, Alaska Commissioner of Public Safety, Chief of Police, Anchorage Police Department. We truly look forward to hearing your testimony. Ms. Jaeger, you may begin.

Lisa Jaeger: Oh, how about that? All right. Well, first of all, you know, we’d like to really thank the taskforce for being here and coming to Alaska and venturing out into the bush part of Alaska to focus on our unique situations and concerns that we have in Alaska. So that is very much appreciated.

I, my name is Lisa Jaeger. I have had the honor and privilege to work for the Tanana Chiefs Conference as a tribal government specialist located out of Fairbanks, serving 37 federally recognized tribes for, since 1979. One of the advantages of being in, working for the tribes for that long is seeing the changes over time. And I can tell you it’s really exciting now to see how far the tribes have come since the passage of the Claims Act to now, in terms of a lot of things but including the development of their tribal courts and protecting children from violence and abuse. So it really gives me a little bit of a historical perspective.

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And in my opinion, the development of tribal courts and a truly cooperative relationship with both the Office of Children's Services and with the state judiciary system is really crucial for protecting children against violence and abuse in Alaska. So I'm, I sure, I think that you've already heard a lot about the horrific statistics and things like that in Alaska in the commission report, the Tribal Law and Order Commission Report, the chapter on Alaska itself. I think Troy Eid might've spoke to you yesterday about that.

So that being said, there's been kind of a long history in terms of the development of tribal courts in Alaska to protect children. And starting back in the 1980's, early 80's, the tribes in our region started doing child protection and custody cases from those early days. This was a time when the state of Alaska did not recognize tribes, did not believe they even survived the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. So the tribes saw that as something that they had to do, was critical to do. The Indian Child Welfare Act was kind of a opener, you know, for doing that activity.

So we've been doing child protection cases in the tribal courts in the Tanana Chiefs region for a long time and have had to kind of fight every single step of the way for tribal recognition, tribal jurisdiction to do this. So it's been kind of a long turbulent history. We finally have arrived to a time now when we have a lot more actually recognition and cooperation, and recognition of tribal jurisdiction in order to protect children.

So just a little bit about the current picture of tribal courts in our region. I've been fortunate to be able to travel over this great state all over. But I'm going to report actually right now on the tribal courts just in our region. You know the remoteness of the state, how big it is. Your travels gave you a little taste of that. The state of Alaska claims criminal jurisdiction statewide, yet just doesn't have the resources in this vast state to actually have law enforcement on the ground in every place. And same with the state judiciary. Can't be in every place at the same time. So we have a lack of not dedicated people, because there is a lot of very

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dedicated law enforcement officers and judiciary. But scant resources. And so the tribes on the ground have taken up that role to develop the tribal court as kind of the first responders.

Our, we have 37 federally recognized tribes in our region. We have, right now we have 31 tribal, active tribal courts. In our tribal courts right now we have 150 children in tribal custody that were put in tribal custody to protect from violence and abuse. So over the years, the number of children in tribal custody compared to state custody in our region kind of averages about 50/50. So about half of the children that are in custody at all are in state custody. The other half are in tribal custody. So they're very active. I mean, they are very active.

Our courts generally use panels of judges. There'll be a pool of judges, between 5 to 12 in the pools. They will use quorums of three. So there's usually three judges that will hear a case. A tribal social worker is often also the tribal court clerk because funding is scant to support the tribal court. So they are run by, basically by volunteerism and using existing resources there. So, but the people are so committed to protecting children that they will do that. They will volunteer their time as judges and for the tribal courts to do this.

The advantages of having the tribal court are numerous. First of all, like I was saying, they're on the ground. They're culturally sensitive. They will step in earlier to address a case, whereas the state of Alaska usually will not step in till later. I mean, even if they were on the ground out there. But they will step in kind of earlier. They know their own people. They know who the safe families are and what is actually happening in the families and where to place children. And we were putting some statistics together lately. And it's looking like of our caseloads in our tribal courts, about 90 percent of the children are placed with relatives. That's a real high percentage that are being placed with relatives there. So that's just kind of a quick kind of view.

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Our tribal courts are doing other things as well besides child protection. They do other types of cases as well. And going to be on the increase because we are working with some agreements with the state for our tribal courts to handle misdemeanors and some other types of cases. But so that's pretty exciting. That's on the horizon.

I had, I did submit some written testimony for this. And I'm just going to kind of go through the recommendations of what, you know, we think are kind of some top things. And like I started out with, the tribal state cooperation and collaboration is really important. We've spent so much time litigation trying to prove tribes exist, trying to prove our jurisdiction. It's really costly, lengthy. And so I think that's really a paramount to be able to really have that true cooperation and collaboration.

Funding of tribal courts. And we appreciate very much the Department of Justice funding that's available, the TCAP grants. There, and there are tribes in Alaska of course that have some of these grants, and in fact at Tanana Chiefs we have one. That's what's helping me to travel to the villages, help with the code development, help develop the tribal courts, teach facilitators for circle sentencing and things like that. So we appreciate that very much. But we're trying to, we need to get some kind of consistent, annual consistent funding. We're trying to work on Department of Interior, the Bureau of Indian Affairs to try to get some consistent funding through the compacts and 638 contracts. Even if it wouldn't be like full funding. But some, even a small amount of funding that's consistent that would come in every year is really critical. So we're working on that. I think it would be really useful to help pay some judges stipends for hearings and for, to help support the tribal court clerk position and things like that. I think it would be, even if it was small amount, if it was annual that they could count on, I think would be really important.

A big need is for training and technical assistance in Alaska for our tribal courts. It's huge. We're scattered around, you know, the state, all over. You can imagine the training cost if

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you were to go in each one of the villages and try to do training in there. It's very, very cost prohibited. So we have to get creative sometimes in the way we do training. I've gotten to the point of making videos, DVD's, this, you know, with this kind of thing. This one is *Alaska Tribes: The Story of Federal Indian Law in Alaska*, how it works. I can give a copy to the taskforce. We also have training, tribal court clerk training films and court films as well. But, you know, it's not like our tribes—I mean, we can't just go to the Lower 48 and get training down there because they operate a little bit differently up here. And so it is a need. We need more training and technical assistance.

But I think we also need more training for our tribal court judges, staff and council members on the effects of violence on children. I think that we really do. We need to get more training on that because I—we've, well, we had some situations recently where I don't think that some of our judges were appreciating the effects that are lifelong can be on children when they are around violence. And so I think that's really a critical need here.

We also of course, because usually about 95 or more percent of incidences of violence are involving alcohol substance abuse. It's a, there's a staggering link between that that we need of course always more services for treatment, counseling, doing assessments and things like that. That's always a critical thing. I wish that the United States would spend more money on treatment programs and less money on incarcerating people. I think it would really be helpful to the health and well-being of the country and the children that are in it.

So I think those are kind of some of the top things I think of to help support the tribal courts. And I am glad to end on the note that I did start in 1979, when the state of Alaska didn't even think that tribes, you know, survived the Claims Act, you know, today. And we have our Chief Justice, Dana Fabe, speaking in favor of tribal courts. And she says that tribal courts bring not only local knowledge, cultural sensitivity and experts to the table, but are a valuable

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resource experience and have a high level of local trust. And they exist in at least half of our state, stand ready, willing and able to take part in local justice. Just as the three branches of state government must work closely to ensure effective delivery of justice throughout the state court system, state and tribal courts must work closely together to ensure a system of rural justice delivery that responds to the need of every village in a matter that is timely, effective and fair. We've come a long way, but we do have some needs.

Joanne Shenandoah: Thank you very much, Ms. Jaeger, for your testimony. And we really appreciate your recommendations. They coincide with other nations as well. And so I believe you're on target. We're like very, very happy to spend this time with you today. Thank you for your testimony.

Lisa Jaeger: Thank you.

Joanne Shenandoah: And now we turn to Judge Voluck. We would like to hear from you. And please speak into the mic.

David Voluck: Okay. Good morning and thank you for your awesome words this morning. Appreciate it. I know that one of the things that makes me so happy to work with Native people is that they always start meetings off on the right foot. So I appreciate that. My name is David Abraham Voluck. And I've been working with Alaska's Native people for the last 20 years of my life. And they've tried to teach me a few things. And much like water slowly denting a rock, it's starting to get in.

The first thing I was taught was to thank my host. And we're in a pretty fancy building here. And so sometimes we can forget that we're actually sitting on somebody's land. And people could be buried here and there's memories. And so I would like to thank the Dene' people. Because I'm always a stranger in a strange land, as you might tell by my appearance. And so I appreciate Native people's warmth and welcoming in allowing us to be here as visitors.

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The second thing I was taught was to apologize to you in advance. What we're talking about is very emotional. I sometimes get worked up. And if I ever say anything that's out of, you know, off color or offensive in any way, please know that that's not my intention.

Much like my colleague Lisa, I'm not going to sit here and overwhelm you with the statistics. I know that there's others who are more qualified than I am to tell you about it. And as you may have noticed, Alaska Native people are probably up there in some of the most studied populations in our great nation. Everyone loves to come up here and study. But I'm so happy to see you all. Because I'm hoping someone will come and roll up their sleeves and work on the changes that we—that have been pointed out for the last 20 years that I've been here.

I will share Lisa's feeling of excitement. I think it was Bob Dylan said something's in the air, some kind of change is in the air. And you being here is more of this wave that we're feeling up here of finally the message is getting out that there's some hurt wings up here and flight is a little wobbly. I think Lisa and I have always felt like Chicken Little at the national meetings, you know, with my hair on fire, running through the room. Here comes Judge Voluck again talking about Alaska. But I digress.

Let me just briefly tell you what I might be able to offer your commission is that I've been blessed to work with all the different Native people in this state. And over time, silly them, they started to trust me. And as their courts started to grow, they invited me to sit with them and build their courts and cross-train each other. I'll give them my legal geek mind. They'll give me some wisdom. And between each other, we've been building the courts. And it's very exciting what's happening. Right now I get to hear cases in Juneau for the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, in Sitka for the Sitka Tribe of Alaska, and on St. Paul Island in the Pribilof's for the Aleut community of St. Paul. Yes, we can see Russia from our window when we are there. So I can bring some of the on-the-ground what's

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happening out there. I've been blessed to be with fellow tribal judges at statewide and national trainings.

What I wanted to speak to you briefly about this morning is something that you're probably aware of, but it bears repeating. A tribal cousin of mine, Felix Cohen, once likened our Native people to a miner's canary. And the image is important because, as the miner walked down the mineshaft and was unsure whether the air was fresh or toxic, would use the spiritual and physical sensitivity of this canary bird. And as it sang, the miner knew I'm breathing good air. But as it started to grow quiet, he knew he was switching to poisonous atmosphere. My dear commission members, you've traveled enough to know that the songs of the Native people are growing more muted. And that's a message to the entire United States. Because as the most sensitive lighthouse on how we're walking, these songs are being muted. And dare I say that the miner's canary of miner's canary is our Alaska Native people.

This is important for everyone in the United States. Because every family brings special gifts to our library. And if we're allowing wings of this human library to be damaged, it's like burning books. And as our former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor stated so brilliantly, we need the lessons of our third sovereign. None of us can afford to burn the library of traditional healing and traditional justice that tribal courts and tribal governments bring.

I wanted to share with you a couple of brief things that hit me between the eyes as I learned about violence and children. That just hearing violence in the other room—how many times have we as judges heard, "Oh, they didn't see it. They were—we had put them to bed already." Just hearing violence morphs the development of the young brain, which is a fancy way of saying brain damage. We're learning more in the field of epigenetics, that Lamarck was not so crazy after all. Our experiences in this life do leave a trace on our DNA that we hand down to our children. So moments of primacy actually affect the heritage that we give to our children. So when people say intergenerational trauma, grief

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and violence, this is not some kind of right-brained hippie dippy concept. It covers the entire sphere of our development.

But I'm not here to depress you this morning. I decided that this morning in the bathtub. You've already heard enough of those things. So what I wanted to say is flip it on its head. Just as, God forbid, trauma can be passed down to our children, so too can love and joy. Let's mutate our genes to the positive.

And so I wanted to talk to you about what tribal courts are doing. As Lisa said, they're the first responders. Read—I know you have—chapter two of the Indian Law and Order Commission Report. It's amazing. I mean, there's 80 communities in Alaska that don't even have police. Who is the first responder? And as Justice Fabe stated, who is the culturally appropriate responder? The numbers are staggering, my friends. Tweaking the system is not going to work. Even if you are so brilliant as to reduce the numbers by 25 percent—oh my God, can you imagine—we're still dealing with orders of magnitude beyond human. We need a fundamental paradigm shift. More or better of the same is not working.

The Sitka tribe when I worked for them was lucky enough to receive a Safe Start initiative. This is the idea of early intervention. The first phone call, the first call for help, which is usually, as we know, the tip of the iceberg. Because violence and sexual trauma is not on the list of things that you discuss at cocktail parties. Some of the cases that I hear are heart wrenching and incredibly embarrassing. So there is a culture of silence around this already. Intervene early.

So too with the native young people in the juvenile justice system. Refer these cases to tribal courts to peacemaking circles, elder's panels. This is what we do in the Pribilof Islands. We have, thank God, a tribal police force that intervenes first. They know every kid by name. They play handball and ping pong with these kids. They're respected

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by them. And as Lisa said and Justice Fabe said, they're trusted by them. The decisions cannot be made by strangers from far away. And unfortunately that's the way it is. The magistrate for the Pribilofs, who is a fantastic man, by the way, is in Seward, Alaska. I haven't counted how many miles that is, but I'm betting it's like got to be 1000 miles.

All right, but I digress again. Judge Jeffery is used to this from me. We also have the tribal youth deterrent effort, diversion effort I mean. First time minor consuming. These cases should not be in front of the state court. We know that of our prison population there's no common denominator, no sociological factor that you can point to that says you're going to be a prisoner. But one thing I can tell you, when they look at the population, 90 percent of them have minor consuming on their record. This is a gateway. And if we reach our youth early and light their fire, their passion for life—this is what a tribal judge, thank God, has the time to do. To find out who they are. What is their fire? What are their talents? How do I make that sentence relevant to you so that this is a meaningful life-changing event?

Woman: Three minutes.

David Voluck: Three minutes. Oh my God. I too was arrested when I was young. Is this really being taped? I'm going to deny everything. But that was a life-changing event. Let's not miss the opportunity.

Lastly, I'd like to say we issue domestic violence protection orders in my courts. And the recent trend that I've seen is older folks, grandparents, loved ones filing for protective orders on behalf of children. These are my petitioners.

All right. So let's get to a few recommendations. We run a child support court where I'm at. And sometimes there's some low income. So we look to remove barriers to success. Some of our barriers are an incessant and at times impulsive litigation posture against tribal courts and sovereignty. It must stop. The waste of time and money,

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but worse, the waste of lives. This has also moved into the political arena with the famous Alaska exceptions. To all national remedial legislations passed to improve the safety and welfare of Native Americans, except for in Alaska. I don't know about you, but that sure smells like unequal protection of the law to me. And like I said, we're talking about the most distressed sensitive population of the miner's canary. And we're left isolated up here, unable to first respond legally. Tribes do it anyway, looking over their shoulders. Because they're not going to let their people go down. But come on, we've got to change the climate up here.

All right, I have probably 33 seconds left. So I'm going to, I'm going to share with you my written recommendations in bullet points. I'll do my homework and give them to you. But I want to end on a positive note. And that is, in my tradition, the first word of creation is "bereishit." In the beginning. And it's kind of not such a great translation. But the famous question is why is it started with the Hebrew letter "bet," which is the second letter. It should start with the "alef." And all the different letters have an argument about why they should've been the first letter of all of creation. And the "bet" looks like a house, but the last wall is not complete. It's open. And that's because our good creator gave us this holy task to finish creation. We have the hand. And there's a famous saying "tracht gut und sein gut." Think good and it will be good. And that's more than just a pithy saying on your calendar, people. If we project positive thoughts and positive actions, we can turn this around. And then, please, God will see the day, as you have said, where all of our weapons are buried. And we should enjoy that blessing together with the sweetest of all blessings: peace. Thank you.

Joanne Shenandoah:

Thank you so very much. I have to say, Judge Voluck, that you have inspired me personally and have affirmed why I'm on this taskforce. Being a musician and having written over 400 songs myself, I try to inspire young people to write their own song. And I know that we have hope. And thinking on the theory of the good mind, which is what the Iroquois

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believe in as well, you'll see our five nations here and to see the small arrows going out. That means everyone's included. We're not done with our work. And I want to thank you so much for that very, very sensitive and profound testimony. Thank you.

David Voluck: (inaudible @ 00:41:55_1005)

Joanne Shenandoah: We will now hear from Judge Jeffery.

Michael Jeffery: Good morning. I would also like to thank all of you for taking the time to come to Alaska and taking the time to go to all those hearings that you've had and also taking that extra time to go out to Emmonak and Bethel. And that's great. I was talking with Dolores Bigfoot before this started and was delighted to hear that she has actually been up to Barrow. And that's great. And it is important. And I agree with Judge Voluck about honoring the fact that the Dena'ina people were here before Anchorage and before all this. And I'd like to honor that tribal group.

Let's rocket north. And that's where I'm from. I'm from the Arctic. I've lived there for 36 years. I've been the Superior Court Judge there for 31 years. And it's flat. I mean, Barrow, there's no trees, there's no mountains anywhere near there. As we speak, the ocean is covered with ice, the lakes are covered with ice. We have lots of snow, although it's beginning to go away. But it's a different place.

And the Inupiat have lived there for thousands of years. Why? Why would that be? Well, the whales are going by, the geese are going overhead. It made sense. The people were scattered out all over the tundra hunting and so on. Because like caribou are eating lichen and they can't be supported very, in very small spaces. They need lots of space. The North Slope of the villages, we have seven. But they're scattered over an area the size of Minnesota. And Barrow itself is the administrative center, 4300 people. The question then, the Prudhoe Bay oil field was found. So then what? Well, of course the Native people had claims. And I won't go into the whole, the whole history here. But there

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was a decision point that the Inupiat had. Are we going to assert our rights through a tribal system? Or are we going to take the lead and assert those rights through a state municipality with very clear taxing powers? And although we have the tribal system in place, which I'm going to talk about, they went with the municipal. And there was some litigation. And the oil companies were saying you can't legislate over, you can't legislate over the whole North Slope. Look where you're scattered. Well, people documented that they were using the whole North Slope. But that's what we have now.

So just to, I just want to start by looking at the North Slope. It is, it works a little differently than most of Alaska. And part of it is because of what I just went through. We have the North Slope bureau. And you have to think. Like in Barrow, the population is maybe 65 percent Inupiat. Villages, you know, 90 percent easy. So it's a Native controlled municipal government. So it's not a tribal government. It's the municipal government. But the mayor's Inupiat. Charlotte Brower. The members of the assembly, all but one are Inupiat. And so this stream of being able to tax the oil companies' property at Prudhoe Bay has made it possible to do some things on the North Slope that are out of reach for most of rural Alaska.

But so here's for example. The North Slope bureau has in every single village professional officers the equivalent of the Alaska State Troopers and a holding facility, a police station holding facility. And that's even the village of Point Lay, a very small village down the coast, same thing there. What does that mean? It means that the state justice system is right there on the ground in a way that is impossible for most of rural Alaska. But that's what we have.

So if you look at the legal landscape in Barrow, looking at the tribal court, Chief Judge Sovalik is the chief judge there. They petitioned for jurisdiction over child welfare cases and got it some years ago. They were a little shocked. It took a couple years for the letter to come, but they got that. So, for example, as the state court judge, I don't hear Barrow child welfare cases. I do hear juvenile delinquency cases,

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criminal cases, and then of course all the other busy things that Superior Court judges deal with. But the tribal court at Barrow, unless they decline jurisdiction—sometimes they do—hears all the child welfare cases. They also, using again tribal code, the Inupiat values—I mean, they're using this in everything that they do. They're doing adoptions and guardianships and things like that. They have a wellness court to work with the children with MCA's, working with the whole family, using again Inupiat traditional values. And they will serve non-Natives as well as people from other tribes that are living in Barrow if they agree to jurisdiction.

Now you might wonder, well, what about the villages? I mean, how does that work? Well, I do those. I mean, I personally, I'm doing these child welfare cases. The villages have contracted with like the tribal, the regional tribal government, the Inupiat community of the Arctic Slope, some of them, and then also with the regional nonprofit, the Arctic Slope Native Association, which also administers our wonderful new hospital in Barrow. But they also have ICWA workers there. And then one village, Point Hope, has their own ICWA worker. There are no tribal police. But you have the North Slope Barrow government controlled by the Inupiat. Guess what? They will enforce tribal court orders. No need for tribal police. We've got a municipal government that's doing it.

I think that we have a lot of respect for each other. When the tribal court was first getting started—I'm remembering one child welfare case. We probably had a foot thick of files on this family. And the parents' attorney, private attorneys in Anchorage that were working with them, thought, well, we'll just transfer this to the tribal court and, you know, clean all this up. And the tribal court after considering it—We had a little hearing. And the woman that was actually training the tribe at that time was saying part of our tribal court is to respect our agreements. And part of our agreement is that we're not taking over a case that's already been started up in the state court. And so, no, we declined jurisdiction. And that was just right from the start. So we have a very cordial mutual respectful relationship.

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Now as far as the state court system is concerned, we have a full service superior district court, two judicial officers. There are state social workers based in Barrow, three of them that serve all the villages. We have an adult and juvenile probation officer, office with resident probation officers. There's a resident prosecuting attorney in Barrow, resident public defender, part-time private law firm, and then a lot of attorneys appearing by phone.

I'm realizing that there's a lot of not only cognitive impairments. Could be Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Could be other reasons. Or it could be simply issues with language. So how am I personally dealing with that? I have the luxury of slowing down, using plain English, using standard court forms that are written in plain English in positive wording. For example, what a concept, you're promising to stay sober. You're not promising I won't consume drink, possess alcohol. Stay sober. And that's the style I try to use. Now as far—we don't have drug courts. We don't have a mental health court because, again, of our small size. In other parts of the state there are circuit sentencing done by straight court magistrates. And Michael Jackson of course in the southeast is a star with that.

But what, how does a state court work with child welfare cases? Our rules at this point—and I serve on a children's rules committee—it's tracking the Indian Child Welfare Act. And in fact, in our state court rulebook the Indian Child Welfare Act is printed in full right after the state court rules. So people have easy access. So all the placement preferences, all of that apply in the work of the state social workers and the state court.

Very quickly, the other things that are kind of working is that we in these cases, parents are, have the right to have an appointed attorney, each parent, if they're low income. And then moving on to—and then there can be a state social worker. One recent case—I was talking with Dolores Bigfoot before we started. It was so wonderful to hear that they had,

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that they had arranged for in-home support for a family, which I knew were a very troubled family. Very much so. And they had people living with them 24 hours a day for a few months. And the child welfare case is closed. They got, they got it. It's great.

In the juvenile delinquency cases—we haven't talked much about that there—but the juvenile has a right to a state funded attorney. And even parents, at the end of the case, if the state wants to place the child outside the home and they're low income, they can get a court appointed attorney at that point. The juvenile justice system uses restorative justice and the least restrictive placement as their watchwords.

Now we do have—and I think you've talked about this in other states too. Alaska does have a waiver, an automatic waiver if like a 16 year old, 17 year old does something very dangerous. They are handled in the adult court. And, but the state jails are responding by having special programs, special diet, special education for the younger inmates. But that can happen if it's a very serious crime. There's also dual sentencing. Unusual, but it happens. I've done this, I've had a case like this myself. They impose a juvenile system order and an adult sentence. However, the juvenile order is tried first. And if the juvenile, as happened in my case, does fabulously well on juvenile probation, the adult sentence just never happens and the case is over.

In adult criminal cases, I also wanted to mention without going through the way, whole way the adult criminal justice system is, works. But Alaska is the first state in the United States to have a mitigating factor in sentencing for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. And that you have to be diagnosed. It has to relate to the offense. But if so, then it can be used to reduce the amount of jail time, which is, I would hope is something that could spread across the country.

So I think, I'm sure the time's getting short here. And I want to hit three recommendations. One is about Fetal Alcohol

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Spectrum Disorder. I have with me—Actually, I looked, I've scanned through—can't say I read every word—but the report of the 2012 taskforce. I also have looked at what's up on the internet about what you all have heard in the first two hearings. They're fantastic. I agree with the recommendations of the taskforce report. A lot of heartfelt work went into that. However, I never saw FASD. I never saw Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder as a factor at all. And that makes me nervous. Because if you don't take account of FASD, that possibility, you could be spinning your wheels both in court hearings, whether they're tribal court or state court, and also working with people who've violated the law, working with the victims. If you don't slow down, do a lot of repetition, use plain good English, you're not going to get through. So that's one thing is that I very support people becoming more aware. The American Bar Association has a resolution from '12 that they urge people to do that. The Canadian Bar Association has done that too. And I hope, I hope that that comes out of the committee.

The next thing is what about, it's not—I mean, the taskforce is about children exposed to violence and that's very important for all the reasons that you have heard and Judge Voluck said. Very important. But the other thing we all have to realize is that this is lifelong. I mean, just like Judge Voluck said. If the mind is being changed by this environment, it's not something that, you know, you just work and, well, when they get to be an adult it'll go away. That's not the way it works. It doesn't go, work that way with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and it doesn't work that way with something like complex trauma where a child's been exposed to multiple kinds of abuse. And so there has to be an acceptance of lifelong support. And by giving the lifelong support, we're going to be reducing the chances of further violence in the home and make it safer for the children.

And the last thing, this is just kind of straight biz of child sexual assault cases. We had 49 children, according to our Women in Crisis, the rape crisis center. Forty-nine children had to travel from the North Slope to Fairbanks because

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that's the closest child advocacy center where they could have a professional interview in the best way possible. And the, Barrow is trying to have a center like that in our community. And they actually have the staff. They just don't have the place yet. But, you know, on a national level, the idea is it's very important to get those kind of child advocacy centers out away from just the major cities but into smaller regional areas. And so that wraps up what I had to say. And again thank you for your time.

Joanne Shenandoah: Thank you, Judge Jeffery. I just wanted to say thank you for your extreme dedication, your comprehensive testimony. It's clear you've made a great impact on our native people here in Alaska. Thank you for caring. Next we are going to hear from Mr. Monegan. You may begin.

Walt Monegan: Good morning. Thank you for the invite to be coming out here. There's—I echo everybody else's appreciation for the fact that you are trying to get the, gather the word and share it. That's all relationships, no matter what they might be. All relationships actually focus and depend upon communication. So the more we communicate, the better we all will be.

To begin with, my name is Walt Monegan. I am the son of Elizabeth (inaudible @ 00:59:06_1005) who was born in Akiak, Alaska, and Walt Monegan, Jr. from Melrose, Massachusetts. My mother was the eldest child of Clarence Clark, Sr., a relocated Tlingit that was raised in Ruby, and Dorothy Hoffman, a Yup'ik from (inaudible @ 00:59:23_1005). My father was a Marine who was killed in the Korean War in combat before I was born. And so for that reason my grandparents, my Native grandparents, were the ones that kind of scooped both my mother and I—because she was 19—and brought her back home and rendered probably a very significant portion of my upbringing in a small community that, as you flew out to Bethel, the jet that took you out there started to make its descent over the community I grew up in. It was a place called Aniak. Pretty much a ghost town right now but, you know, it never really was a big

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place. Only had about 54 people in it.

My background is law enforcement. And it's all been up in here in the state, Anchorage predominantly, but a total of about 35 years. And I think I've prepared some remarks and I will submit them for later review. But basically I just want to add on what everybody else is, in the interest of time to give you some of the insights that I think I have enjoyed and observed in my time. That we have, I have benefitted from walking in two worlds. In the Western culture, certainly is after high school or high school and then after. And, but before that, in a small community out in rural Alaska by my Native grandparents. And it provided me with a lot of insight, I think which helped me in my law enforcement career. I would tell folks that I think that the values that I learned as a Native that helped me were harmony, honesty and, for lack of a better word, humility. And it's, I think it has served me like it's supposed to have had.

What I'd like to share is from my law enforcement experience, is that if your recommendation or anybody's recommendation is just dump more Troopers or BPSO's or tribal police or village police into a community, it's not going to work. It really will not work. What it takes to make a community safe, whether you live in Napaskiak or Anchorage, is community involvement. Get the people who live there a part of it. And for that reason I am a strong proponent of tribal courts and tribal councils. I like to see things like youth court or diversion panels where people get involved and try to help. But scratch anybody who has been in a reactive career for any length of time and what you'll find is that person really becomes also an advocate of preventative measures. So for that reason, education.

We've talked about, the panel has all talked about the experiences and the domestic violence exposures and whatnot. I am sure that most of you are familiar with the Adverse Childhood Experience Study, or ACES, and which DV is one of the things that is listed in there. And there are ongoing studies that continue to enlighten what happens.

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About a couple years ago there was a study that popped out that said domestic violence, if goes untreated, will actually lower a child's IQ by six or seven points. So what we're doing is inflicting damage, permanent damage if it's untreated, to an individual and giving them something just as massive and terrible as FASD or posttraumatic stress disorder. These are things that I think that all could be prevented.

And so for that reason, what a community can do besides things like engaging in councils or tribal courts or health issues or, but go to the schools, the local schools. And a couple of things that I think I'd like to see schools really incorporate collectively and universally is that there is a section that talks about the health aspects of ACES, childhood development, and the effects. Now start out as early as fifth grade, but make it in general terms. Not too traumatic, not overwhelming and scaring anybody. But by the little bit, incremental doses as they progress through school to the point when they're finally in juniors and seniors in high schools they can debate on the dangers of domestic violence and they fully understand it. For me, reaching out with that kind of education and letting people know what's out there is the beginning of turning that spigot off on the situation. Otherwise, we will continue to chase the problem. We'll never get ahead of it.

The other thing I'd like to see that would be done in schools is that—and many of the districts out there already do this. But again, it needs to be universal. The reason why we teach history in schools is so that everyone in that class, all of us who had taken classes, so that we can understand the history of our people and how, what contributions we've made, the struggles we've survived, and gives us a sense of pride and belonging at the global table. Now unfortunately, many of our history books is, are written in the Western way. And so the aspects of American Indians, Alaska Natives are really mitigated. They're not, they're just barely mentioned. And I think if we want to really truly make this a country of freedom for everyone and give everybody the promise of America that to have that successful life, that healthy life,

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they have to be acknowledged and they have to be accepted.

So what I would do is work towards being more inclusive in all the people we share this country with, whether you be here in a tribe or a state. That would be some of the aspects that I think can be done at the grass level, grassroots level. Again, as a police officer for a long time and especially when I was chief, I would go to community councils and I would hear people say things like, you know, "We need more cops out here, Chief, in our neighborhood." Well, maybe you do, maybe you don't. And I'd get all these quizzical kind of response looks. And so I'd say let me explain it this way. If you and I were neighbors that lived across the street from each other, and we actually knew each other, and I knew that you were going to go down on the Kenai Peninsula, do dip netting for salmon this coming weekend, Saturday morning when I get up and I pour my coffee and I go over to the window and try to assess what kind of day it's going to be, I note in your driveway a van that I don't recognize. Now the police cruiser that just cruises between our homes going down the street doesn't know which car belongs in which driveway. But I as your neighbor could and would make the call. It's not being creepy. It's not being snoop. It's just being considerate and wanting to help your neighbor. People doing that have the best chance of fighting crime, disorder. People getting involved.

One of the things too that I think we don't truly understand is in childhood development. I've been told that when an infant in the NEO ICU unit goes into an arrest, either cardiac or respiratory, the first protocol to treat that infant is that the nurse peels off his or her glove, the latex glove, the rubber glove, and puts skin on skin on the little one. That the majority of the time will start up that little youngster. And what that means is that that little one knows that somebody is out there and cares for them. Now that feeling, that skin on skin thing, actually it never goes away. We need that until our very last day, throughout our lives. We all need to be acknowledged, we all need to be accepted. And I think that's something we as a society, the American society so to

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speaking, doesn't really fully grasp. Native and restorative justice principles are much, much closer to that. They understand. We are, as a tribe, as a village, as a people, we know that each and every individual is valuable, that they can contribute for the greater good of all.

And so to some aspects, I think that we have a leg up on the rest of the country. We just need to capitalize it. We need to remember it. The other thing about childhood development is sometimes we don't realize or appreciate how quickly our children, us, actually learn. And I'm going to use my middle daughter as an example. When she was nine months old we took her to the pediatrician for a warranty check. And she was getting antsy. Mom was talking to the doctor and I'm holding little Sierra. And she couldn't walk yet, but she could crawl. So she's—I put her on the floor because that's what dads do sometimes. And she looked a little bored down there, so I gave her my keys. Now I'm kind of watching, making sure she doesn't do anything inappropriate or hurt herself with the keys. But what she does is she takes those keys and she crawls across the room over to the door and then hand walks her way up the door. At nine months old, she's trying to extend her little tiny arm with my ring of keys towards the doorknob. At nine months old, she already knew that there was an association between keys and a doorknob. And that's from being, only being carried kind of position. Now I think certainly I love her and she made me a grandpa couple of times since then.

But I think all children are so inclined. They learn, most mammals learn from watching. And so what we'd hear, what we experience as youth we incorporate, we pattern. That, as Judge Voluck said, even though I may not see the DV, the hearing the screaming, the yelling, the slamming against the wall or on the floor or, that still terrifies me. But it becomes my norm. And so when I become an adult that is it such a bad thing? It's something I grew up with. So understanding parts of those in education. Community involvement in education I think is one of the things that would be my recommendation, that we start early.

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You know, I'd like to close. I had many, many things I'd want to say. But I'd like to close basically by borrowing a situation that is actually from our northern cousins up there on the Slope. One of the reasons the blanket toss that you see or hear about where a whole ring of villagers, they have somebody in the middle of the blanket and they toss them up higher and higher. Well, because it is flat, there isn't any mountains, there isn't any trees, what they're doing originally was to look for whales out on the horizon. And the more people that you had around that blanket and helping that person in the middle, the higher that individual would go and the better possibility of spotting something that will help feed the entire village. So the analogy of course is the more of us around that blanket helping that individual not only succeed, but it'll benefit all of us. So.

Joanne Shenandoah: Beautiful. Thank you so much for your words. And also I'm are you planning to submit more testimony?

Walt Monegan: Yes. I have some pages here.

Joanne Shenandoah: Oh, wonderful. Great. We'll look forward to that. And I just want to say a few things. You mentioned that pride and belonging and identity are certainly part of a lot of our issues. And I want to thank you for reminding us about that. As well, I just also want to say your community's very fortunate to have you in their service. Thank you for your testimony. And now I want to turn to the advisory committee and see if they have any questions. Anita, please.

Anita Fineday: Thank you for your testimony. I just have some questions for, I think for the judges, Ms. Jaeger and Mr. Voluck. So I'm not sure who might want to answer this. I was just curious about more details about the numbers of judges that you have that hear cases and how many cases you hear overall, the total of cases. Maybe Ms. Jaeger could start or Mr. Voluck. Just trying to get a sense of your caseloads and the size of the court system that you have.

Lisa Jaeger: There we go. I'm actually not a judge. So we'll kind of straighten the record out there. But I do technical assistance

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and training and support the tribal courts and the development of them. And so I could just describe for the 37 tribes that, you know, that we direct, do direct service for. Thirty-one of them have active tribal courts at this time. All 37 have had tribal protection cases at some point in time. There's about ten of them that are very active. They'll have caseloads of, you know, maybe, you know, 30-ish on the more active ones at a time. Child protection cases somewhere in that ballpark. We—And like I said in, the tribes in our region use panels of judges. I mean, I think you were asking about the numbers of judges. And they require a quorum of at least three to hear cases. But sometimes they'll be seven or eight judges hearing a case. And you're spending, you know, a great deal of time with that case. That's one of the advantages of the tribal court is that they're able to spend a great deal of time, you know, with their, for per each case.

Anita Fineday:

And just one follow-up. Do any of those courts issue orders for protection, domestic violence?

Lisa Jaeger:

Oh, DV, yes. Yeah. I haven't talked about that at all, but they do. And we try to get them registered in a central registry system, you know, to be, that helps us to get, you know, state law enforcement to assist in enforcing those. The big issue that we have right now is really a little bit different. It's about protecting communities as a whole from really dangerous individuals. That may not be a place where we can do an individual protective order for just like a domestic violence protective order, so called banishment. We—There's been lots of banishments in our region over time. I mean, you have to get really dangerous people out in order to protect the village. And the hope is then they're going to go to someplace like Fairbanks or Anchorage that has 911 and services and things like that. So they, the tribes in, you know, have actually done a fair amount of it. Do they have the jurisdiction to do that? That's the big question.

We had an incident here just the week, just a few weeks ago of two State Troopers that were murdered in the village of Tanana. And so right now there's two villages that are, were

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actually trying to work with the state to figure out how to banish a couple of individuals that are very dangerous. So we have some jurisdictional issues, you know, surrounding that that really need to be worked out. When you lack that Indian country, you can't exclude. So you get these jurisdictional problems.

But when someone calls me up, says there's this really dangerous person, we've got to get him out of our community, you know, the first thing we want to do is we want to see if there's a warrant for their arrest. Right? Because that would be real easy. And sometimes there is and we can get Troopers to go in there and take them out. But if we don't have that luck, you know, then we have to be real creative in figuring out how to get them out.

Anita Fineday:

Thank you.

David Voluck:

The three tribes I work for are a little bit different in size and resource. I think as Judge Jeffery's very clearly stated, in order for the panel to totally understand the landscape in Alaska, you need to know that certain areas are more, they have more resources to throw at the issues. Other areas we use a time honored tradition of duct tape and blue tarps to address what's going on in the village. For the central council, we have me acting as the presiding trial judge. And I have a chief judge that sits in case of an appeal and two associate judges. And they are all volunteer positions. Through the auspices of the Department of Justice grant process that Lisa mentioned earlier, I'm able to feed my family.

The hard part about this, and I hope you pick this up from the Indian Law and Order Commission Report, is that these grants are only three years long. And as you all know, nobody runs their government that way. And that is no way to run any kind of justice system. And so every three years I like to joke I have to put on lipstick and high heels. Do you like that image? And resell myself to the Department of Justice with the newest and sexiest form of restorative alternative indigenous justice, you know, and like the

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buzzwords aplenty to try to keep the court running. And that's just as we're getting up on step, which is a boat term which I think Commissioner Davidson might know is, as you're slugging through the water, there's a magic moment when your boat starts to plane. And that's called getting up on step.

And so the, as my daughter would say, redonkulous part of tribal court funding in Alaska is as soon as a court starts to get up on step, they have to reinvent themselves and they cannot continue to build on the success that they already have started to do. And so I think Lisa's recommendation of some base funding—because the Bureau of Indian Affairs, God bless them, has taken the position that Alaska courts are not entitled to any kind of recurring base funding. And so we have bake sales and duct tape and blue tarp.

The Sitka—so we handle about 200 cases through the central council in Juneau per year. The Sitka tribe is smaller and it's about 40 to 50 cases per year. One thing I've neglected to tell you is that the Tribal Youth Diversion effort, which is this diversion panel for minor consuming, the beautiful part about it is we get them at arraignment. So our agreement with the city and bureau of Sitka is as that youth is coming to appear for the first time, they hit pause and they say how would you like to try tribal court? And what I wanted you to know is it's Native and non-Native. And that's the beauty of the lessons of the third sovereign that I think all the presenters have said is traditional justice, restoration and healing, it doesn't matter whether you're Italian, Chinese or Alutiiq. It's good stuff. It works. Recidivism goes down. People learn things, God forbid. So that's a beautiful part, maybe a recommendation that I have is that, you know, tribal courts are good for everyone in the community. And you don't have to necessarily be a tribal member.

The Aleutian court that I serve is a much smaller community. And I'd say we have about 30 cases per year. There, I have a chief judge that I'm mentoring on the law side. He's mentoring me on the wisdom side. And in Sitka it's the same thing. So we have two judges in Sitka and two in the

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Pribilof's. But most of the cases were a little bit different than the Tanana Chiefs region. I'm hearing them as the presiding judge.

The last thing I wanted to say to you is I have, I handle about five domestic violence protective orders, 5 to 10 a year in all three of the courts. And as I stated, the petitioners most lately are adults who are protecting young people. What I wanted to say to you is—and I'm sure you've heard this before—but I would be remiss if I didn't say it again. The Alaska exception, the special rule—I don't know what you want to call it. In the Violence Against Women Act is, in the words of the Indian Law and Order Commission, unconscionable. And if I had one recommendation, one wish is to have that repealed immediately. That is unequal protection of the law for a very vulnerable population.

Tribal courts, everyone that I've worked for and work with believes in due process plus. That means we go out of our way. Because restoration and healing isn't going to happen if people aren't at the table. I send my guys to go knock on their door if they're not showing up for the hearing. I call them on my cellphone. Hey, did you remember you have a hearing? Most of the time they didn't even remember. And you bring them to the table. But I want to say something very clear. This due process plus is not because of the xenophobia of non-Natives and non-Native court systems. Because I think you see this trend going on that if we're going to empower tribal courts, they need to be even better than state courts. We do due process plus because that's how we roll, not because someone tells us that that's what we need to do. You know?

So the VAWA exception creates a cloud over Alaska. And the last thing violence and children and women and families need is delay. Because as you all know, a matter of minutes can mean the difference between life and death. And so to have this cloud of some Troopers not sure if he's going to serve this order because the attorney general has an argument that because of jurisdiction and the non-member and—even though they live 20 minutes away by snow

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machine and are Yup'ik. But if you're a non-member, we can't have—there's a beautiful woman on the internet at some point. You should check her out. Her name is Sweet Brown. And her famous saying is, "We ain't got time for that." And so it's time to clean the table, get rid of these exceptions that create confusion. That's not how you're supposed to like write laws. All lawmakers are under a responsibility to write clear laws, not to write gobbledygook. So please, whatever voice you can bring to have that VAWA exception removed, please. So anyway, thank you for letting me get back up on this stump.

Eric Broderick:

Judge Jeffery, you pointed out the very severe effects of FASD. There's a—And the effect, as you said, the individual for life and across all the systems that serve them. I guess I have a couple questions for you. When someone sort of finds himself in your court, how do you know that they have it, first of all? And secondly, if you do know, what do you, how do you deal with them differently?

Michael Jeffery:

Great questions. First of all, at least—Well, I think it's fair to say all over the state. But like in my part of Alaska, diagnosis is very rare. I mean, the best chance a lot of times that a person has in their life is if they happen to be in the child welfare system or the juvenile justice system where these diagnoses might be made. Because it's expensive, it's hard to do. And so when I—This is back in 1996 when finally the lights went on about how big this was. I also realized there, you know, I will never know for sure. So what does that mean? It means I have to change the way I'm doing business for everybody.

And just like Judge Voluck was saying, a tribal court has the time to spend, you know, spend more time with someone. Thankfully, praise the Lord, you know, in Barrow the caseload is lower. So I've had the time to do that too. And so that's why in every case I try to speak more slowly, speak in plain English, use commonly used forms, redraft those so that they're easier to use. People are initialing, try to track them better. And so there's no other, I don't see any other way to do it.

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Now as far as the end result, I mean, I have had, you know, fetal alcohol people like even that were diagnosed. And there are times when, I mean, the watchword is they probably don't need to be in jail as long. Maybe a probation and supervision in the community would be best for the person, best for the state, just best, better all the way around. On the other hand, I have had people who like were diagnosed who did something terribly violent. They're in jail for a long, long time. Because, I mean, it's not—you can understand, oh yeah, well, probably the person was being impulsive and this and that. But the bottom line is that there was a really bad incident. There's going to be a strong response to that.

So, and remember Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Spectrum. It's a range of things. And that's what makes it so hard. How exactly, how is somebody even affected? You don't really know. But people have to take the time. That means the attorneys, the social workers. I mean, one practical thing that I do that one of our local social workers who actually used to be working for the tribal government— but like let's say child welfare case. The parents are going through a consent or maybe even a termination, a relinquishment. I am going through that whole thing in court and discuss it. I don't accept that an attorney, like whether it's a criminal justice case or child welfare case, I don't—you know, the kind of idea to save time—Well, you've talked with your client about this. Yes, Your Honor. Fine. And then we'd move on. I'm not doing that. Instead I'm ta-, I've got to be sat-, personally satisfied that they're understanding at least as best as possible.

So that's just what I've been doing. But I realize if I were in Anchorage and I had 60 people sitting there, what can you do? But in a rural court, that's one reason I've been in Barrow so many decades. Because it's the place to be.

Eric Broderick:

Thank you.

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Joanne Shenandoah: I'd also like to ask you, Judge Jeffery, if you would supply us with a copy of your article on "An Arctic Judge's Journey with FASD." And we'd really look forward to reading that. Are there any other questions by the taskforce? No? Okay, with that I'd like to give you a hand of thank you for your testimony. Appreciate it very much. And we will take a short 15 minute break and be back at 10:30 for our next panel.

[END PANEL 3]