

# Yakutat Tlingit Tribe

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## Human Services Department

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### Department of Human Services & Education

#### 102-477 Narrative Report

April 1, 2014- March 31, 2015

#### Introduction:

The Yakutat Tlingit Tribe, Human Service and Education Department strive to assist Alaskan Natives and American Indians with an array of support and services that will lead to self-sufficiency. We offer a variety of programs funded from Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS); the programs involved include Higher Education, Vocational Training, Direct Employment, Social Service Programs, General Assistance, Child Care Development Fund, and Johnson O'Malley.

#### Guiding Principles:

The purposes of the 102-477 Act are to demonstrate how Indian Tribal governments can integrate employment, training, and related services they provide in order to improve the effectiveness of those services, reduce joblessness in Indian communities and serve tribally determined goals consistent with the policy of self-determination. The Yakutat Tlingit Tribe strives to meet this challenge through the integration of existing programs by designing and implementing modified programs to:

- 1) Address the unique needs of tribal members living within the community, taking into consideration their individual strengths, talents and needs;
  - 2) Prepare for the future by tailoring training specific to future employment opportunities;
- and;

- 3) Implement programs that are consistent with the cultural values and activities paramount to Native tradition.

Therefore, the approach taken by the Tribe to identify future labor market demands is to identify full-time permanent jobs that currently exist, or are needed, and then seek to provide the training needed to fill those positions. We hope to continue to use this approach in order to solve our own unique problems, create job opportunities in a very limited job market, and provide local skilled labor to fill positions often filled by non-residents.

### **Geographic Location:**

Yakutat is historically a traditional Native Village located in an area of spectacular natural beauty. The village is located at the entry of Yakutat Bay, 220 miles northwest of Juneau, the capital city of Alaska and 380 miles south of Anchorage, the State's largest city. Nestled below the highest coastal mountains in the world, Yakutat is surrounded by the Fairweather and St. Elias ranges which include the second highest mountain in North America, Mt. Logan at 19,580 feet, and the second highest mountain in the U.S., Mt. St. Elias at 18,008 feet: another eight out of the eleven mountains in the area peak at over 15,000 feet, creating a stunning and dramatic scenic background. Beautiful sandy beaches, green forests and plentiful wildlife and sea life are also found in the area.

Yakutat is also the "Home of the Hubbard", reportedly the largest tidewater glacier in North America. With a face that rises 400 feet above sea level and extends nearly seven miles long, the Hubbard draws thousands of visitors each year on more than two hundred (200) visiting cruise ships.

According to the 2012 American Community Survey estimates, we have 644 residents; 56% of which are some degree of Native American or Alaskan Native. The Yakutat Tlingit Tribe provides services to tribal members, Alaska Natives and American Indians living within the 7,650 square miles that make up the boundaries of the City and Borough. With no roads connecting to outside communities, the village is isolated and only accessible by air or water.

### **Current Economic Conditions:**

Primarily a fishing village, with approximately 117 active commercial fishing set-net permits (AK Dept. of Fish & Game), the economy is largely dependent upon fishing, fish processing and to a lesser degree, tourism. Most residents who live here are seasonally employed and rely upon commercial fishing and subsistence hunting and fishing for their livelihoods. In recent years, declining salmon runs coupled with low market prices have directly and negatively impacted commercial fishermen and their standard of living here. According to the State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the average Yakutat set-net fisherman earned a gross income of \$18,306. This is about \$10,000 less in annual income per fisherman than last year's numbers, after taxes, fuel, gear and supplies that is not much to live on. In years past, many fishermen could live off their fishing income for most of the year. Unfortunately, those days are clearly past.

This community must grapple with the continuing trend of seasonal employment and the many social problems that arise because of it. The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development confirm this by indicating that during 2014, the lowest unemployment rate of 6.1% occurred during the month of September, while the highest rate of 14.2% occurred during the month of February. Yakutat, as compared to other areas of the state, also has a high year-round unemployment rate: the 2014 average rate for the city of Juneau was 5.1%, for Anchorage it was 5.2%, while Yakutat was at 9.8%.

The financial hardship facing many families here is also apparent by the numbers of children qualifying to receive free and reduced lunches. During 2014, 80.6% of students enrolled in the Yakutat School District (YSD) received free lunches, which is the same percentage as the past two years. In 2015, YSD will no longer be providing a lunch program for any students; this will increase the cost of food each month for many families.

### **Service Delivery:**

The Yakutat Tlingit Tribe provides the only direct access to social services for the entire community. There are no local city & borough, state or federal social service agencies here. Instead, the Tribe serves as a Fee Agent for State of Alaska programs by providing applications

and eligibility interviews for a variety of services including Senior Benefits, Medicaid, Food Stamps, Adult Temporary Assistance Program, Adult Public Assistance, General Relief Assistance, and Burial Assistance. The tribe is also administering state, federal, and international heating and energy assistance programs in order to improve access and service delivery to our residents. Due to the volume of clients served, and the need to provide confidential services, the need to obtain new offices became apparent. In February 2008, the Tribe was able to secure new office space needed to create a “one-stop shop” for clients. Known as the Community Center, this space is used to house social service offices, provide confidential counseling offices for mental health and substance abuse clients, as well as host adult and youth educational and recreational activities and classes. We are also currently in our fourth and final year of the Strategic Prevention Framework – State Incentive Grant (SPF/SIG). Through this grant we were able to hire a Strategic Prevention Specialist and a Youth Advocate to battle heavy alcohol & binge drinking in youth ages 12 – 20 and adults ages 21 – 44. This grant also provides administrative support to our Yakutat Healthy Community Coalition.

Our core Staff includes three workers: The Human Services Director/477 Program Manager, 477 Program Staff Member, and the Intake Specialist. In June the core staff will increase to four workers, as the job of Human Services Director and 477 Program Manager will be split into two job positions.

### **General Assistance:**

During April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014 to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015, a total of 139 applications for general assistance were processed and awarded on behalf of 48 grantees in need of basic essentials such as food and shelter.

A majority of cash assistance recipients received other services such as vocational training, supportive services, and referral to other programs, including Public Assistance. 59 applications for the State of Alaska Public Assistance programs were processed on behalf of 126 household members during this April to March timeframe.

### **Supportive Services:**

The supportive services program financially supports clients to seek stable employment, stay employed, or seek a higher position of employment. This year, our Employment Supportive Services (ESS) program assisted 12 clients. ESS grants included purchasing work gear and clothing for six clients, one of which also received help with business licensing costs and another also received help with travel costs to accept new employment. The final ESS grant was used to help a client get a driver's license back to be able to accept employment.

### **Higher Education and Occupational Training:**

During this past fiscal year, the Higher Education and Occupational Training programs have assisted 31 clients with their educational goals. Of this amount, 21 have obtained their degree or certificate, eight remain enrolled, and two were removed from the program. Of the 21 who have successfully completed their training programs, six received their Asbestos Certification – one of which is still enrolled for higher education - , six completed MSHA training to work in mines, two received certificates to administer Pranic Healing, two received Construction Trade certificates, two received certificates for Radio Station equipment operating and repair, one received Welding certification, one completed a grant training program, one completed a business boot camp, and one received a Bachelor's in Health Care Management.

Of the eight students currently participating, all are enrolled in degree programs in which one's goal is an Associate's of Art, one is a Bachelor's in Biology/Life Science, one is a Bachelor's in Business Administration, another is studying music and psychology, one is attending nursing school, one is going for a Bachelor's in Social Work, one undeclared, and another is Business & Public Policy. Of these students, all are in good standing.

### **Childcare Development Fund:**

During the past year, the YTT Childcare Program provided home care services to three households, providing care for five children, and employing two tribally certified child care providers.

This represents an increase in families served but only slightly, which warrants a closer look as to why this is happening. While it's true that our child count has decreased in recent years as families leave our community in search of employment, we attribute these low numbers

primarily to the fact that we have a lack of Child Care Providers here. This leads us to believe that more emphasis should be placed on helping our Child Care Providers to be more successful as business owners and operators. There has also been a great interest by YTT and tribal members in the opening of a child care center in Yakutat.

**Other Programs:**

The tribe also administers Heating Assistance Programs run by funding from State, Federal, and International sources, a Strategic Prevention Framework/State Incentive Grant with a purpose to reduce heavy and binge drinking in youth and adults. In addition, this department also administers other BIA programs not consolidated under P.L. 102-477 including ICWA, Tobacco Prevention, Adult Care, Burial Assistance and Emergency Services.

**Performance Standards:**

Standard:     **Individual Transitional Assistance:** By the end of twelve months, seventy-five percent (75%) of clients will complete their Employability Development Plan objectives under the Individual Transition Assistance program. This program requires clients receiving G.A. Benefits to comply with inpatient treatment, outpatient counseling and/or participate in other support group meetings as is recommended by the Family Services Counselor.

Result:        This objective was met, with less than 10 clients not completing their goals defined in their EDPs.

Standard:     **Employment & Supportive Services:** Increase the number of job opportunities available to tribal members by maintaining a job pool of potential positions as well as future employment opportunities. Advertise at the tribal Adult Ed. Center and throughout the community.

Result:        This standard was met.

Standard: **Occupational Training:** By the end of twelve months, ninety percent (90%) of students enrolled in Occupational Training will complete their educational objectives for that time period.

Result: This objective has been met, with 90.9% of students reaching their educational objectives over the past twelve months. Of the 22 students enrolled in occupational training, 20 have completed their training programs successfully while two were removed due to violation of 477 program rules.

Standard: **Higher Education:** By the end of twelve months, seventy-five percent (75%) of students enrolled in Higher Education will complete their educational objectives for that time period.

Result: This objective was met. Of the ten students enrolled, 100% completed their objective for the time period. 8 are still currently enrolled and in good standing. One completed the semester successfully and in good standing but then chose to not return the following semester. The final one graduated with a Bachelor's Degrees.

Standard: **Child Care Assistance:** A minimum of ten (10) parents will receive child care assistance services in order to participate in work skills development programs under the Human Resources and Education department, (including job interviews, training, etc.) and/or Life Skills Support activities under the Family Services department (including family counseling sessions, support group participation, etc.)

Result: This objective was not met. All families who applied for services received child care assistance; however, only three families were served.

### **Jobs Created:**

A total of one job was created under the Tribe's Employment Supportive Services grant, helping with the licensing costs of a tribal member's business.

**Indians/Alaska Natives Employed:**

Of the job created, one Alaska Native was employed; the business also has potential to grow in the future.

**Businesses Assisted:**

Ten businesses were assisted by YTT's 477 program. Eight were assisted through the Supportive Services program, helping with business licensing, and work gear & clothing costs for employees. Five others were helped through Occupational Training with certifications needed for employee before hire. Higher Education also helped as a Bachelor's Degree was achieved by a client to better serve as an employee to an organization. Some of the clients that received supportive services also received occupational training.

**Unmet Needs:**

Tribal members living within the community of Yakutat rely almost exclusively upon the Tribe to assist them with their educational and employment goals. Unlike other communities who may have access to state or university programs to assist them with basic job search, resume writing, GED study, etc., in Yakutat, the Tribe is the only social service agency available. Because we are a small tribe with few resources, we have continued to try to meet the needs of our members, but feel our success could be greatly improved. We believe the only way we can effectively serve our people is to supplement our BIA funds with state and federal grants while simultaneously working to grow our capacity in the hopes of building healthier more productive futures for our tribal members.

Report prepared by: Sasha Vale, Interim HS Director/477 Program Manager

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