

ALASKA NATIVE
VOICES
FOR
JUSTICE
JUSTICE CENTER

CELEBRATING **THIRTY YEARS!**

ALASKA NATIVE JUSTICE CENTER
IMPACT REPORT
2023



ANJC: Celebrating 30 Years of Justice

In 1993, a group of visionary Alaska Native leaders, including Roy Huhndorf and Gail Schubert, formed the Alaska Native Justice Center (ANJC). At the time, they were appalled by the public's response to assaults against Alaska Native women, and by the disproportionately high rates of incarceration for Native people. The result was the formation of a small nonprofit organization with a bold mission: to advocate for the fair and equitable treatment of Alaska Native people in the justice system. Three decades later, it's a mission that remains at the heart of ANJC.

30 YEARS
ALASKA NATIVE JUSTICE CENTER



In the years since ANJC was founded, it has become a vital resource for Alaska Native people and Tribes navigating the justice system. After joining the **Cook Inlet Tribal Council** family as an affiliate nonprofit in 2016, ANJC embarked on a period of transformational growth, expanding services, staff, and operating budget.

In 2023, **Alex Cleghorn** was promoted into the role of Chief Operations Officer to work together with CITC leadership and aligned partners to strategically position ANJC for the future. Mr. Cleghorn is not only an experienced attorney, but he's an emerging thought-leader regarding specialized legal services and support for Alaska Native people and Tribes. He's a passionate advocate who is vigorously committed to honoring ANJC's founding mission while building a thriving organization that will serve Our People into the future.

As we celebrate ANJC's 30th Anniversary, ANJC is committed to standing alongside Our People, advocating for justice, educating and empowering future generations, and serving as a voice for justice. ANJC's mission is a mission worth fighting for—and together we can make a difference for generations to come.

Gloria O'Neill
Cook Inlet Tribal Council, President & CEO

"After 30 years of hard-earned growth, ANJC is positioned for true impact within the justice system. Today, we have a renewed focus on ANJC's core services, a new office location in midtown Anchorage, and a growing team of professionals who understand the unique legal issues of Alaska Native people and Tribes."

ANJC is built to serve, advocate, and educate at all levels of the justice system. Not only do we work with survivors of crime—both inside and outside the courtroom—we support Tribes through training, advocacy, and representation in state courts. I am honored to serve as ANJC's Chief Operations Officer, and immensely excited to work alongside our staff and statewide partners. We have a tremendous opportunity ahead as we continue to work on behalf of Alaska Native people and Tribes to advance the urgent mission ANJC's founders established three decades ago."

Alex Cleghorn
ANJC, COO



1993

The Alaska Native Justice Center is established to address Alaska Native and Alaskan people's unmet needs within the civil and criminal justice system.

2008

ANJC expands legal representation to include victims and survivors of crime.

2016

On October 1, Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) and ANJC enter into a partnership to strengthen ANJC's services.

2019

ANJC receives the Paul H. Chapman Award for legislative reform advocacy regarding gaps in Alaska's sexual offense laws

2020

ANJC co-founds the Alaska Victim Legal Assistance Network (AVLAN) to meet the civil legal needs for victims and survivors of crime.

2022

ANJC plays vital role in discussions leading to the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act and reaffirming Tribes have concurrent jurisdiction over violent crimes within Native communities.

2023

We've moved! ANJC relocates to new facilities in midtown Anchorage, offering a dedicated and private professional space.

WOMEN IN ALASKA EXPERIENCE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AT ALARMINGLY HIGH RATES.

For Our People:

SURVIVOR SERVICES

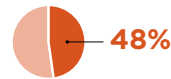
At least **48 percent** of women in Alaska have experienced domestic violence at some point in their lifetimes. Among those, Alaska Native women are disproportionately represented.

In 2023, **ANJC responded to 1,435 requests for assistance**. ANJC took on **107 new cases for survivors of domestic violence**, sexual assault, victims of crime, human trafficking, and Elders who survived abuse or neglect. As a result, ANJC:

- Began **48 new legal cases**.
- Obtained **32 protective orders**.
- Provided **46 court accompaniments**.
- Provided case management to **147 survivors**.
- Responded to **172 urgent supportive services needs**.
- Hosted **24 legal clinics designed to empower individuals to navigate the court system**.

Walking with survivors: Throughout 2023, ANJC helped hundreds of survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. Each survivor story is unique and personal.

ALASKA



USA



Percent of women who have experienced domestic violence.

For example, ANJC began working with a participant who abruptly relocated from rural Alaska to Anchorage to escape an abuser. After contacting ANJC, a Survivor Services case manager helped the participant file for a protective order and get into inpatient substance treatment. This fall, the participant completed the treatment program, found full-time employment, and moved into their own apartment.

Not every success story looks like this, and change can be a difficult path. On average, **it takes a survivor of domestic violence seven attempts to successfully leave an abusive relationship** and remain permanently separated. ANJC's work is about empowerment. ANJC case managers support survivors on their journey to build a life free from violence and abuse. Our services are driven by the goals of the survivor, whether they are working toward finding safety from their abuser, gaining custody over their children, or obtaining the skills or resources they need to live independently. ANJC's case managers will tell you it is an honor to work with survivors who come forward and to then witness their bravery, persistence, and strength as they transform their lives to be free from violence and abuse for themselves and their families.

For Our People:

SUPPORTING OUR ELDER

In 2023, **ANJC supported 162 Elders** with court paperwork, landlord/tenant issues, financial scams, housing, adult guardianships, and obtaining guardianship over their grandchildren.

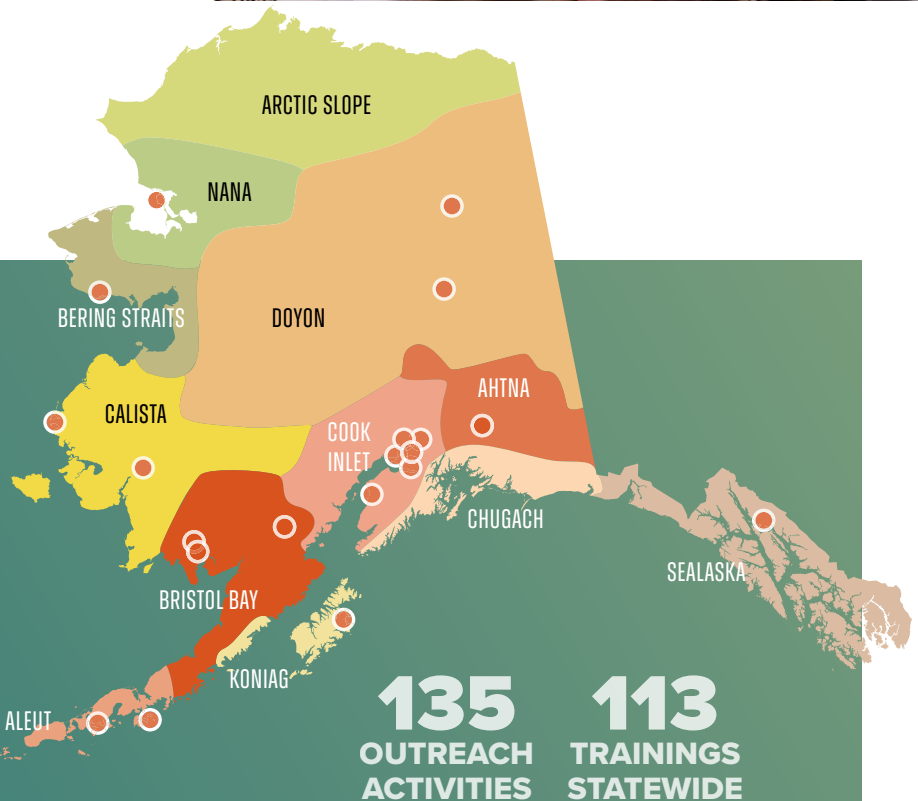
In one such case, ANJC assisted an Elder who was being emotionally, physically, and financially abused by an adult child. **Fear of retaliation** made it difficult for the Elder to report the abuse to law enforcement. However, the Elder felt safe enough contacting ANJC and Cook Inlet Tribal Council to apply for services and was then able to seek help. **ANJC assisted with a Domestic Violence Protective Order** and ensured that the Elder was housed and safe. **As a result, the Elder is now safely back at home.**



STATEWIDE REPRESENTATION

ANJC serves Alaskans statewide, assisting participants from **every ANCSA region** (all twelve regions illustrated in this map).

Additionally, staff visited **21 communities** with outreach activities and trainings.



For Our People

ANJC IN THE COMMUNITY

In 2023, ANJC staff conducted **135 outreach activities** and **113 trainings** for the public, Tribal staff, and partners. Additionally, ANJC staff visited nearly every region of the state to provide trainings and outreach this year.

Staff traveled to 21 Alaska communities: Eklutna, Girdwood, Palmer, Wasilla, Kenai and Soldotna, Glennallen, Fairbanks, Juneau, Kodiak, Nome, Bethel, Dillingham, Hooper Bay, Iliamna, Kotzebue, King Cove, Aleknagik, Sand Point, Unalaska, and Gwichyaa Zhee (Fort Yukon).

For Our Tribes:

TRIBAL SERVICES

Tribal Legal Representation

ANJC represents Alaska Tribes and offers technical assistance to Tribal child welfare workers appearing in court. In 2023, **ANJC represented Alaska Tribes in 227 Alaska State Court cases** and provided **28 trainings** to further ensure that Alaska Native children were protected under the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).

Tribal Justice

ANJC partners with and represents Alaska Tribes to strengthen Tribal sovereignty and justice, and to create and control Tribal justice institutions. In 2023, ANJC provided 33 statewide trainings on Tribal justice topics and served 13 additional Alaska Tribes with individualized training, technical assistance needs, and legal representation. ANJC now assists many of Alaska's 227 federally recognized Tribes through direct support or in partnership with regional nonprofits to ensure Tribal justice systems succeed.

OUTREACH: INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT



In 2023, ANJC designed the first ever training series and child welfare conference for Tribal child welfare workers. During the year, staff conducted two in-person and two virtual Basic Indian Child Welfare Act trainings in preparation for hosting a three-day conference in downtown Anchorage. The September 2023 conference attracted over 200 Tribal Child ICWA workers and affiliated Tribal staff from communities across Alaska. The conference focused intensely on the implementation of ICWA in Child in Need of Aid cases as well as responses to allegations of child abuse and neglect.



For Our People:

PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION

In March 2023, ANJC partnered with **Arizona State University** to host 29 law students for an **intensive weeklong class** that addressed Alaska's unique legal landscape. This was the first time the course was offered, titled "Alaska Native Legal Issues and Solutions," co-created by ANJC's Alex Cleghorn and Stacy Leeds, the Willard H. Pedrick Dean and Regents Professor of Law at the ASU Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law.

"For many, the course was both intellectually and emotionally challenging because it unpacked so many conflicts, injustices, and tensions," said Stacy Leeds.

"Every single participant grew in their understanding of Indian law and in their exposure to the diverse perspectives and unique lived experiences of Alaska Native communities and individuals," said Leeds.

Through this new partnership with ASU, the course provided an opportunity to ensure that the next generation of lawyers understands Alaska Native legal issues. Similarly, ANJC continues to expand legal knowledge through education and outreach efforts. As a learning organization that strives to build up underrepresented populations, ANJC creates opportunities for Alaska Native and American Indian

people to increase Indigenous representation in the legal field. Examples include:

- **Law Clerkship:** For the past two years, ANJC has hosted law clerks and fellows in our office to provide future law professionals with real-world experience with Alaska Native legal issues.
- ANJC hosts annual **Law & Culture Days** in partnership with the **Alaska Native Heritage Center**. ANJC staff and partners present on Alaska Native cultures and our unique legal landscape to an audience of summer law clerks and interns. In 2023, **65 law students attended** the event.
- ANJC, the Alaska Court System, and Anchorage School District hosted the first in-person **Color of Justice** event since 2019. The event was held at the **Boney Court House Alaska Supreme Court Chambers** with 65 students participating, including several students from the Bering Straits and Bristol Bay regions. The event was a success, and students were incredibly engaged and eager to participate, which fed the educators', attorneys', and judges' enthusiasm for the activities. ANJC's participation was possible because of a generous grant from **The CIRI Foundation**, which helped cover staff time, outreach, and materials for students at the event.



ABOUT THE ANJC CLERKSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMS:

ANJC's initiatives provide law students and recent graduates unparalleled opportunities in the realm of Native law. While the Law Clerk program offers short-term, intensive experiences, the Law Fellow initiative extends over one to two years, immersing participants in varied Alaska Native legal issues, from research to litigation.



SAM SCHIMMEL: FULL CIRCLE

At 14, Sam Schimmel joined the **Color of Justice** program, a pathway for youth toward legal careers. Originating from Gambell, Alaska, he was selected by **CIRI**, his Native corporation, to be part of this transformative experience in Anchorage. There, he realized the pressing need for improved legal representation for Alaska Native communities.

Years later, after engaging in multiple civic roles and establishing **Operation Fish Drop** during the pandemic, Sam is now a dedicated Georgetown Law student. This summer, he seized the opportunity to immerse himself in ANJC's **Native Law Clerkship** program. Through this, he contributed to cases ranging from custody matters to domestic violence and protective orders. The clerkship's hands-on experience gave him insights into the depth and complexity of issues faced by Alaska Native people in the legal system.

Passionate and committed, Sam looks forward to bringing his skills back to Alaska after his time at Georgetown. He envisions a future where he can work rigorously to ensure Alaska Native communities receive the representation and justice they deserve.



ZOË WISE: JOURNEY TO JUSTICE

Zoë Wise of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, found her 10-week clerkship at ANJC to be transformative. While Zoë's academic journey began with English and evolved into creative writing, it was her paralegal stint during the pivotal **McGirt Decision** that redirected her toward the realm of Native law. At ANJC, Zoë not only honed her legal skills, particularly in family law and the **Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)**, but also deepened her connection to Alaska's rich Native heritage.

During her tenure, Zoë had the unique opportunity to bridge academic learning with real-world legal practice, often assisting clients in the courtroom and making legal processes more approachable. Additionally, ANJC's initiatives, like **introducing law clerks to Alaska Native culture and history**, enriched her understanding and solidified her aspiration to champion justice for Indigenous communities.

With the experiences and insights gained, Zoë's path in the legal realm is set on advocating for justice within her community, embodying the spirit and mission of the ANJC programs.



OUR MISSION: JUSTICE FOR ALASKA NATIVE PEOPLE

ANJC serves as a bridge between Alaska Native people and the justice system. We advocate for justice and work in partnership with community and statewide agencies.

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