

ALASKA NATIVE



JUSTICE CENTER



Impact Report 2024

ANJC empowers Alaska Native communities by ensuring access to justice, healing, and support, advancing equity and resilience for individuals and Tribal communities across the state.



Since 1993, the Alaska Native Justice Center has helped over 10,000 individuals find justice.

MESSAGE FROM THE COO



Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we reflect on another year of service, I am proud to share the continued impact of the Alaska Native Justice Center in our FY24 report. Our commitment to serving, advocating, and educating at all levels of the justice system remains steadfast.

ANJC's work extends beyond supporting survivors of crime both inside and outside the courtroom. We actively engage with Tribes, providing crucial training, advocacy, and representation in state courts. And our staff can be found in communities across the state providing education, outreach, and training. As

Chief Operations Officer, I'm honored to work alongside our dedicated staff and partners in advancing the mission established by our founders over three decades ago.

This year brings exciting opportunities to expand our reach. We are supporting Alaska Tribes with Tribal Justice efforts, advancing the Intertribal Technical Assistance Working Group, and expanding our Tribal ICWA Representation Program. These initiatives represent a significant opportunity to effect lasting change for our Alaska Native people and Tribes.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to our core values and founders' vision. With your support, we'll continue our efforts to create a more just and equitable Alaska for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Cleghorn', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alex Cleghorn
Chief Operations Officer
Alaska Native Justice Center



Understanding Key Terms

Below are some important terms that help explain the services we provide.

Case

A single court action identified by a unique case number, which may involve issues like protective orders, custody, or divorce. ANJC may represent clients in multiple cases simultaneously, and some cases can take months or even years to resolve.

Human Trafficking (HT)

The exploitation of individuals through force, fraud, or coercion, often involving labor or adult entertainment. ANJC provides support and services to survivors of trafficking to help them regain control over their lives.

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

A federal law aimed at keeping Native American children connected to their families and Tribes, particularly in child custody and foster care cases. ICWA allows Tribes to intervene in state child welfare cases, ensuring Tribal children's connection to their heritage.

Outreach and Awareness Events

ANJC engages in outreach events to inform the public about our services and community resources. These events include booths, webinars, presentations, rural community visits, and direct outreach to underrepresented groups.

Protective Order

A court order designed to protect a person from harm by another individual. Alaska State law offers three types of protective orders: domestic violence, stalking, and sexual assault, each with specific requirements regarding relationships and offenses.

Pro Se (Legal) Clinics

"Pro se" refers to individuals representing themselves in court without a lawyer.

ANJC's pro se clinics help clients understand the legal system, specifically for those seeking protective orders or involved in divorce or custody cases.

Survivor Services

The range of services ANJC provides to survivors of crime, which may include legal representation in State Court for protective orders, divorce, or custody cases. Additional support includes court accompaniment, case management, urgent supportive services, and legal clinics to help individuals navigate the court system.

Tribal Justice Services

Services aimed at strengthening Tribal sovereignty and justice systems, ANJC partners with Alaska Tribes to establish Tribal justice institutions and offers training, technical assistance, and legal representation to ensure Tribal governance and justice.

Variance

An employment-based legal exception that ANJC helps secure for individuals facing barriers due to past criminal convictions or findings in child welfare proceedings, enabling access to jobs regulated by the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) in Southcentral Alaska.

STATEWIDE REPRESENTATION

By the Numbers

2024 was a year of measurable progress and meaningful outcomes.



6,956
Hours of Legal
Services



213
Urgent Supportive
Services Provided



424
Court Hearings
and Trials



102
New Clients



115
Court
Accompaniments



25
Protective
Orders



Obtained **Five**
Variations for
Individuals Due
to **Employment**
Barriers

ICWA

130
New Indian Child
Welfare Cases



681
People Attended
ICWA and Tribal
Justice Trainings



47
Pro Se Clinics
Hosted

Up Close with the Issues Facing Alaskans



“It was very fascinating to actually go in person to these places, to listen to people who have experienced domestic violence, and say, ‘We’re here to help, and this is how we can help you.’”

Cillian McDonagh (*Iñupiaq*)
Law Clerk

For Cillian McDonagh, a summer as ANJC’s law clerk was about more than paperwork.

While he did his fair share of affidavits, document proofreading, and even analyzed a prenuptial agreement, Cillian’s work at ANJC also took him outside the office to visit local homeless shelters, where he shared information about the support the organization provides victims of domestic abuse and other crimes.

A second-year student at the **Sandra Day O’Connor School of Law** in Phoenix, Arizona, Cillian was born and raised in Anchorage and is a **Bering Straits Native Corporation** shareholder descendant. His clerkship at ANJC was an opportunity to expand his understanding of tribal law and tribal issues. “I wanted deepen my understanding of the relationship between tribal governments and the federal government through legal cases and research,” he said.

Cillian also got to network with other law students and with working attorneys at events like ANJC’s annual Law and Culture Day.

After law school, Cillian hopes to continue exploring opportunities at his own Native corporation, Bering Straits, as well as learn about the other ANCSA corporations and their nonprofits.

“Now that I’ve worked for ANJC, I would love to, if I ever got into politics, bring in a deeper understanding of the issues that Alaska Native people face,” he said. ■

STATEWIDE REPRESENTATION

ANJC collaborates with Tribes and communities across all Alaska regions to strengthen justice and provide essential support for Alaska Native people.

The Alaska Native Justice Center plays a vital role in bringing justice and fairness to Alaska Native communities across Alaska. Founded in 1993, ANJC helps Alaska Native people navigate the civil and criminal justice systems, working to reduce high rates of victimization within these communities.

One key part of ANJC's work is its role in the **Council for the Advancement of Alaska Natives (CAAN)**, where it collaborates with 12 regional nonprofits and other statewide organizations. Together, they push for policies and solutions to meet the unique needs of Alaska Native people.

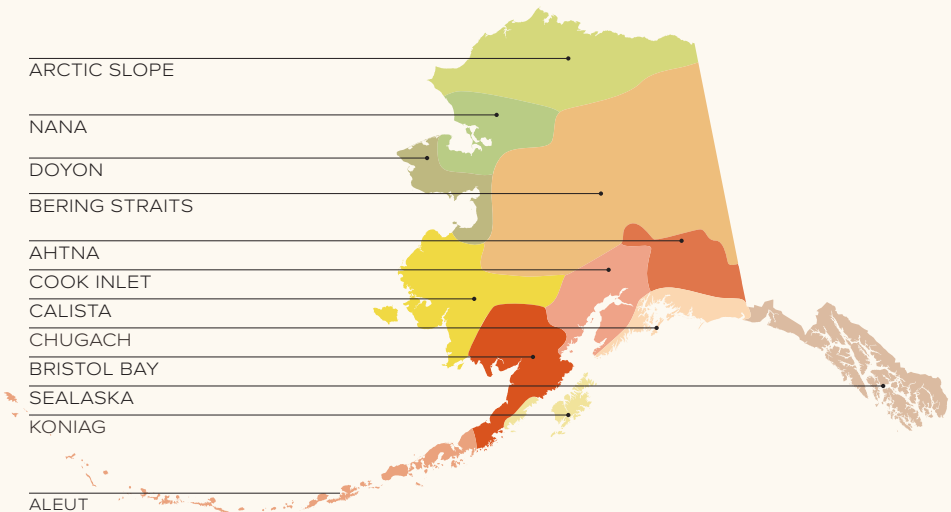
ANJC also hosted its second **Inter-Tribal Technical Assistance Working**

Group (ITWG) meeting in Anchorage, gathering tribal leaders, justice officials, and federal representatives to address critical justice issues facing Alaska Tribes.

Statewide, ANJC works through its role in commissions like the **Alaska Criminal Justice Data Analysis Commission**. By participating in these groups, ANJC ensures Alaska Native voices are included in decisions that impact state justice policies.

Through these combined efforts, ANJC continues to create positive change for Alaska Native communities, working toward a fairer and more inclusive justice system. ■

ANJC REPRESENTED CASES IN EVERY TRIBAL REGION IN 2024



“I spent a good majority of the time on the run, living in addiction. I got tired. I was just grateful for a chance. I ran with it, instead of running from it.”

| Maggie Fairbanks



Beyond Barriers

Barrier crimes can keep individuals from working post-incarceration. But ANJC helps people like Maggie Fairbanks overcome those obstacles with employment-based variances.

Maggie Fairbanks was tired of running. She'd spent her life dodging parole officers, and she had cut her ankle monitor off more than once. When she came up for sentencing yet again, the judge warned her: This was her last chance.

Maggie wanted to use her experience to help others who struggle with addiction. She hoped to find a job as an addiction treatment counselor.

But her criminal record stood in the way.

Because she wanted to work in the field of substance abuse treatment, she needed to apply for an employment-based variance—an exception to an individual's criminal record that can be granted by the State to allow them to work for a specific employer.

"The variance program is really important for people in reentry because there aren't a lot of programs for people coming out of jail. Even things we take for granted—like a good paying job with benefits—don't seem like they're possible," said Haley Dampier, a paralegal at ANJC.

A good job isn't just about survival. About 66 percent of Alaskans released from incarceration end up returning to prison. For many people reentering

the community, staying out of prison hinges on the stability provided by a job that offers a living wage, benefits, and a sense of fulfillment.

Although the variance program opens the door to employment for previously incarcerated individuals, applying for this exception can be a lengthy, arduous process. The sheer amount of paperwork can be overwhelming.

"The applicant really has to delve into some hard circumstances—sometimes into the worst times of their life," Haley explained.

That's why ANJC paralegals work through each step of the variance application process alongside individuals like Maggie.

Maggie worked closely with Haley to obtain a variance that would allow her to work as a counselor-in-training. Though it was a long process, she was grateful for the support she received from ANJC. Today, she is certified as a chemical dependency counselor and employed at a treatment center. She regularly shares her story with other individuals seeking recovery support.

"I feel like it's part of my purpose, and part of my recovery," she said, "and that's to help people that are going through the same thing. We keep what we have by giving it away." ■

STRENGTHENING TRIBAL JUSTICE:

Alaska ITWG Brings Together Record Number of Tribes

In a landmark gathering, the Alaska Native Justice Center brought 36 Alaska Tribes, leaders, and federal representatives together to strengthen justice and sovereignty in tribal communities.

In October 2024, the Alaska Native Justice Center (ANJC) hosted its second Inter-Tribal Technical Assistance Working Group (ITWG) meeting welcoming 36 Alaska Tribes to Anchorage. The unprecedented turnout—98 participants including tribal leaders, justice personnel, and senior state and federal officials—signals a transformative moment in Alaska tribal justice.

The ITWG serves as a forum for Alaska Tribes to strengthen safety and justice in tribal communities, with particular focus on preparing for the exercise of Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction (STCJ). This mission gained new urgency following the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2022 (VAWA 2022) and its pioneering Alaska Pilot Program, which for the first time provides a path for Alaska



Representatives from 36 Tribal communities attended the ITWG meeting.

The ITWG serves as a forum, bringing together Alaska Tribes to collectively strengthen safety and justice in tribal communities.

Tribes to begin to exercise STCJ over non-Indians for certain crimes in their villages—addressing a critical gap in tribal public safety.

“The combined expertise in the room represented approximately 80 years of experience in tribal justice,” noted ANJC COO Alex Cleghorn, highlighting the depth of knowledge shared during the intensive sessions. Participants engaged in discussions covering essential topics such as the current legal landscape, emerging opportunities, intertribal courts, youth diversion programs, and healing to wellness courts.

The gathering facilitated unprecedented dialogue between tribal, state, and federal representatives. During Department of Justice consultation, tribal leaders addressed systemic challenges in federal-tribal relations, with one tribal chief drawing parallels between current funding practices and historical trauma from the boarding school era.

The meeting gained additional significance from VAWA 2022 and the Justice Department’s recent memorandum affirming Alaska



Magistrate Trinidad Contreras,
Tlingit and Haida

Tribes’ inherent authority to exercise full civil and criminal jurisdiction over Native people within their Villages. The diverse participation—from experienced tribal courts to communities just beginning their justice system development—fostered valuable knowledge sharing.

As ANJC prepares for its next ITWG meeting in Fairbanks (spring 2025), the energy is palpable. One participant captured the spirit of the gathering, expressing hope that attendees would leave with “fire in their bellies” for Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction. The path forward depends on sustained collaboration between tribes, government representatives, tribal organizations and non-profits to enhance safety and justice across Alaska’s tribal communities. ■

anjc.org



Our Mission: *Justice for Alaska Native People*



**Be a
Voice for
Justice!**

SCAN TO DONATE

Suggested minimum donation:

Individuals \$250+

Corporations \$1,000+

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COOK
INLET
TRIBAL
COUNCIL

The Alaska Native Justice Center, managed by Cook Inlet Tribal Council, relies on donations to carry out its mission. These vital funds allow ANJC to better support and uplift Alaska Native communities.