



Alaska Institute for Justice

Alaska Immigration Justice Project • Language Interpreter Center • Research & Policy Institute

Keep the Doors Open

Ten years ago, the Alaska Immigration Justice Project opened its doors to provide critical immigration legal services. At the time we opened our offices, one full-time attorney worked in our office ensuring that immigrant domestic violence and sexual assault survivors could access safety and protection. Since opening in 2005, our mission, to protect the human rights of Alaskans, has been our guiding principle. In 2013, we changed the agency name to Alaska Institute for Justice to reflect the inclusion of two additional programs dedicated to environmental and social justice. The Alaska Institute for Justice now includes three programs: Alaska Immigration Justice Project, Language Interpreter Center and Research and Policy Institute. These programs provide unique and critical services for Alaska's immigrant, refugee and limited English proficient populations and for communities affected by climate change. Fifteen people now work in our offices in Anchorage and Juneau. We serve 850 Alaskans annually and provide interpreter services to hundreds of social, legal and medical professionals so that their services are accessible to all Alaskan residents. Our success would not have been possible without your tremendous support. We are deeply grateful and look forward to another successful ten years. Keep our doors open!



Welcome Lara!

Our new AIJP Attorney Staff. Lara grew up here in Alaska, and while she's been away for a few years, she's glad to be back. In high school she spent a year as an exchange student in the Dominican Republic where she learned to speak Spanish. And later in her University years, studied Portuguese, and worked at an immigration law firm. She graduated from university, and later from law school in Miami. She spent two years working as an interpreter. She worked as a Portuguese court interpreter for Immigration Court in Florida, and as both a Spanish and Portuguese interpreter for United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. With her passion for immigration law, after Lara graduated Law School she chose to return to her home town in order to make a difference and help in her community. Focusing her efforts on human trafficking survivors who she feels have been especially marginalized. The law is a tool to make a difference, and she is excited to be working with AIJP, in order to make a difference in the lives of human trafficking survivors.

Human Trafficking

AIJP works with both immigrant and US citizens trafficking survivors. Trafficking includes both sex and labor trafficking. In the media, there is a high focus towards sex trafficking, but we feel it is important to have an equal focus on both. AIJP continues to work with governmental and non-governmental agencies to help provide resources for human trafficking survivors. Agencies such as Standing Together Against Rape (STAR), Abused Women's Aid In Crisis (AWAKE), and Covenant House, have all been supporting our efforts to provide services to human trafficking survivors. We have been working to encourage different agencies, such as the FBI, the US Attorneys Office, and the Department of Labor, Health, and Human Services, to refer any trafficking survivors they come across to us. In order for them to receive the assistance and support they may need. The services we offer range anywhere from intensive case management to social, medical and legal advocacy to help victims achieve immediate safety and stability. We are here to support these victims and their needs to farthest extent of the law, and to the best of our abilities.



Welcome Denise!

Denise Pollock is a research assistant at the Alaska Institute for Justice (AIJ) and dedicates most of her time to work on a NOAA community-based grant: “Resilient Alaska Native Coastal Communities: Integrated Social-ecological Monitoring and Assessment Supporting Adaptation Decision”. Denise is Inupiaq, and is a tribal member of the Native Village of Shishmaref but was raised in Barrow and Fairbanks, Alaska. She received her BA from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Denise moved to Anchorage in September after three years of working for national Native advocacy organizations in Washington DC. Experience in DC enabled her to better understand the relationships between tribes and the federal government, and to strengthen her policy research and grant writing skills. Her favorite part of living DC involved organizing and educating Native youth about the role of fossil fuel industries within tribal communities and how they exacerbate climate change impacts. Given that Shishmaref is one of the Alaska Native communities most imminently threatened by flooding and erosion, She felt it was time to move closer to home, and to help protect her community and many other Alaska Native communities, when given the opportunity at AIJ.

Research and Policy Institute


A rapidly changing climate in the Arctic is dramatically impacting the health and well-being of Alaska Native communities. Erosion and repeated extreme weather events damage infrastructure, including health clinics and water and sewage treatment facilities. Saline intrusion and thawing permafrost impact access to potable water. In the most extreme cases, accelerating rates of erosion are life-threatening and are causing Alaska Native communities to choose to relocate their entire community. Thanks to the NOAA Grant AIJ is conducting research that strives to increase the adaptive capacity of Alaska Native communities experiencing the impacts of climate-induced environmental change on their health and wellbeing. Community engagement and empowerment are critical to any process aiming to improve the adaptive capacity of Alaska Native communities. By developing new and building upon existing trust relationships, learning from, and co-producing knowledge with communities, we seek to develop adaptation strategies to protect their health and well-being, and to articulate their needs to organizations that might be able to provide technical or financial assistance.

At the moment, 14 of the 27 Alaska Native communities have agreed to work with us. Denise has managed to put together reports on Eilm and Quinnagek, documenting the flooding and erosion impacts on these communities. Almutluak documents how it's community have responded to flooding and erosion. AIJ is working on a questionnaire that we will share with Alaska Native Communities in order to understand how they have mostly responded to Climate Change impacts and what their priorities are regarding climate change. Our goal is to share the final results with governmental and non-governmental agencies in effort for these Alaska Native Communities to receive financial and/or technical support for their climate change impacts.

WE ARE ALL RELATED HERE

MONDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2015
7PM-8:15PM
ALASKA EXPERIENCE THEATER
LARGE THEATER
333 W 4TH AVE #207,
ANCHORAGE, AK

We Are All Related Here tells the story of the Yup'ik people of Newtok, Alaska, who are being forced to relocate their village due to the erosion and flooding they are experiencing as a result of global warming.



On Dec. 7, 2015, The Alaska Experience Theater showed “We Are All Related Here” a documentary film about the Yup'ik people of Newtok, Alaska who are being forced to relocate their village because of climate change induced flooding and erosion. The film not only provided a layout of the village, but also captured the cohesiveness of the community through music, dance, language, and subsistence gatherings. After the film, director Brian McDermott and film participant and Executive Director of AIJ Robin Bronen answered questions from an engaged audience about how Newtok was selected for the film and what the future for Newtok holds. Robin discussed how no institutional governance framework has been created for relocation and

how federal statutes that govern disaster response, such as the 2013 Stafford Act, do not provide appropriate responses to gradual climate change impacts. Regardless, the Village of Newtok is continuing to take strong measures to ensure the survival of its culture and community at their selected relocation site Mertarvik.

Language Interpreter Center

The Language Interpreter is proud to have served over 2,500 appointments in 2015, and is looking forward to helping many more in the New Year. With over 35 languages and over 200 hundred interpreters we hope to continue to serve the Alaska area, and continue to recruit more languages and interpreters during our training from June 13th to the 15th, 2016.

We appreciate all the different agencies who have contacted us in order to provide language access in order to provide services to all of Alaska's different communities. We hope to continue to spread word of our services, and are happy to have been featured in the Anchorage Press on October 16th, 2015, we strive to continue to bring awareness of our services, to all of Alaska. We serve not only the Anchorage area, but all of Alaska, and will continue to reach out to communities outside of Anchorage.

As well as providing interpreters, we provide training to our clients on how to work with interpreters, and the interpreters roles and responsibility, so that the role of the interpreter is clearly understood, in order to help bridge any gaps between the client, the Limited English Proficient Person, and the Interpreter.

Interpreter Spotlight

We would like to congratulate Yolanda, on being the first and only medically certified interpreter in Alaska. Our interpreter work in many different settings, including medical, legal, social, and educational. Medical being one of the more difficult settings, due to complex terminology. As we reach out to the medical community to encourage them to use medically trained interpreters, we equally encourage our interpreters to work towards becoming medically certified in order to serve our community to the best of our ability.

"Many interpreters will probably agree with me that nothing is more rewarding in our job as being able to see the communication flowing between the people who could not have been able to understand each other because of the language barrier. For me, interpreting is both a very rewarding and deeply humbling experience.

A couple of years ago, I was asked to interpret at the cancer prophylactics event organized by Providence Imaging Center and the Catholic Social Services for Anchorage- the second most culturally diverse city in the Nation. This community event gathered over a hundred of women, mostly immigrants and recently arrived refugees, many of whom were visiting a medical facility for the first time in years. The women were provided with a free screening for breast and cervical cancer; some also received a free consultation about their pregnancies.

During the check-ups, the women were confidently answering and asking questions, and the doctors were at ease and comfortable taking to the patients. Most of the time, doctors and patients paid no attention to me as though I was not even in the same room.

Now reflecting on that experience, I feel both gratitude and humility. I am thankful that being an interpreter, as I empower people to understand each other, even though they speak different languages, and recognizing the tremendous responsibility that comes with the task of facilitating such communication is truly humbling." - Marina Gantz, Russian Interpreter.

Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta and the Yup'ik Language

On November 1, 2014 The Language Interpreter Center was mentioned in an article in the Anchorage Daily News. This article highlighted the importance of Yup'ik interpreters in the Bethel area. In the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, where many people grew up speaking Yup'ik as their first language, the language barrier, can at times be problematic, particularly in a legal or medical setting. The Language Interpreter Center is working to ensure the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta area has access to trained Yup'ik interpreters. The Language Interpreter Center, the courts and two Yup'ik language experts are working to create a Yup'ik glossary with an emphasis on problems too common on the Delta: sexual assault, child sexual abuse, domestic violence and parental neglect and abuse. "Our goal is to make sure that all Alaskans have access to the services that they need regardless of their ability to speak English," Robin Bronen, executive director of the Alaska Institute for Justice. Of Alaska's native languages Yup'ik presents the biggest need for interpreters.

The Language Interpreter Center held a two day training Kuskokwim campus of the University of Alaska Fairbanks. This is the fourth time the Language Interpreter Center has gone to Bethel in order to recruit and train bilingual speakers to become interpreters. The process started a decade ago when the Alaska court system hosted its first of three summits to evaluate language issues, in 2005, 1000 surveys went out to evaluate the interpretation needs of those working in Alaska's legal medical and education and social services agencies, schools and others can draw when they need to hire a professional. Federal law, Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, requires any agency that receives federal money to provide language access. While we train interpreters, we also work to ensure agencies are aware of their responsibility.



The Language Interpreter Team

We would like to welcome Mai La and Sarah to the Language interpreter Center. Mai La focuses on any interpretation assignment that may come in, and Sarah works on translation assignment. Barb, The Language Interpreter Center Program Manger, has been with the Language Interpreter Center from the beginning, and oversees the whole of the Language Interpreter Center. We all work together to ensure Limited English Proficient Persons, receive language access. In which ever setting they require.

Meet the New Staff in AIJ's Juneau Office!



Anna Taylor is excited to be providing direct legal services to immigrants in Juneau and Rural Alaska. Her favorite part of working for AIJ is the people she gets to work with including her clients and her co-workers. Anna graduated from the University of Vermont, then spent a year in Argentina, learning Spanish. She graduated

from Washington College of Law in Washington, DC in May 2013. After spending five months in south Texas, representing detained immigrants, she came to Juneau to work for AIJ in March 2014. She spends her free time hiking, playing the French horn, and dreaming about the day she can have a puppy.

My name is Ivette Lugo, Alaska Institute for Justice's Juneau Rural Outreach Coordinator. I would like to express how happy I am to be here at the Alaska Institute for Justice for the last six months. I feel very grateful to be part of this amazing organization. I am happy to be learning and sharing what I have learned working with our rural communities. I was born and raised in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico, a beautiful desert with the perfect sunset. I went to Law School at Universidad de Sonora and graduated in 2000 (I just went to Mexico to celebrate our 15th graduation anniversary). I moved in to Alaska soon after I graduated from Law school in 2001 to study with the Boston University online program where I received a Masters in Criminal Justice in 2008.



Rural Outreach and Language Access Work

Ivette Lugo has been working to help identify, assess and respond to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and increase access to culturally and linguistically appropriate services in rural communities. Ivette has been developing resources for AIJ's clients; connecting survivors with community resources; conducting outreach about AIJ's services; identifying gaps in existing services and resources; connecting survivors with our staff attorney Anna Taylor for civil legal services; and connecting limited English proficient clients and service provider agencies to the Language Interpreter Center for language access resources. This work has included collecting local resources to better assist rural clients coming into the Juneau office, developing a resource packet for outside agencies including AIJ's available services and resources for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault; organizing an informational community meeting about AIJ's services including identifying existing gaps in services and needed resources; and presenting in a webinar for the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault about AIJ's services.



Sonoran desert road trip, November, 2015

AIJ is doing groundbreaking work to improve language access for crime victims in Alaska. With the support of a grant from the Office for Victims of Crime, AIJ is working with Alaska Legal Services Corporation, Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, Alaska Office of Victims' Rights, Violent Crimes Compensation Board, Anchorage Municipal Prosecutor's Office, and the UAA Justice Center to provide holistic civil legal services to underserved and limited English proficient crime victims within Alaska. These organizations are coordinating their work through regular meetings of a statewide Steering Committee and developing a comprehensive language access policy to improve access to services for underserved victims of crime. AIJ's Language Interpreter Center is translating vital agency documents to improve access to services.



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