Kenaitze Youth Speak
Alaska Native Engagement Award Project - The Kenai River

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Project Overview

• Project with Kenaitze high school students
• Focus to increase tribal interest in attending college for STEM studies
• Youth speaking about changes along the Kenai River, and expectations in the future
• Youth will participate hands-on for all aspects of interviews, photography, transcribing, and final publication of “Kenaitze Youth Speak”
Sample Research Questions

• Is it important to have a healthy Kenai River?
• Compare landscape changes along specific locations; Kenai Bluff, Soldotna Creek, etc...
• How are salmon fishing, sharing, and eating important to the Kenaitze people and to you personally?
Objectives

• Assess the importance of place to Kenaitze youth
• Assess potential responses, adaptation, and resilience to climate change should it occur on the Kenai Peninsula
• Assess a youth perspective on the importance of salmon to Kenaitze youth
Seems Boring? Think again...

- One sample: The Kenai Estuary
What landscape changes do you see here, compared to what your grandparents saw sixty years ago?
What did the researchers in this room see?

• Man-made structures in the estuary?
• Bluff erosion?
• Caribou?
What did our Native youth see?

• Look, there’s signs that tell people how to behave. Seriously? They don’t know what to do if you don’t write it on a sign?
• They built a big platform to see the birds and caribou, but people can’t even figure out how to park or how to be respectful.
What did the anthropologist see?

Core Values

• Core values underlie response to change
• They provide a framework for meaning in a culture that’s occupied this river for thousands of years and have been passed down from generation to generation.
• Core values for the tribe include behaviors and discipline for pointing out something obvious (like littering in the wetlands)
What about the future?

• Resilience to change and potential responses may include the acceptance of bluff erosion and natural changes, but not the acceptance for human behaviors which go against the core values of a subsistence culture.

• People can adapt to landscape changes – but can they adapt to bad behavior of other people?
The Kenai River in the Year 2025

• Mural project with AK Native Engagement Award Project for Kenaitze Tribal Council

• What do the youth want to see in 2025?

I want to
See a garbage-free Beach.
-Summer, 14

I want Native traditional Plants to grow and thrive, Along with the knowledge of the traditional use to be passed on to all generations.
-Shannon, age 20.

I want to See the River healthier than it is now.
-Holy, 15
The Tribal Council

• Want to see the youth prepare for the future
• Mural presented at the 2013 Annual Meeting
Thank You!

• More to come in 2014...