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THE APPLICATION OF CULTURAL VALUES BY CONTEMPORARY ALASKA
NATIVE LEADERS AND ALASKA NATIVE CORPORATIONS:
INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

A Research Project
Presented to the Faculty of
The George L. Graziadio
School of Business and Management
Pepperdine University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
in
Organization Development

by
Lorraine Henry
August 2011

This research project, completed by

LORRAINE HENRY

under the guidance of the Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has
been submitted to and accepted by the faculty of The George L. Graziadio
School of Business and Management in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

Date _____

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of traditional Alaska Native cultural values on current business practices within Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs). Five past and eight current chief executive officers of ANCs were interviewed to determine the impact of traditional Alaska Native cultural values on the ANCs. Past leaders were asked 12 questions about the ANC's startup and growth years, with special focus on the organization's leadership and values. Current chief executive officers were asked six questions including about the leadership legacy of the past ANC leaders and founders. Interviews were conducted by telephone or in person and lasted 30 to 60 minutes. Thematic analysis was used to generate findings. The study findings revealed substantial similarities from the two sets of leaders.

Key issues were identified by both samples. Areas of agreement between the past and current leaders were: improving the quality of life for Alaska Natives, passing the corporations and heritage of these entities onto future generations, honoring the culture, and maintaining shareholder and stakeholder relationships. Two issues were mentioned only by past leaders: having the motivation to serve the people, and differences between Western and Alaska Native approaches. Maintaining and growing business success was mentioned only by the current leaders.

Basic assumptions of each sample also were determined. Areas of agreement between the past and current leaders were: making the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and ANCs work for the people, improving the quality of life for Alaska Natives, passing the corporations and heritage of these entities onto future generations, learning, and cooperation. Two additional assumptions were mentioned only by the past leaders: intentionally blending Western and Alaska Native approaches and connection to all things. Maintaining and growing business success while providing direct benefits to shareholders was mentioned only by the current leaders.

Values driving both samples additionally were identified. Areas of agreement between past and current leaders were: loyalty to family and culture, future generations, sharing and cooperation, learning and acquiring knowledge, and Alaska Natives' quality of life. Respect and connection to all things was reported by past leaders.

It was concluded that reconciling the two different value systems (Western and Alaska Native) appears to have been achieved by blending education and experience in business and loyalty to an Alaska Native value system. Although several limitations affected this study and continued research is necessary to more deeply understand the interplay of the cultures, the study results suggest that blending two diverse cultures within the context of a corporation is possible without sacrificing business success or the central values of either culture.

Acknowledgments

The individuals who participated in this study were generous with their time and were very willing to share. This paper provides a glimpse into the thinking of a few who helped to create the Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs) and those who continue to carry on a legacy. The ANCs' early leaders and founders led a change effort of tremendous magnitude and established top performing businesses amidst unprecedented circumstances. The perspectives they shared about the complex systems are simplified in this paper to highlight key points.

During the process of researching this project, memories of several key people who triggered an awareness of a personal value system included my younger sister, Marcy, who, when we were children, wrote about how she observed her big sister model a respect for all people; my mother, Marge, who ran her aviation business in Arctic Alaska with heart and modeled for all she employed a business leadership value of caring for people; Tuti Hinekahukura Aranui, who taught the importance of understanding one's own values before seeking to learn about others during a cross-cultural exchange between the Maori of New Zealand and the Inupiat of Arctic Alaska; and Edie Seashore, who put a spotlight on my desire to learn more about the impact values can have on organizations.

The patience and support from my husband, Patrick, and the encouragement from so many family members and friends helped me maintain a commitment to this research project. They conveyed a belief in my ability and this helped to dispel self-doubt and my feeling that others much smarter and more insightful than me ought to do this research.

Thank you to those who reviewed this paper and offered confirmations about the importance of the research topic.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Human value systems refer to people's worldviews that describe their conscious beliefs about the way the world is or should be. A value system also refers to an ideology that explains people's behaviors, such as what and how they deliberate and make decisions as well as the reasons they give for exercising those behaviors (Rohan, 2000). Values are the standards that lead people to take positions on issues and guide them to practice certain behaviors. Just as individuals have value systems, organizations also have value systems that guide their members' attitudes and behaviors. A person's value system might be most readily apparent when he or she is put into a new environment (Earley & Ang, 2003). Similarly, organizations' value systems often become evident during inter-organizational interfaces (Ang & Inkpen, 2008).

This study examined the interface of Alaskan Native values and corporate American values within the context of 12 Alaska Native for-profit companies that were created as a result of the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). Studying Alaska Native corporations (ANCs) provides an opportunity to learn how the indigenous people of Alaska embedded their traditional cultural values into the corporations they created. Examining the intersection of the American corporate model with the Alaska Native value system within the context of the ANCs provides an informative case of two culture systems operating together.

Examining the intersection of different cultures in business meets an important need in research and practice. While cross-cultural and multi-cultural

studies have been conducted and have provided insights about differences across cultures and how different culture groups may work together, most of these theories have been created based on United States populations and only later have been tested within other cultural contexts (Aycan, 2000; Pellegrini, Scandura, & Jayaraman, 2010).

Cross-cultural studies specifically on Alaska's Native peoples have been limited to discussing how healthcare practitioners (Chouinard & Cousins, 2009; Slattery et al., 2007), educators, and scientists (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005) from outside the culture can learn to effectively work with the population. Only limited studies are available that demonstrate how current individual and management practices have been influenced by the traditional Alaska Native cultural values. Further, much of the organization development research is based on Western—and, particularly, American—management practices and theories (Marshak, 2009). Creating processes to help companies execute change in cross-cultural settings is a relatively new aspect of organization development and more research is needed (Cummings & Worley, 2005).

Friedman (2005) elaborated that global business expansion requires a company's employees to work with people from different cultures and, often, different value systems. Companies pursuing global business interests would benefit from acknowledging that culture plays a large role in the organization's success. For example, culture influences how people learn, solve problems, and make changes (Schein, 2009).

Cultural illiteracy can be detrimental when working in the global marketplace (Hall, 1981); therefore, it is vital for leaders and employees working

in the global market to learn about other cultures (Francesco & Gold, 2005) and develop cultural intelligence (Schein, 2009). Cultural intelligence is becoming particularly imperative for businesses that are outsourcing and off-shoring their functions to other countries (Ang & Inkpen, 2008). This study will provide insights about two cultures that intersected in the establishment and sustaining of organizations and what outcomes resulted.

Research Purpose

This study examined the influence of traditional Alaska Native cultural values on the ANCs' business practices today. Research questions included

1. What key issues did past ANC leaders face?
2. What basic assumptions and values did these past ANC leaders bring into the organizations?
3. What key issues do current chief executive officers of ANCs face?
4. What basic assumptions and values do the current chief executive officers bring into the organizations?
5. In what ways have the Alaska Native cultural values been carried forward into today within the organizations?

A key assumption underlying this study is that the Alaska Native people who created the ANCs were guided by traditional cultural values when they established the organizations. Anders and Anders (1986) asserted those who "aspired to top positions" in the ANCs were not invested in "the old ways" (p. 220). This suggests that contemporary leaders did not bring the traditional Alaska Native belief system into the organizations.

Study Setting

The ANCSA established by the United States government in 1971 conveyed money and land to Alaska Native people and settled their land claims dating back to the 1800s. The indigenous peoples of Alaska were recipients of the settlement: Aleut, Alutiiq, Athabascan, Chugach, Eyak, Haida, Inupiat, Tlingit, Tsimshian, Cup'ik, Yup'ik, and Siberian Yup'ik (McClanahan & Bissett, 2002) and they organized regionally.

A stipulation of the Act was that for-profit organizations needed to be created as a vehicle of the settlement (Arnold, 1976). Thirteen regional for-profit corporations and more than 200 village corporations were created. Twelve in-state private, for-profit organizations include Ahtna, Inc.; Aleut Corporation; Arctic Slope Regional Corporation; Bering Straits Native Corporation; Bristol Bay Native Corporation; Calista Corporation; Chugach Alaska Corporation; Cook Inlet Region, Inc.; Doyon, Ltd; Koniag, Inc.; NANA Regional Corporation; and Sealaska Corporation. A thirteenth regional corporation was organized for Alaska Natives who were non-residents of Alaska.

The amount of money each regional corporation received was based on the enrollment of Alaska Natives who became the owners of stock in the for-profit corporations. A unique feature of the ANCs, which is unlike other for-profit corporations, is that the ANC stockholders are defined by their Alaska Native blood quantum or through inheritance.

The movement toward and settlement of ANCSA catapulted Alaska Natives into the leadership arena at local, state, and national levels. The leaders who spearheaded the startup ANC companies often had little or no business

experience; yet, they paved the way for, or left a legacy of, multi-million and billion dollar companies. These individuals are often identified as Alaska Native leaders. However, as the descriptor *Alaska Native* may diminish the magnitude of leadership demonstrated by these individuals, this study refers to these individuals as *contemporary leaders*. The term contemporary leader also was chosen to distinguish these individuals from Alaska Native *traditional leaders*, who are esteemed as having traditional cultural knowledge and expertise.

The contemporary leaders brought with them the traditional Alaska Native ways, but also needed to learn and incorporate new Western concepts of business. Their task was to help their people move into a market economy that involved generating new and different kinds of wealth. Beliefs described by the ANCs' founders and current chief executives provide a cross-group comparison about the influence of values to their respective organizations.

No cultural values framework has been documented for a collective Alaska Native culture group and they are often categorized with Native Americans. As a result, the national cultural descriptions that exist may not be representative of Alaska Natives. Further, the Alaska Native culture groups vary culturally and these differences are well defined. Creating these organizations required substantial cooperation across the regions involved.

Significance of Study

This study generated new understanding about the impact of traditional Alaska Native values on the ANCs' performance. These insights are important for businesses working with the ANCs.

This study also generated insights about what happens when different value systems operate together, such as differences, challenges, and benefits that emerge. This information is useful for individuals who want to develop their awareness about working cross-culturally.

Finally, the lessons learned by the past and current leaders can provide guidance and insights for future ANC leaders as well as leaders in settings where traditional cultures are being blended with Western business practices.

Researcher Background

I am of Inupiat heritage and was raised in an Inupiat community. I also am a shareholder of one of the ANCs studied. Alaska Native values helped shape my belief systems and these influenced the way I designed, conducted, and interpreted the findings of this study. For example, Alaska Native norms dictate that a person should not ask direct questions when seeking information from elders. Further, one person should not speak for the group unless he or she is selected by the group. These practices had clear implications for conducting this study—particularly as it concerned conducting interviews and analyzing and reporting the results. For me, asking probing questions when interviewing ANC leaders and founders would be considered disrespectful. Analyzing other people's stories and experiences also seemed inappropriate. I maintained awareness of my belief systems throughout this study and sought to balance sound research technique with sensitivity to cultural values and practices.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 2 provides a review of relevant literature, including research on group cultures and on the Alaska Native value system. Chapter 3 describes the

methods used to collect and analyze data for this study. Study results are presented in chapter 4. The final chapter provides a discussion of the results, including a summary of findings, conclusions, limitations, and recommendations for future study.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

This chapter reviews existing literature relevant to this study. The literature on culture and values is extensive and varied. This study focused on the disciplines of anthropology, psychology, history, sociology, and economics with emphasis on organization development research. In-depth information on studying and understanding culture can be found in the works of Kluckhohn (1954), who provided a theory of culture analyzing a cultures orientation and proposed a values orientation framework; Rokeach (1973), who introduced a classification system in a values survey; Hofstede (1993), who provided a cultural framework with dimensions of culture with work-related values across nations; and Schwartz (1992), who proposed a theory for motivational contents of values. Kluckhohn's and Rokeach's work served as a basis for many of the theories discussed in this chapter, although Kluckhorn and Rokeach are not directly reviewed here. Hofstede's and Schwartz's work will be discussed, along with the work of Trompeenars and Hampden-Turner (1998), who introduced a cultural model that describes how human beings relate to each other; Schein (2004, 2009), who introduced a model of organizational culture for analysis and intervention; and Earley and Ang (2003), whose theory of cultural intelligence describes the impact of one's cultural background on their behavior within a business context.

The following sections discuss group and organizational culture, the Alaska Native Community, and the ANCSA and the birth of the ANCs. These areas of literature provide foundational understanding of how Alaska Native

values have affected the ANCs and how they have been carried forward into the organizations today.

Group and Organizational Culture

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) posited that “culture is the way in which people solve problems and reconcile dilemmas” (p. 6). Culture can be difficult to detect because most people acquire cultural values early in life and then pre-consciously put them into practice (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2005). Culture also gives rise to tacit knowledge and ingrained beliefs and perspectives that are difficult to articulate (Nonaka, 2008). The following sections describe the components of culture, practices for assessing culture, practices for institutionalizing and evolving culture, and the role that early leaders play in organizational culture.

Components

Hofstede et al. (2005) used the metaphor of an onion to depict how culture manifests at different levels, with certain elements being observable and certain elements being somewhat hidden and not capable of being directly observed. Culture consists of artifacts and behaviors, values, and basic assumptions (Schein, 2009).

Artifacts and behaviors include such things as organizational structures and processes. Behaviors or norms are the actions that are good, right, and acceptable according to the culture (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). Hofstede et al. (2005) described norms as “standards for behavior that exist within a group or category of people” (p. 21). While observable behaviors provide data about culture, the literature suggests one must look deeper to fully

understand a culture. Schein argued that it is through certain behaviors that the group ensures its safety, comfort, and productivity.

Schein described values as “rationalizations such as organizational goals and strategies” (p. 21). The motivations that guide these behaviors are repeatedly described as values (Hofstede et al., 2005; Schein, 2009; Schwartz, 1999; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). Values represent the implicit or explicit shared ideas of what is “good, right and desirable in society” (Schwartz, 1999, p. 25). Hofstede et al. (2005) asserted that values represent a constant component in a culture and form its core. Values may be intrinsic, meaning they are upheld based on principle, no matter what the cost, or instrumental, meaning they are upheld because they are directly beneficial to members (Grondona, 2000). The tacit nature of values makes identifying and studying them difficult.

Basic assumptions are those unconscious beliefs that reflect the organization’s values (Schein, 2009). Schein (2004) contended that a group’s basic assumptions, which are unconscious and deeply embedded, comprise a cultural group’s core beliefs about themselves, others, and the world. These are generally taken-for-granted ideas within the cultural group about how one should “perceive, think, and feel about things” (Cummings & Worley, 2005, p. 484). Clarifying a group’s basic assumptions also can lead to better understanding of the group’s values. Schein (2004) advised that when analyzing the beliefs and values, it was important to carefully differentiate between what is “congruent with the underlying assumptions” and those that are, in effect, “either rationalizations or only aspirations for the future” (p. 30).

Culture and values have been found to influence organizations and guide their members in what behaviors, perceptions, and beliefs are right and wrong (Cameron & Quinn, 2006; Francesco & Gold, 2005; Hofstede et al., 2005; Schein, 2004; Schwartz, 1999; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). As with societies, culture informs organization members about the “correct understanding of life” (Francesco & Gold, 2005, p. 262).

Assessing Culture

Although many elements of culture tend to be tacit, a group’s or organization’s culture can be deduced from the leadership style that dominates the organization, the organization’s routines and procedures, and the factors that make the organization successful and unique (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). Schein (2009) added that an organization’s culture also is evident in its mission and goal statements, which point to the organization’s ideals, future goals, and current realities. Not only do these help guide and motivate members, but by understanding where the organization has been, where it is now, and where it wants to go, implicit clues about what is believed, valued, and acted out in the organization can be discovered (Greiner, 1998; Schein, 2009).

Importantly, for a culture assessment to be effective and produce valuable results, it must be linked to a particular problem or issue. Schein (2009) explained,

Diagnosing a culture for its own sake is not only too vast a problem but also may be viewed as boring and useless. On the other hand, if the organization has a purpose, a new strategy, or a problem to be solved, then to determine how the culture impacts the issue is not only useful but in most cases necessary. (p.101)

Hall (1981) added that identifying an organization's culture may be best accomplished by initiating a dialogue among members internal and external to the organization being assessed. Blending the in-depth view from internal members with the fresh, "foreign" perspective of outsiders through open dialogue and questioning can spark awareness about beliefs, values, and even behaviors that organization members may enact unconsciously.

Institutionalizing and Evolving Culture

Culture is spread throughout a societal group or organization through the "interactions between people, events, situations, actions, and general circumstance" (Morgan, 1997, p. 152), making culture a self-organizing phenomenon. Over time, as the condoned behaviors, values, and beliefs are reinforced again and again, culture can become deeply ingrained (Greiner, 1998). However, culture also can evolve, as it is linked to the organization members' social practices, which can be ever-changing. Further, as the organization grows, matures, and faces different types of demands and pressures, the culture may evolve accordingly (Zheng, Qu, & Yang, 2009). Schein (2009) elaborated that through the course of organizational growth, the structures and espoused values that were supportive in the early stages may become a touchstone and a primary source of stability as the organization matures.

Hofstede et al. (2005) explain that societies have a capacity for "conserving their identity through generations of successive members" even with "varied and numerous forces of change" and as change "sweeps the surface, the deeper layers remain stable" (p. 36). They state, "identity answers the question

‘to which group do I belong?’” and state “identities are visible, values are invisible” and “cultural values affect the consequences of identity differences” (p. 322).

Studying the cultural differences is important and designating people to a certain identification is complex. Earley and Ang (2003) referred to the many studies that confirmed differences in the pattern and style of decision making and thinking of Western and non-Western cultures related to cultural values on social perception (p. 110) and the identification of people to a specific culture is not simple. They elaborated,

What seems to be lacking in the research literature is an integration of the broader cultural and national contexts in which people live and work with this emerging emphasis on cross-border work. To make things even more complex, people from different culture and/or nations, who do not necessarily share a common way of interpreting and evaluation situations, are more likely to respond dissimilarly to the same context. (p. 15)

Hatch (1993) proposed that organization culture is the ongoing and “dynamic construction and reconstruction of cultural geography and history” (p. 686) and built a supporting model of this based on Schein’s definition of culture. According to Hatch, culture is the manifestation of group members’ meaning making regarding who the group was, is, and will be. The meanings that are generated, in turn, construct their self-perceived images and identities and inform their actions. For example, if organization members view the firm’s past setbacks as a function of their own individual efforts and choices, they might respond by changing their work behaviors. In contrast, if they attribute the setbacks to mistakes by their manager and the leadership, they might respond by leaving the organization.

Zheng et al. (2009) created a framework that explains the dynamic nature of culture related to the organizational lifecycles of startup, growth, maturity, and revival:

1. Inspiration. When the organization is just being created, the founders are heavily focused on survival of the organization. Attending to internal conditions such as conflict and other cultural issues take a backseat. Simultaneously, the organization members who have just been brought together (often for the first time) are focused on developing a collective identity and sense of belonging. Culture provides the galvanizing force that achieves these goals. The source of culture at this stage is the founder's assumptions and values, consequently leading to the sense of inspiration. Inspiration is achieved through creating and communicating mission statements, visions, goals, and symbols. Therefore, stages exhibit corresponding cultural mechanisms using Schein's levels of culture model.

2. Implantation. As the startup phase turns into organizational growth, the focus in the organization turns to institutionalizing (implanting) the organizational culture. Implantation occurs by creating "organizational systems, structures, policies, rites and rituals, stories, and other tangible forms" (Zheng et al., 2009, p. 161) that formalize the culture and guide organization members in how to think and behave.

3. Negotiation. As the organization enjoys maturity, stable cash flow, and absence of immediate threat, the organization becomes pluralistic, meaning that a number of subcultures develop as organization members' views of the firm's reality continually changes. The development of subcultures, each with their own

sets of beliefs, values, and behaviors, eventually leads to conflict and conflict gives way to negotiation. In this sense, the subcultures raise, exchange, and negotiate their particular views and behaviors, in turn, leading to a renegotiation of the overall organizational culture.

4. Transformation. Cultural transformation occurs in concert with organizational renewal or decline. This lifecycle stage happens when organizations sustain declines in market share, competitive advantage, or revenue. At this stage, the subcultures must reach consensus about the organizations new set of beliefs, values, and behaviors. Zheng et al. (2009) explained, "Transformation refers to the process through which subcultures negotiate and achieve a fundamentally different organizational culture that maintains a balance between cultural diversity and cultural unity" (p. 165). This process often requires paradigm shifts (Cummings & Worley, 2005).

Role of Early Leaders

Zheng et al.'s (2009) model discussed in the previous section suggested that organizational founders and early leaders play a significant role in the culture that emerges in an organization. First, founders tend to select people like themselves for the startup organization; therefore, the culture tends to resemble the beliefs, values, and behaviors of the founder. Often, these cultures tend to be quite strong (Kotter & Heskett, 1992). Second, the actions and accomplishments of the founders become indelibly linked to the organization's history, thus, becoming part of the organization's cultural heritage (Marks & Mirvis, 1998). Having this place in the organization's history, results in additional enforcement of the founders' behaviors in the culture. Third, founders may author the

organization's mission and creates its structures, processes, and other components. These features act to further reinforce the firm's culture (Schein, 2004).

Alaska Native Community

The term *Alaska Native* describes a people who are "indigenous to the lands and waters encompassed by the state of Alaska" (Roderick, 2010, p. 3). While popular press and historical research refer to these people as a singular group, the total population is actually comprised of several distinct cultural groups, including the Aleut, Alutiiq, Athabaskan, Chugach, Eyak, Haida, Inupiat, Tlingit, Tsimshian, Cup'ik, Yup'ik, and Siberian Yup'ik. Therefore, any attempts at characterizing the Alaska Native culture should acknowledge that although similarities may exist across the subgroups, a unified Alaska Native culture or set of values does not exist.

The following sections explore published findings on Alaska Native cultures. Relevant to this discussion are the concepts of *value system*, *worldview*, and *ideology*. Rohan (2000) offered the following definitions: *value system* refers to cognitive structures, such as the perceptions and thoughts characteristic of a cultural group's members; *worldview* refers to "people's beliefs about the way the world is or should be that are a function of their value priorities," and *ideology* refers to "value-laden linguistic construction that are used in or after decision-making" (p. 270).

Values

Several researchers have referred to Alaska Native cultural values (Baenen, 2004; Hensley, 2009; Kawagley, 1995; McBeath & Morehouse, 1994;

McClanahan, 2006; Worl, 2002); however, literature that explains the values is limited. One notable exception to this is comprised of the efforts by Alaska Native culture groups that have started to document their oral traditional knowledge and values. One effort was launched in 1980 by Inupiat elders of northwestern arctic Alaska who held a session to make their values explicit (Baenen, 2004; Hensley, 2009). By 2005, a formal list of values had been created based on contributions from nine regional culture groups, including Athabascan; Bristol Bay Yup'ik; Cup'ik; Kodiak Alutiq; Northwest Arctic Inupiat; North Slope Inupiat; Saint Lawrence Island Yup'ik; Southeast Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian; and Uniangax Aleut (Association of Alaska School Boards [AASB], 2005). The values are declarations of an accepted way of being with each other and the environment. The AASB compiled the list of espoused values and produced a poster for school children. Roderick (2010) proposed a similar list of common values across all Alaska Native culture groups. Comparing these sources points to three key values common across the culture groups:

Loyalty to family and community. Loyalty to family and community refers to having allegiance to one's family and community (AASB, 2005) as well as valuing community over individuality (Roderick, 2010). For example, the socioeconomic organization of Alaska Natives is based on a kinship system (Worl, 2002). Similarly, Alaska Natives retain ownership of the ANCs and are able to give shareholders preference in hiring (Alaska Federation of Natives, 1988).

The values of family and community over self suggest that the Alaska Native communities are collectivist cultures (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Worl, 2002). Hofstede et al. (2005) described collectivist societies as those where

people “from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups” and throughout their lifetime, this connection “continues to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty” (p. 76). In such a community, each person is considered a small part of the whole and one derives one’s identity from one’s group affiliation. Consequently, the bonds between members of the cultural group are strong and social relationships take preeminence over other goals (Hall, 1981). Additionally, ideologies of equality prevail over ideologies of individual freedom and harmony and consensus in society are the ultimate goals. By contrast, within individualistic societies, people look after themselves and their immediate families, desire freedom over equality, and strive for self-actualization.

Sharing and cooperation. Alaska Native cultures emphasize the importance of sharing, generosity, and cooperation (AASB, 2005; Roderick, 2010). Again, this value suggests that Alaska Native cultures have a collectivist orientation. Cooperation suggests an accepted way of working together and looking out for each other. Worl (2002) explained that in Alaska Native society, a value of sharing is “key to survival” and young people are “socialized into the value of sharing with kin and community members” (p. 4). Kawagley (1995) also referenced behaviors of respect, cooperation, and sharing in his description of the Yupiaq worldview.

Respect for all things. Respect for one another, the land, and harmony with nature is of prime importance in Alaska Native cultures (AASB, 2005). Therefore, group members are taught to honor the land and waters and demonstrate respect and reverence for fish and wildlife (Roderick, 2010).

These views originate from Alaska Native beliefs about the people's relationship to the land. Case and Volluck (2002) explained that Alaska Natives do not believe "that the land belonged to the Natives" as property and a basis for raising capital (p. 175). Instead, Alaska Natives hold that they, in fact, belong to the land. This implies an orientation toward nature and reflects a belief that humans are part of nature and must go along with its laws, directions, and forces. This nature orientation suggests flexibility, compromise, and a comfort with waves or shifts as cycles (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). This approach of going along with nature has a profound impact on how people conduct their day-to-day lives, manage their businesses, and make decisions. For example, land use decisions within Alaska Native cultures have focused on "protecting land as the landscape for subsistence" (McClanahan, 2006, p. 41).

A contrasting approach would be one of controlling nature and "using it for its highest economic value" (McClanahan, 2006, p. 41). This approach often is evident in the Western corporate model, which holds that businesses can and should control nature by imposing their will upon it (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998).

Additional Alaska Native values published by the AASB (2005) included rules of interpersonal behavior, such as honesty, fairness, caring, patience, kindness, trust, humor, and humility. Respect, specifically respect for one another and respect for elders, also is of high importance. The values also urge people to not be boastful. Group members also are urged to have respect for knowledge based on life experiences and to learn by observing and doing and gaining

wisdom from elder leaders. Roderick (2010) echoed the importance of learning from “the guidance of elders” (p. 2).

Worldview

My analysis of the literature on Alaska Native worldviews (AASB, 2005; Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Kawagley, 1995; Roderick 2010) points to three key beliefs: (a) all things are connected, (b) systems are complex and dynamic, and (c) a person can hold multiple concepts at once. Kawagley (1995) explained that the Yupiaq worldview holds that synthesis of information is achieved through interactions with the natural and spiritual worlds and that interconnectedness of all the elements make up the social and ecological systems that exist. The AASB (2005) emphasized Native spirituality and the practices of honoring, respecting, and practicing ancient traditions. Barnhardt and Kawagley (2005) explained the Alaska Native belief that “different systems can exist in a person or organization as a ‘two-way transaction’” (p. 9). Finally, Roderick (2010) pointed out that Alaska Native cultures take a holistic view of life, believing that “everything in creation is connected, complex, dynamic, and in a consistent state of flux” (p. 2). Barnhardt and Kawagley (2010) further elaborated that the Alaska Native worldview is shaped by “linking human interaction with the environment,” demonstrating an “interconnectedness of all the elements that make up the social and ecological systems” (p. xix).

The ANCSA and the Birth of the ANCs

For more than a century leading up to the ANCSA of 1971, Alaska Natives had been fighting with the United States federal government for land settlement (Arnold, 1976). When Alaska became a state in 1959 and oil was discovered on

the North Slope in 1968 (Anders, 1989; McBeath & Morehouse, 1994), the tensions only escalated. They witnessed rapid changes in the rules concerning land ownership and claims for resources. These changes often occurred without the engagement and knowledge of Alaska's Native people (McBeath & Morehouse, 1994). They realized they might lose their lands "by default if something was not done" (pp. 114–115). Thus, the agreement formalized through the ANCSA of 1971 was viewed as a necessary compromise.

Rather than the reservation model used with the Native American Indians, the ANCSA introduced Alaska Native people to a Western approach of land ownership and capitalizing on the land through corporate enterprise. Republican Ted Stevens, newly elected to the United States Senate in 1968, shared his view of the act:

ANCSA was my baptism of fire as a Senator from Alaska. . . . The 1971 Act is unprecedented, unique in the history of the federal government. It represents the largest settlement of aboriginal rights in the history of the world. ANCSA makes Alaska's Natives the largest private landowners on earth. ANCSA assured for Alaska's Natives the opportunity to participate fully in determining our State's future during a period of rapid development and increasing world recognition. It marked the beginning of a new era in federal Indian policy. It marked self determination. (Stevens, 1991, pp. 4–5)

However, substantial dissatisfaction with the Act was evident among both the Natives and the non-Natives. McClanahan and Bissett (2002) explained the Alaska Natives' view:

With passage of the act, Congress took away most of Alaska Natives' land. Alaska Natives retained 44 million acres out of 375 million acres and were granted nearly \$1 billion for lands given up. It's important to point out that while many in the non-Native community viewed ANCSA as a "generous" grant to Alaska Natives, what was given up overshadowed what was gained. (p. 15)

Meanwhile, non-Natives in Alaska considered themselves pioneers and resented what they viewed as a “hefty settlement for a frontier that Whites believed they had tamed” and they were certain it would not take long for “the Natives to be parted from their money and land” (Strohmeyer, 2003, p. 172). Many believed that the Alaska Native people “would gradually wither away through assimilation” (McBeath & Morehouse, 1994, p. 114).

Ultimately what emerged as a result of the land claims battle was the creation of a broader Alaska Native community from the many disparate cultures. It was through the battle for the ANCSA that the society of Alaska’s indigenous people converged as a collective entitled *Alaska Natives* (McClanahan & Bissett, 2002). Trust and cooperation across the groups emerged when all Alaska Natives faced the common threat of losing their land (Arnold, 1976; Case & Voluck, 2002; Langdon, 1993). Cooperation emerged as they fought to create, resolve issues with, and pass the ANCSA (Arnold, 1976; Huhndorf, 1991; McClanahan, 2006; Pullar, 1997). Cooperation and inclusive decision-making practices formed as they explored their disagreements and worked through their differences and disputes in the operation of the ANCs (McClanahan, 2006).

Modernization of the Community

The ANCSA was passed at a time when most Alaska Natives still lived a traditional lifestyle (Berger, 1985). Therefore, creating the ANCs catapulted the Alaska Native community into a period of modernization wherein group members had to reconcile the conflicting Native and Western cultures and move toward becoming more Western or American (Anders, 1989; Anders & Anders, 1986; Berger, 1985; Hensley, 2009; Mitchell, 2001; Rude, 1996; Worl, 2002). Anders

and Anders (1986) argued that a fundamental conflict exists between Western and Alaska Native values (e.g., capitalism and competition versus harmony and sharing) and that the ANCs “represent the antithesis of these [Alaska Native] values” (p. 220).

Several examples of the differences between Alaska Native and Western cultures have been documented. Some authors have pointed out that the closed organizational system presented as the model for the ANCs was antithetical to Alaska Native social structures and practices (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Pullar, 1997). For example, in Alaska Native cultures, group membership and concern for the whole translates into practices of sharing the wealth. This is antithetical to the Western individualist focus on taking care of oneself and one’s immediate family.

Views of learning and competency also varied across the cultures (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005). For example, in indigenous cultures, learning is accomplished through one’s “direct experience in the natural world” and competence is tested through real-world situations. In Western cultures, learning goals are determined through comparison to some decontextualized ideal, often achieved through abstract classroom instruction, and tested using objective measures. Barnhardt and Kawagley pointed out that the Western approach “does not address whether that person is actually capable of putting that knowledge into practice” (p. 10). Further, learning from elders is emphasized in Native cultures, whereas in Western cultures, elder employees typically retire and their “expertise and knowledge is lost to the organization” (Chapman, McCaskill, & Newhouse, 1991, p. 341).

In contrast, Colt (2001) proposed that a dualism of Alaska Native society and Western business (manifested in the ANCs) could exist, if the two systems were allowed to be different, separate, and independent of each other. ANCSA also has addressed some blending of the cultural views. The policy statements imply a broader emphasis for the ANCs to address the economic and social needs of Alaska's Native people (Case & Voluck, 2002), which suggests incorporation of the collectivist worldview. Accordingly, the ANCs grapple with the challenges of "how to mix social welfare objectives with corporate goals" on a daily basis (ANCSA Regional Association, 2004, p. 12). The sharing and cooperation value underlying Alaska Native cultures also is evidenced in that the ANCs "with natural resources on their lands are required by Section 7(i) of the Act to share the benefits with the others" (Hickel, 2002, p. 146). The blending observed in the ANCs is similar to corporations formed by Canadian Aboriginals, which are run differently than Western-style organizations in the mainstream Canadian community (Chapman et al., 1991).

Despite these measures to honor Alaska Native culture within the framework of the Western corporate model, many ANC founders were concerned that creating the ANCs would prompt a modernization and adaptation by the Alaska Native people that was so complete that the traditional cultures would be lost as a result (Huhndorf, 1991). These fears were compounded by the fact that the Western business model introduced to the Alaska Native people was imposed on them rather than something they freely chose. This created an intercultural encounter and issues which provided the environment from which the ANCs emerged.

ANCs through the Organizational Life Cycle

Zheng et al. (2009) provided a model of organizational lifecycles, consisting of four stages: startup, growth, maturity, and revival or decline. This section describes the key features of the ANCs using the framework of Zheng et al.'s model.

Startup. The startup phase of the ANCs occurred from 1971 to 1990. The ANCSA required the introduction of a new business model to assimilate the indigenous people of Alaska into the mainstream American culture with a focus on economic development (Berger, 1985; Langdon, 1993). This required Alaska Natives to organize into corporations and gave the ANCs authority to administer proceeds from the settlement. The ANCs were provided with capital and each corporation had to find or create economic opportunities with no particular target markets or business plans (Anders & Anders, 1986; Berger, 1985).

The ANC leaders selected a hierarchical organizational structure with a top ranking company president and a board of directors (Anders & Anders, 1986). The model selected by the founders could also be reflective of a natural problem solving tendency. The Alaska Native culture groups have hierarchical social systems with examples of formal and structured social organization among the Tlingit and Haida (Langdon, 1993), family hierarchical systems among the Inupiat (Burch, 2006), and extended family social structure of the Yupiaq people (Kawagley, 1995). All the culture groups acknowledge the special status of elder leaders (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Hensley, 2009; Huhndorf, 1991; Kawagley, 1995; Roderick, 2010; Worl, 2002).

This model also was applied with the establishment of the non-profit ANCs that chose the same organizational structures as the for-profit corporations. These organizations are viewed as the non-profit arms of the for-profit ANCs. Goldsmith (2008) stated the non-profits as “the largest employers in remote areas. Although funded largely with federal money, they are in the private non-profit sector” and describes both the for-profit and non-profit ANCs as “unique to Alaska and have become very important to the remote rural economy (as well as the state economy)” (p. 5).

During the formation of the ANCs, the leaders frequently consulted with the people so voices from all aspects of the society were heard (Arnold, 1976; McClanahan, 2006). This consultation indicates a perception of power and accessibility between the people and leaders.

Those who established the ANCs were described as having a lack of business knowledge and experience (Berger, 1985; Rude, 1996), were unfamiliar with the corporate model, and confused about what could be accomplished (Anders & Anders, 1986). Husky (1992) suggested that those who drafted the land claims may have assumed that a lack of capital and access to resources were what limited Alaska Natives and did not anticipate the skills they would need to implement ANCSA.

The implementation phase was a complicated process and became an “almost crushing burden for the relatively few people involved in it” (Huhndorf, 1991, p. 2). It took years of organizing before the corporations began to operate as businesses. During the first decade, the leaders were engrossed in learning to manage the newly created companies (Mitchell, 2001). They were focused on

meeting ANCSA deadlines, studying legal issues, selecting lands, and investing and distributing ANCSA monies (Rude, 1996). The stockholders had expectations for the ANCs to be profitable while providing them with employment, regular dividends, and protecting “traditional ways of life and ancestral lands used for subsistence” (Berger, 1985, p. 37). Adding further pressure, people feared that if the ANCs failed, the creditors would seize the land.

A few of the ANCs suffered huge losses and by the early 1980s neared bankruptcy (Rude, 1996). Several ANCs also received bad advice that resulted in costly mistakes (Berger, 1985). The early ventures initially focused on localized business enterprises and many mistakes were made by the new entrepreneurs as the wholly-owned investments generally failed (Colt, 2001). The early implementation years were a time in which the leadership devoted resources of “time, energy and money to negotiation, litigation, administrative appeals, and lobbying” (p. 30).

The consolidated financial performance of the ANCSA corporations in the first two decades of their existence was described as “surprisingly poor” (p. 158). Between 1973 and 1993, business operations of the 12 ANCs lost approximately \$380 million, comprising more than three quarters of their original cash endowment. As a result, during this time, concerns arose regarding the ANCs’ sustainability (Anders, 1989; Berger, 1985; Langdon, 1993; Mitchell, 2001; Rude, 1996).

It is not clear why some ANCs performed respectably while the majority saw repeated business failures and lost millions, with diminished returns to capital. The ability to advance economically did not appear to be due to a lack of

capital. Rather, lack of management skill and experience may have been a contributing factor.

Leaders who experienced the accelerated pace of change adapted to the new economic system by learning high level capitalist concepts and making business decisions on behalf of the people. They had competing responsibilities, which often led to pressures. Many “gave their timeless energy, sometimes their health” (Huhndorf, 1991, p. 58). Yet the founders have rarely written about managing this massive planned change effort. Hensley (1966) recalled,

My cohorts and I had all been extending ourselves tremendously, both physically and mentally, doing what we felt we had to do to uplift ourselves, our families, and our people. We were not politicians; we became politicians. We were not businessmen; we became businessmen. We were not managers; we became managers. The pressures had been enormous. (p. 201)

The Western corporate model was seen by the contemporary leaders as a vehicle to help move the Alaska Native people in a new direction (Langdon, 1993). The leadership did not resist change but embraced the opportunity to take a Western business model and create organizations that were unlike any other American corporation (Huhndorf, 1991). These examples imply an intentional approach by the leadership to acknowledge both systems.

Growth. The growth period can be considered the decade from 1990 to 2000, wherein the contemporary leaders started to see the results of their business decisions and were determined to make ANCSA work.

The contemporary leaders continued to work through the federal system, particularly to ensure continued stock ownership. They achieved political success again in 1991 when new laws were passed to protect undeveloped lands and

corporation stock. New legislation halted the potential for a future non-Native takeover and established clear boundaries that eliminated the fears shareholders expressed during the startup years. The ANCs also were able to issue stock to those born after the enactment of ANCSA (Case & Voluck, 2002), ensuring that those Alaska Natives born after 1972 could become shareholder owners without waiting to inherit stock. The ANCs, including their subsidiaries, joint ventures, and partnerships, qualify as minority businesses with Alaska Natives holding a majority of the corporation's total equity and majority of the total voting power. This status as a minority business gives the ANCs and their affiliates an advantage to receive sole-source contracts on federally-funded projects (Alaska Federation of Natives, 1988).

The sustainability of the ANCs suggests the contemporary leaders found ways to make the two systems work (Pullar, 1997). Significant achievements to change ANCSA and seeking business opportunities during the growth years led ANCs toward becoming mature companies.

Maturity. The maturity phase of the ANCs can be considered the period from 2000 to 2010, wherein the contemporary leaders achieved business success and the ANCs were able to establish themselves in the business community of Alaska. Collectively, their economic performance improved by 2006 when the regional ANCs held assets valued at \$3.8 billion and paid out \$104.6 million in dividends to their shareholders (ANCSA Regional Association, 2006). The corporations are acknowledged by the business community as an economic force in Alaska.

In 2008, ranked by their revenue, many of the ANCs topped the list of the companies fueling Alaska's economy. Cumulatively, the 12 regional for-profit corporations reported \$4,477,275,149 in total revenues. Eleven of the ANCs were listed as the *Top 49ers*, which are for-profit companies that have significant operations in Alaska and are at least 51% owned by Alaskans with the ranking based on gross revenue (Alaska Business Publishing, 2010).

Core industries for each corporation vary and most ANCs have gone outside of their geographic regions for more diversification and less risk. A common business structure chosen is a holding company with the board of directors controlling subsidiary companies and some have created a separate division of the organization to manage the business operations. The ANCs are designated as their own industry category of ANCs, thus, differentiating them from other for-profit companies. Although they are in varied industries, their designation has special rules and regulations, such as exemption from federal securities law and only the larger corporations are participant to state securities regulations (Case & Voluck, 2002).

Each ANC is different, with businesses in varied industries located in the United States, Middle East, South Pacific, Antarctica. The ANCs also are continuing to expand globally. The ANCs also own companies such as hotels and resorts; engineering firms; construction and consulting services firms; civil construction companies; resource development firms including timber, mining, oil and gas support services, and petroleum refining and distribution companies; aerospace engineering services firms; information technology and

telecommunications companies; venture capital management firms; and facilities management and logistics companies.

The mission statements of the ANCs in 2005 addressed issues of culture, heritage, and improving the lives of the shareholders. Eight corporations identified culture and heritage as part of their mission and five specifically stated their goal of improving the quality of life for Alaska Natives (McClanahan, 2006). Alaska Native organizations invested in studies to learn what is important to Alaska's Native people and to gather employment, educational, and economic data.

A survey to learn about the Alaska Native perspective on issues found that all groups of Alaska Natives see subsistence, education, jobs, and substance abuse (in that order) as the major issues. Rural residents were somewhat more concerned about subsistence, while urban residents mentioned substance abuse. A total of 68% (nearly 7 out of 10 Alaska Natives) said subsistence is "very important" to their household, while another 17% said it is "important" (Alaska Humanities Forum, First Alaskans Institute, 2003).

The number of unemployed Alaska Natives increased 35% from 1990 to 2000. Since 1960, the income level for Alaska Natives has increased every decade; however, incomes still remain far below that of non-Natives. The cost of living is highest in the remote areas given that electricity is two or three times higher and food costs are at least 50% more than in urban areas (Alaska Federation of Natives, 2004). Additionally, incomes in rural areas are lower than in urban areas.

Although roughly 42% of Alaska Natives live in urban Alaska (Alaska Federation of Natives, 2004), the importance of the village economies is important to all the ANCs, as many Alaska Natives have family members in, or can trace their lineage back to the villages. Additionally, a majority of the ANCs' shareholder base resides in remote villages. It is in these remote communities that the Alaska Native people continue to live the traditions of a subsistence lifestyle. Emphasis on improving the villages' economies continues to be a priority, particularly for the ANCs in the remote regions of the state. Goldsmith (2008) explained,

Six regional corporations—Arctic Slope, Bristol Bay, Bering Straits, NANA, Calista, and Doyon—represent shareholders from remote rural areas. (Some areas within the Doyon and Bristol Bay corporation boundaries are outside our defined remote rural region.) The six for-profit regional corporations in remote rural areas own businesses in many industries, inside and outside Alaska. All six are involved—some much more than others—in resource industries in remote rural Alaska. (p. 5)

A combining of the cultures is inferred by the phrases about *two worlds* used by various Native organizations and suggests two different and competing value systems coming together: *walking in two worlds: with one spirit* (Alaska Native Corporations, 2005); *two worlds, one spirit* (NANA Regional Corporation, 2009); and *living in two worlds* (Alaska Native Professional Association, n.d.). These examples imply an intentional approach by the organizations to acknowledge the best of both systems.

Revival. The revival period for the organizations began in 2010 and has continued to the time of this research project. A study was funded by the CIRI Foundation to document the effects of ANCSA by interviewing 27 Alaska Natives

from the different culture groups who were born between 1957 and 1976. They were selected based on their leadership potential and life experiences—specifically with regard to whether they struggled with what it means to be an Alaska Native today. Ten of the interviewees were directly asked whether there was a clash between the culture and corporations. Six answered affirmatively, while three answered “no,” and one provided no answer. All respondents shared an attitude about the importance of community confirming a belief system of a group orientation. The neutral respondent explained growing up with the ANCs, which may be an indicator of how the corporations are accepted and have become a part of the culture for those born after the creation of the ANCs (McClanahan, 2000).

Culture is always changing and this has implications for what this means for leadership styles and corporate identity during this generational shift. New generations of leaders bring different beliefs and assumptions into the organizations—possibly due to having grown up under the leadership of Tara MacLean Sweeney, who was the director of governmental affairs for ASRC. In her keynote speech to the Alaska Federation of Natives Convention on October 25, 2007, she expressed concern about creating a generation with a sense of entitlement and stated that this needed to change. Otherwise, she predicted, future generations of Alaska Natives would have no connection to their past, leading to a loss of Native identity and values (Juneau Empire, 2007).

Summary

The literature provides evidence of differences between the Alaska Native and Western value systems. There are no data to demonstrate culture and

values as contributing factors of success for the ANCs and what values guided and helped the ANC leaders achieve economic success in their organizations. This study sought to understand the impact of values to the ANCs from the leader's perspectives and to learn what basic assumptions were consciously brought in to the organizations by the early leaders through research and analysis that has not previously been conducted. The next chapter describes the methods that were used in this study.

Chapter 3

Methods

This study examined the influence of traditional Alaska Native cultural values on the ANCs' business practices today. Research questions included

1. What key issues did past ANC leaders face?
2. What basic assumptions and values did these past ANC leaders bring into the organizations?
3. What key issues do current chief executive officers of ANCs face?
4. What basic assumptions and values do the current chief executive officers bring into the organizations?
5. In what ways have the Alaska Native cultural values been carried forward into today within the organizations?

This chapter describes the methods used to collect and analyze data for this study. The following sections describe the study sample, interview script, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures.

Study Population

This study focused on the 12 regional for-profit ANCs located in Alaska that were created as a result of the 1971 ANSCA. The study population consisted of the ANCs' chief executive officers, both past and present. It was necessary to interview past leaders to determine what values were brought in at the startup and growth years of the ANCs. It was necessary to interview current leaders to determine which of these values carried forward through the organizational life cycles of the ANC into the present day.

Although many past ANC leaders are deceased, I was able to locate and make contact with eight of these individuals. I contacted all 12 current chief executive officers. I sent a letter to the past and current leaders whom I had contacted and provided information about the study, a description of the nature of participation, and an introduction letter from the president of the First Alaskans Institute, a statewide Alaska Native non-profit foundation. I followed up with each leader by telephone or e-mail to request their participation and to confirm the date, location, and time of the interviews.

Five past and eight current leaders agreed to participate in the study. The sample consisted of men and women from the following eight ANCs: Aleut Corporation; Arctic Slope Regional Corporation; Bristol Bay Native Corporation; Chugach Alaska Corporation; Cook Inlet Region, Inc., Doyon, Ltd.; Koniaq, Inc.; and NANA Regional Corporation.

The interviews with the five past leaders were conducted and all the data were analyzed before any interviews were conducted with the current chief executive officers. The purpose of this approach was to allow the interviews with past leaders to inform the data gathering with the current leaders.

This study was conducted under the guidance of the Pepperdine University Institutional Review Board and was approved for exempt status. The process for protecting the research subjects included full disclosure of all aspects of the research process and confidentiality of the data was maintained. Each participant provided a signed consent form (see Appendix) before taking part in the study. In addition, this research followed the Alaska Federation of Natives (2006) guidelines for research as follows: (a) advising Native people who are to

be affected by the study of the purpose, goals, timeframe, and data collection techniques of the research; (b) protecting the sacred knowledge, cultural practices, and intellectual property of Native people; (c) guaranteeing confidentiality of surveys and sensitive material; (d) include Native viewpoints in the final study; (e) acknowledging the contributions of Native resource people; and (f) providing copies of the study to the local people.

Interview Procedures

Past leaders were asked 12 questions about the ANC's startup and growth years, with special focus on the organization's leadership and values.

Sample questions included

1. What helped to shape you as a leader?
2. What do you hope people remember about your leadership?
3. What were the shareholders' expectations about your leadership role?
4. What principles guided your decisions?
5. Did you experience a different value system in the workplace than you did in your community? Please describe the differences you encountered. How did you confront these differences? What behaviors were changed as a result of the differences?
6. What values influenced your corporate decisions?

Current chief executive officers were asked six questions including about the leadership legacy of the past ANC leaders and founders. These questions were based on the data provided by the past ANC leaders. Sample questions included:

1. What influence did past leaders' values have on the corporation's business practices?

2. What influence did past leaders' values have on the way problems are solved and decisions are made within the corporation?

3. Please provide some examples when you balance Western corporate values systems with Alaska Native value systems?

Interviews with the past ANC leaders were designed to take 1 hour. These interviews were conducted in person at a location of the participant's choosing. Interviews with the current chief executive officers were designed to take 30 minutes, due to their limited time. These interviews were conducted in person at the participant's office or by telephone. Each interview was audio-recorded.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to examine the data. The data generated by the interviews with past ANC leaders were organized into common themes reflecting the problems or issues the organizations faced. An additional set of themes was created to reflect the leaders' beliefs and assumptions. Similarities and differences between the two cultural systems were identified, along with adaptations the leaders and organizations made to fit the external environment. Participants' experiences were captured and the ways in which cultural values may have been carried into the organizations also were determined.

Throughout the data analysis phase, I strove to maintain awareness of my own belief systems as an Inupiaq and how these beliefs affected the way I conducted the research. My efforts helped enhance both the credibility of the findings and my ability to tell the story with accuracy and respect.

I also selected second raters to review and validate the data analysis. The second raters were selected based on their experience conducting research, their knowledge of the study group, and their identification as being outside the Alaska Native culture group. Each second rater reviewed certain portions of the analysis to assure that the entire set of results was reviewed for accuracy. The second raters received typed interview notes and used these to identify themes. I compared these themes to my own results. Inter-rater reliability ranged from 67% (Rater G.K., assumptions) to 71% (Rater S. B. and K. F., themes), suggesting reasonable reliability (see Table 1). Where mismatches occurred, I reviewed my analysis and the rater's analysis and revised the analysis as needed.

Table 1

Interrater Reliability

Source	Rater	Matches N (%)	Missed N (%)
Past leader	Rater: S.B. (Themes)	7 (71%)	2 (29%)
Past leader	Rater: G.K. (Assumptions)	6 (67%)	2 (33%)
Current leader	Rater: K.F. (Themes for Questions 4-6)	7 (71%)	2 (29%)

Summary

This chapter described the methods used to collect and analyze data. Five past ANC leaders and eight current chief executive officers of ANCs were interviewed to determine the impact of traditional Alaska Native cultural values on the ANCs. Past leaders were asked 12 questions about the ANC's startup and growth years, with special focus on the organization's leadership and values. Current chief executive officers were asked six questions including about the leadership legacy of the past ANC leaders and founders. Interviews were conducted by telephone or in person and lasted 30 to 60 minutes. Thematic

analysis was used to generate findings. The next chapter reports the results of the study.

Chapter 4

Results

This study examined the influence of traditional Alaska Native cultural values on the ANCs' business practices today. Research questions included:

1. What key issues did past ANC leaders face?
2. What basic assumptions and values did these past ANC leaders bring into the organizations?
3. What key issues do current chief executive officers of ANCs face?
4. What basic assumptions and values do the current chief executive officers bring into the organizations?
5. In what ways have the Alaska Native cultural values been carried forward into today within the organizations?

Participant Demographics

A total of five past ANC leaders were interviewed. Of these, four were male and one was female (see Table 2). All were Alaska Natives aged 60 or older. Their tenure as chief executive officer ranged from 5 to 24 years (mean = 13.2 years). The leaders had limited education: two had not completed formal high school, one held an associates degree, and the remaining two had completed 3 years or fewer of college. Only one had prior business leadership experience with a large organization. This individual was chairman of the board of a grocery store. All participants were involved in some capacity with the creation of their ANC. One of those individuals served as the chair for the board of directors before assuming the role as the chief executive.

Table 2

Participant Demographics: Past Leaders

	Age	Years as chief executive	Previous Education and Experience	Involvement with forming the ANC
1	70+	15	Education: High school equivalency; military school Experience: Army officer, small business in fuel and tug boats; basic accounting and sales	President of Native Association in 1966. President when the ANC was created
2	70+	5	Education: Associates degree in business administration Experience: Accounts receivable clerk	Part-time receptionist, then worked in every department of the ANC and learned everything about the corporation. Also served on ANC Board in all officer positions.
3	60-70	24	Education: 1-2 years of college Experience: Construction jobs; warehouseman at a local utility plant; local chamber of commerce; city council member; participated in forming new municipality	Involved with Native Association before passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Helped leaders in whatever they needed, including raising funds to support the work.
4	60-70	6	Education: 2 years college, 1 year business college Experience: Entrepreneur, president of village corporation; construction; chairman of board for grocery store chain	Mostly as an observer. Visited with many of the founders as the corporation was being formed, so was aware of what was going on. Had a lot of respect for those leaders and sought to learn from them. Served on the ANC Board.
5	70+	16	Education: 10th grade (high school) Experience: Small business commercial fishing	Attended ANC formation meetings. Became president 2 years after ANC established.

ANC = Alaska Native Corporation

Eight current chief executive officers (four women, four men) were interviewed for this study (see Table 3). All eight participants are Alaska Native and have served as the chief executive officer for seven different ANCs for 1 to 9 years. One participant is aged 30–40, five are aged 40–50, and two are aged 60–70. These participants had substantially more education than the past leaders: One held an associates degree, two held a bachelors degree, and five held a masters degree. One participant had served as the chairperson of the Board of

Directors. Two participants worked as the chief executive for the same ANC at different times. Seven different ANCs were represented.

Table 3

Participant Demographics: Current Chief Executive Officers

	Age	Years as chief executive	Highest Educational attainment	Previous Experience
1	30-40	1	Masters in business administration	Commercial banking and lending; administrator of Native non-profit
2	40-50	1	Bachelors in business administration	Commercial fishing; management; project administrator; president of ANC subsidiary
3	40-50	3.5	Masters in business administration	Progressive development within the ANC
4	40-50	1	Associates in accounting and business	Accounting; small business owner; business manager; Native non-profit; served on ANC Board and as chair for more than 10 years
5	40-50	4	Masters in business administration	Chief financial officer for ANC; served on ANC Board; vice president of finance for subsidiary
6	40-50	4	Masters in business administration	Bookkeeper; business manager
7	60-70	9	Bachelors in rural development	Vice president of ANC; president of Native non-profit
8	60-70	5.5	Masters in business administration	Many years within the ANC mostly in land and resources

ANC = Alaska Native Corporation

Past Leader Findings

My examination of the past leader interviews revealed eight key themes: (a) making the ANC model work, (b) assuring that Alaska Natives' quality of life issues were addressed, (c) equipping future generations, (d) acknowledging one's leadership role and motivation to lead, (e) learning from others both within and outside one's culture groups, (f) observing differences between Alaska Native and Western values, (g) honoring their worldviews and blending them with the Western corporate structure, and (h) practicing cooperation. These themes are described below.

Making the ANC Model Work

When the participants recalled the early years of the ANCs, they were compelled to explain the complexities of the ANCSA requirements. They all emphasized how they were determined to succeed on behalf of the people to achieve business success. Each participant stated that ANCSA, as it was passed in 1971, was a compromise and they went on to explain how they and the other ANC leaders worked hard for improvements to the Act while they were establishing the corporations. They described the limitations of the ANCSA corporate model structure and all of them expressed a determination to make the ANCs be a success to ultimately help Alaska's Native people.

Addressing Quality of Life Issues

All participants expressed aspirations for the ANCs to provide opportunities for shareholders, including jobs, employment potential through education and training, and dividends. Each spoke to the intent of the ANC model to be successful in business for the purpose of providing benefits to the people including social improvements, which would address the quality of life for Alaska's Native people. All participants stated they wanted to bring an economic independence to the people by creating profitable businesses.

Equipping Future Generations

The leaders made reference to the future generations of shareholders born after 1971 (termed *afterborns*). Three participants expressed their sense of accomplishment that their ANC included the afterborns as shareholders and how this decision for an open enrollment was a significant achievement. Three participants also stated that young people today may not understand the cultural

values. They, in turn, emphasized the need to focus on educating and including young shareholders.

Acknowledging One's Leadership Role and Motivation to Lead

Each participant had difficulty talking about his or her own leadership legacy and often referred to and gave credit to others. They all expressed a commitment to do what was best for the people and commented that their personal actions and behaviors affected their image as a leader. All participants mentioned the necessity of being closely connected with the people within their regions.

Learning from Others both Within and Outside Their Culture Groups

Focusing on profitability became an important goal for all participants in their role as chief executive. Each mentioned that they needed to learn how to be in business and bring others in from outside the culture group who had business knowledge during the early formation years of the ANCs. These people from outside the culture group were described as non-Natives who understood Alaska Native cultures and were able to teach and advise the leaders on how to build capacity within the organization so Alaska Natives could maintain control. One participant explained that when hiring someone from outside of the region and culture group, it was necessary to seek those who demonstrated knowledge or expertise in specific areas, such as business or legal, who had the understanding of and ability to work with the culture of the people, and knew they worked for the shareholders who were and would continue to be in charge of the companies.

All participants also talked about how they learned from elder leaders and this transfer of knowledge was achieved by watching, listening, and doing. The

participants mentioned names of specific elder leaders who were mentors and role models. The participants noted the following key qualities in the elder leaders: honesty, humility, and integrity. Four participants stated they tried to base their own behaviors on what they saw modeled by elder leaders. Three participants mentioned how the Western approach to learning and transfer of knowledge is different than the Alaska Native approach.

Observing Differences Between Alaska Native and Western Values

All participants pointed out the unique nature of ANC shareholders. In particular, their emphasis on the value of stocks and benefits is different than the emphasis placed by a typical Western corporation's shareholders. In ANCs, shareholders often believe the corporation has a responsibility to take care of them (e.g., by assuring their education or providing social programs). The participants voiced their personal challenges with the image of the typical Western business leader and the pressure they felt to conform. For example, common features of the Western leader model they mentioned were making large sums of money for themselves and gathering after hours for cocktails. In contrast, in Alaska Native culture, the leader does not work for one's personal gain but instead works to serve the group and achieve collective gains. Some participants also commented that their social drinking and alcohol use in the past had led to problems. Another difference one participant raised is that the Alaska Native worldview is that all things are connected. Four participants noted that Alaska Natives' sense of *connection* to the land is very different than Westerners' view of *owning* the land.

Honoring Their Worldviews and Blending Them with the Western Corporate Structure

Participants often mentioned the land and expressed the importance of balancing traditional land use and environmental issues with economic opportunities such as resource development. Respect was often mentioned in reference to how one treats other people, the land, and animals and four participants shared that land ownership was a new concept for them. Four elaborated that a natural connection existed between humans and the land. These participants explained that they sought to blend their traditional cultural values with the Western corporate structure.

Practicing Cooperation

All participants emphasized the need to work closely with shareholders and the Board of Directors. Each described situations when shareholders' diverse viewpoints had political implications, resulting in painful experiences for the leaders. Three shared stories about anger expressed toward them. The participants emphasized that cooperation, working together, and helping each other was necessary, despite personal differences. The participants pointed out that cooperative behaviors were necessary to pass the ANCSA, create and build the corporations, and achieve corporate goals.

Table 4 presents a summary of the themes and basic assumptions drawn from the past leader data. The underlying assumptions point to the participants' values (what was important to them). These assumptions emphasize the Alaska Native people and a focus on future generations. Consequently, their leadership motivation focused on working on behalf of the people. Their worldview was one

of being connected to all things and the accepted behavior is cooperation. They also described learning applicable knowledge from others.

Table 4

Key Issues and Underlying Assumptions for Past Leaders

Issue	Shared Basic Assumption
ANCSA was a compromise with the United States government. Adaptation of the ANC model was needed and continues to be needed for business success to be achieved.	ANCSA can and must be changed to work for Alaska's Native people.
The ANCs are expected to provide economic opportunities and improve quality of life issues for shareholders.	Seek economic opportunities and create corporations which will provide economic independence to Alaska Native people.
Uncertainty about how future generations will value the cultural traditions and if they will understand the significance to the corporations.	ANCs will be passed on to future generations; yet, the culture seems to be changing.
Participants showed hesitancy to talk about their leadership legacy and their expressed motivation was to serve the people	Leaders are grounded in an Alaska Native value system, able to work within a Western corporate system, and work on behalf of the people.
Western corporate business concepts were unfamiliar. Risks were high and failure would have meant losing the people's land and money.	To make wise decisions, one must be willing to learn from those with business knowledge to help the companies succeed while also seeking to learn from the elder leaders by observing, listening, and doing.
The Western corporate model is different from an Alaska Native value system (e.g., profits first versus people first). The Western model brought examples for being a leader in business and promoted benefits for the individual.	The Western corporate model can be adapted within an Alaska Native value system.
Impact to traditional activities is at the forefront when considering developing the land for economic development projects.	Alaska Native people are connected to the land, sea, animals, and environment; therefore, continuation of traditional activities is paramount. Identity is linked to traditional cultural heritage.
With very engaged shareholders, there are diverse viewpoints. Difficult decisions often have political implications.	Work collaboratively with others to achieve shared desired results.

ANCSA = Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act; ANC = Alaska Native Corporation

Current Chief Executive Officer Findings

Examination of the interview data from the current chief executive officers pointed to four key themes: (a) improving shareholders' quality of life, (b) carrying forward the legacy, (c) enacting the values in business, and (d) balancing business growth with shareholder benefits. These themes are described below.

Improving Shareholders' Quality of Life

All participants emphasized that the ANCSA and the ANCs had a positive impact on Alaska and Alaska's Native people, although the ANC model was an unfamiliar and imperfect way of operating for the people. They added that the ANCSA prompted the Alaska Native people to come together to achieve a powerful, collective political voice. Six participants recognized the founders for their ability to establish, operate, and maintain the new corporations with little or no business experience and no other model available for what they were trying to create. They described the former leaders' legacy as their commitment to the success of the ANCs and making the ANC model work for the benefit of the people.

Four stated the founders exhibited a sense of responsibility and accountability to the people within their respective region and the Alaska Native community. Seven described the former executives' legacy of creating opportunities for shareholders, with reference to the relationship between being in business and needing to address the quality of life for shareholders. The participants asserted that ANCSA was expected to address quality of life issues for shareholders using a Western corporate model not designed as such. This issue is still at the forefront today.

Three participants said the early leaders instilled a sense of pride in the Alaska Native identity. One participant spoke about early leaders who had the traditional knowledge and were fluent in the traditional language and expressed with regret that he or she was not able to speak the language.

All participants see the ANC as an economic tool to advance Alaska's Native people and the practice is to provide dividends and direct programs to shareholders. All the ANCs make contributions to various shareholder programs, including scholarships, cultural heritage programs, and community donation programs in the regions where the ANC is located. Seven stated the importance of keeping the shareholders as owners of the companies at the forefront of the strategic focus. Four participants are investing in ways to address the quality of life issues in their respective regions, including employment opportunities for their shareholders. Of these, three participants indicated they continue to invest in the economic stability for their respective villages. The common issue was related to maintain a connection with the shareholder owners.

Carrying Forward the Legacy

Three participants mentioned that their ANCs faced the potential of bankruptcy earlier in their history. One of these participants expressed that the early leaders did their best and were hardworking. One of these participants also emphasized the intention to develop future shareholders as business leaders through shareholder programs. This participant shared that he or she was a recipient of such programs and that these programs helped him or her become educated.

One participant acknowledged that the former leaders were successful in bringing everyone together to focus on the needs of the people by working and learning together. This participant explained that he or she would continue taking a collaborative approach with leaders from the region to solve issues together. He or she named this as a management priority and a practice.

One participant commented that the early leaders took a conservative, small-business approach. This participant stated that this is still the philosophy of the leadership today and described the decisions around potential business ventures and how the organizational culture is low risk.

The early leaders had described taking a service-oriented leadership style. The current executives were asked if they also took a service-oriented leadership style. Two participants expressed this as part of their own belief system and described how they are personally applying this model. Three participants described this as important and shared specific examples of their own service-oriented leadership. Three participants described this as an expectation from many of the ANCs' shareholders and provided scenarios of service-oriented leadership. One participant added that service leadership is appropriate for non-profits but is difficult to apply within a for-profit. Five participants stated the accepted behavior around this type of leadership is often referred to as humility.

Enacting the Values in Business

Participants were asked to explain what values influence the business practices and how they influence the business. Participants commonly stated that values affect problem solving and decision making, for example, in executive hiring, relationships with business partners, and raising and deliberating on shareholder issues. Five participants reported that shareholders often bring their issues directly to Board members. Six ANCs have past chief executives serving as members of the Board of Directors.

All participants emphasized that they make the corporate values visible through the print materials that are distributed to potential partners, new

employees, and the public. One participant stated he or she is intentional about making the values visible through his or her personal behaviors and emphasizes the importance of personal behaviors in the interview process when hiring top level executives.

Seven participants stated that corporate strategy and planning is based on deliberations with the Board of Directors and management, and these decisions often focus on how benefits can be provided to shareholders. Funded programs for shareholders and communities include scholarship, internship, culture and heritage, and community donations. Cultural heritage and the Alaska Native identity are celebrated in corporate materials and programs.

Four participants mentioned that business partners are selected based on whether the potential partner shares the ANC's value system, such as demonstrating behaviors of respect, honesty, and integrity. These participants emphasized that trust was important to building and sustaining a strong partnership. In one example, a partnership was ended at financial loss to the ANC because the Board and management did not trust the partner.

One participant pointed out that when deliberations are contentious—for example, when top-level management changes are made—these can have a negative impact within and even outside the corporation. These ripple effects occur because the ANC is part of a larger community—beyond the region where they are located and even beyond the Alaska Native community.

Balancing Business Growth with Shareholder Benefits

Current leaders stated that one of their greatest challenges is balancing business growth with providing direct shareholder benefits such as dividends,

programs, and opportunities. One participant stated that the ANC distributed 30% to 35% of its bottom line to shareholders and worried about the sustainability of this practice. Five participants stated they focus on ways to provide employment and economic opportunities in their respective regions. Three participants added they are often balancing with traditional activities and environmental concerns. Four participants voiced the need to increase profitability by conducting business outside of their region and outside Alaska. They acknowledged that some people view this kind of expansion negatively. Three participants mentioned that Native organizations serve roles as for-profits, nonprofits, and tribal organizations. These participants explained that other Native organizations expect the for-profit ANCs to provide funds, even if the activity needing funding is falls within another organization's expertise and responsibility.

The second most difficult challenge named by the current executives is planning for the next generation of shareholders. Two equated the ANC to a family-owned business. One participant explained that a community is stronger when the younger group of community leaders exhibit the values identified by the culture group. However, three participants expressed concerns about being able to pass on the ANC's set of values to future generations. Two participants expressed concern about staying connected to the afterborns if they continue to be excluded as shareholders of the ANC. Two participants described ANCSA as a multi-generational experiment and the ANCs are now in the middle of it.

Summary

Reflecting on the data gathered from the current chief executive officers points to six key issues facing the ANCs: (a) providing economic opportunities

and improving shareholders' quality of life, (b) dealing with impacts on business growth, (c) maintaining shareholder relationships, (d) dealing with a changing organizational identity, (e) selecting business partners with shared values, and (f) gaining acceptance for business investments (see Table 5). Each issue points to an underlying basic assumption, which suggests the current leaders' values.

These leaders expressed motivation to make certain the ANCs are successful businesses, which will in turn provide benefits to the shareholders. The leaders voiced a responsibility for the ANC to be passed on to future generations and to work for the shareholders. They described the declared values as a guide for a way of being.

Table 5

Key Issues and Underlying Assumptions for Current Chief Executive Officers

Issue	Shared Basic Assumption
The ANCs are expected to provide economic opportunities and improve the quality of life for shareholders.	The ANC is an economic tool to advance Alaska's Native people.
The bottom line is impacted by dividend and direct benefit programs that can impact ability to grow businesses.	ANCs will provide dividends and benefits to shareholders.
Maintaining a relationship with shareholders and adapt to shareholder issues and concerns brought directly to management and board.	ANC leaders work for the shareholders.
Stock issues (e.g., afterborns) and different values brought in by younger shareholders may be changing the ANCs identity.	Future generations of shareholders who will inherit stock need to be educated about their heritage.
Finding business partners that share values.	Partnerships and joint ventures are necessary to develop business opportunities.
Business investments need acceptance from multiple stakeholders with different expectations.	Leaders must be knowledgeable, politically astute, and savvy business leaders.

ANC = Alaska Native Corporation

Comparison of the Findings across Samples

The key issues raised by the past and current chief executive officers were compared to determine what issues have carried forward into today (see Table 6). Five of the eight total issues mentioned were shared by members of both samples: making the ANCSA and ANCs work for the people by demonstrating business success, improving the quality of life for Alaska Natives, passing the corporations and heritage of these entities onto future generations, honoring the cultures, and maintaining shareholder and stakeholder relationships. Thus, these four issues have been carried forward.

The key issues point to underlying basic assumptions and suggest the shared values (see Table 7). Seven key assumptions were identified. Six of these were shared by both samples: make the business model work for the people (shareholders), improve Alaska Natives' quality of life, pass the corporations and heritage of these entities onto future generations, blend Western and Alaska Native approaches, learning, and cooperation. Only the past leaders mentioned connection to all things.

ANC Leadership Values

The key issues and assumptions across the two samples were analyzed to discern the values held by ANC leadership (see Table 8). Six of the seven values were mentioned by both sets of leaders: loyalty to family and culture, future generations, sharing and cooperation, learning and acquiring knowledge, business success, and Alaska Natives' quality of life. These results suggest that these values have been carried forward in today's leadership. Respect and connection to all things was a value found in the responses of past leaders.

Table 6

Key Issues across Samples

Key Issue	Supporting Data
Making the ANCSA and ANC work for the people to achieve business success	ANCSA was a compromise with the United States government. Adaptation of the ANC model was needed and continues to be needed for business success to be achieved. (P) The ANC is an economic tool to advance Alaska's native people. (C)
Alaska Natives' quality of life	The ANCs are expected to provide economic opportunities and improve quality of life issues for shareholders. (P, C)
Future generations and continued heritage	Uncertainty about how future generations will value the cultural traditions and if they will understand the significance to the corporations. (P) Stock issues (e.g., afterborns) and different values brought in by younger shareholders may be changing the ANCs identity. (C)
Motivation to serve the people	Participants showed hesitancy to talk about their leadership legacy and expressed motivation was to serve the people. (P)
Differences between Western and Alaska Native approaches	Western corporate business concepts were unfamiliar. Risks were high and failure would have meant losing the people's land and money. (P) The Western corporate model is different from the Alaska Native value system (e.g., value for profits versus value for the people) and brought examples for being a leader in business and promoted benefits for the individual. (P)
Achieving business success	The bottom line is impacted by dividend and direct benefit programs that can impact ability to grow businesses. (C)
Honoring the culture	Impact to traditional activities is at the forefront when considering developing the land for economic development projects. (P) Select business partners that share values. (C)
Maintaining shareholder and stakeholder relationships	With very engaged shareholders there are diverse viewpoints. Difficult decisions often have political implications. (P) Maintaining a relationship with shareholders and adapt to shareholder issues and concerns brought directly to management and board. (C) Business investments need acceptance from multiple stakeholders with different expectations. (C)

ANCSA = Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act; ANC = Alaska Native Corporation; P = past ANC leaders; C = current chief executive officers

Table 7

Key Assumptions across Samples

Key Assumption	Supporting Data
Make the business model work for the people (shareholders)	ANCSA can and must be changed to work for Alaska's Native people. (P) ANC leaders work for the shareholders. (C)
Improve Alaska Natives' quality of life	Seek economic opportunities and create corporations which will provide economic independence to Alaska Native people. (P) The ANC is an economic tool to advance Alaska's Native people. (C) ANCs will provide dividends and benefits to shareholders. (C)
Pass the corporations and heritage of these entities onto future generations	ANCs will be passed on to future generations; yet, the culture seems to be changing. (P) Future generations of shareholders who will inherit stock need to be educated about their heritage. (C)
Blend Western and Alaska Native approaches	Leaders are grounded in the Alaska Native value system, able to work within a Western corporate system, and work on behalf of the people. (P) The Western corporate model can be adapted within an Alaska Native value system. (P)
Learning	To make wise decisions, one must be willing to learn from those with business knowledge to help the companies succeed while also seeking to learn from the elder leaders by observing, listening, and doing. (P) Leaders must be knowledgeable, politically astute, and savvy business leaders. (C)
Connection to all things	Alaska Native people are connected to the land, sea, animals, and environment so continuation of traditional activities is paramount. Identity is linked to traditional cultural heritage. (P)
Cooperation	Work collaboratively with others to achieve shared desired results. (P) Partnerships and joint ventures are necessary to develop business opportunities. (C)

ANCSA = Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act; ANC = Alaska Native Corporation; P = past ANC leaders; C = current chief executive officers

Table 8

Values Held by Leaders of Alaska Native Corporations

Value	Supporting Data
Loyalty to family and culture	<p>Honoring the culture (Key issue)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact to traditional activities is at the forefront when considering developing the land for economic development projects. (P) Select business partners that share values (C) <p>Motivation to serve the people (Key issue)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants showed hesitancy to talk about their leadership legacy and expressed motivation was to serve the people (P) <p>Making the ANCSA and ANC work for the people (Key issue, key assumption)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ANCSA was a compromise with the United States government and the ANC model needed and continues to need adapting. (P) ANCSA can and must be changed to work for Alaska's Native people. (P) ANC leaders work for the shareholders. (C) <p>Blending Western and Alaska Native approaches (Key issue, key assumption)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Western corporate business concepts were unfamiliar. Risks were high and failure would have meant losing the people's land and money. (P) The Western corporate model is different from the Alaska Native value system (e.g., value for profits versus value for the people) and brought examples for being a leader in business and promoted benefits for the individual. (P) Leaders are grounded in an Alaska Native value system, able to work within a Western corporate system, and work on behalf of the people. (P) The Western corporate model can be adapted within an Alaska Native value system. (P) <p>Maintaining shareholder and stakeholder relationships (Key issue)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With very engaged shareholders there are diverse viewpoints. Difficult decisions often have political implications. (P) Maintaining a relationship with shareholders and adapt to shareholder issues and concerns brought directly to management and board. (C) Business investments need acceptance from multiple stakeholders with different expectations. (C)
Respect and connection	<p>Connection to all things (Key assumption)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alaska Native people are connected to the land, sea, animals, and environment; therefore, continuation of traditional activities is paramount. Identity is linked to traditional cultural heritage. (P)

ANCSA = Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act; ANC = Alaska Native Corporation; P = past ANC leaders; C = current chief executive officers

Table 8 (Continued)

Value	Supporting Data
Future generations	<p>Passing the corporations and heritage of these entities onto future generations (Key issue, key assumption)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ANCs will be passed on to future generations; yet, the culture seems to be changing. (P) • Future generations of shareholders who will inherit stock need to be educated about their heritage. (C) • Uncertainty about how future generations will value the cultural traditions and if they will understand the significance to the corporations. (P) • Stock issues (e.g., afterborns) and different values brought in by younger shareholders may be changing the ANCs' identity. (C)
Sharing and cooperation	<p>Cooperation (Key assumption)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work collaboratively with others to achieve shared desired results. (P) • Partnerships and joint ventures are necessary to develop business opportunities. (C)
Learning and acquiring knowledge	<p>Learning (Key assumption)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make wise decisions, one must be willing to learn from those with business knowledge to help the companies succeed while also seeking to learn from the elder leaders by observing, listening, and doing. (P) • Leaders must be knowledgeable, politically astute, and savvy business leaders. (C)
Business success	<p>Achieving business success (Key issue)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ANCSA was a compromise with the United States government. Adaptation of the ANC model was needed and continues to be needed for business success to be achieved. (P) • The bottom line is impacted by dividend and direct benefit programs that can impact ability to grow businesses. (C)
Alaska Natives' quality of life	<p>Improving the quality of life for Alaska Natives (Key issue, key assumption)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ANCs are expected to provide economic opportunities and improve quality of life issues for shareholders. (P, C) • Seek economic opportunities and create corporations that will provide economic independence to Alaska Native people. (P) • The ANC is an economic tool to advance Alaska's Native people. (C) • ANCs will provide dividends and benefits to shareholders. (C)

ANCSA = Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act; ANC = Alaska Native Corporation; P = past ANC leaders; C = current chief executive officers

Summary

This chapter reported the results of the study. The past ANC leaders who were interviewed had led their organizations for 5 to 24 years. Their experience leading up to their positions included limited education and business leadership experience. All participants were involved in some capacity with the creation of their ANC. The current chief executive officers who were interviewed have served as leaders of the ANCs for 1 to 9 years. They are well-educated and had gained business leadership experience before assuming their posts.

The past leaders described that the role of leadership is to work on behalf of the people and expressed a sense of responsibility, based on an assumption that everyone must look out for and take care of each other. Accepted leadership behaviors included showing humility, working together, and respecting one another. This demonstrated an Alaska Native value of people sharing responsibility for each other (Kawagley, 1995; Worl, 2002) and indicates a collectivist orientation, consistent with findings by Barnhardt and Kawagley (2005) and Worl (2002). This was at odds with the Western corporate model described by the past leaders, which emphasized an individualist orientation that encouraged people to look after oneself.

The ANC founders brought a tacit knowledge about the connection to the land and being in harmony with nature, which was made explicit with the crafting of ANCSA. The land was described as highly revered by the early leaders, who expressed what the loss of the lands would mean to their people and how this drove their business actions and decisions. Case and Volluck (2002) similarly emphasized Alaska Natives' connection to the land, elaborating that the land

does not belong to the people, the people actually belong to the land.

Consequently, the Western concept of owning land was quite foreign for many of the early leaders.

The early leaders described an elder generation of leaders from whom they learned by listening, observing, and doing. Knowledge also was sought from those outside of the culture groups who had business and legal expertise with the explanation that those who came from outside the culture groups needed to share commitment to the shareholder owners in order to be successful within the organization. These findings are similar to assertions by AASB (2005) and Roderick (2010) that Alaska Natives esteem elders and seek to learn from them. In summary, analysis of the study data suggested that six values were central to the past leaders' work in the ANCs: loyalty to family and culture, respect and connection, future generations, sharing and cooperation, learning and acquiring knowledge, and Alaska Natives' quality of life.

The current leaders' value of sharing and cooperation, consistent with Alaska Native values (Kawagley, 1995; Worl, 2002), was evidenced in their focus on maintaining a relationship with the shareholders. Other Alaska Native values they exhibited include a focus on learning and acquiring knowledge (AASB, 2005; Roderick, 2010) and dedication to enhancing Alaska Natives' quality of life.

Substantial similarities were found in the data from the two sets of leaders. Five of the eight total issues mentioned by the leaders were shared by members of both samples: making the ANCSA and ANC work to achieve business success, Alaska Natives' quality of life, future generations and continued heritage, honoring the cultures, and maintaining shareholder and stakeholder

relationships. Two issues were mentioned only by past leaders: having the motivation to serve the people, and intentionally blending Western and Alaska Native approaches. Maintaining and growing business success was mentioned only by the current leaders.

Five of the seven total assumptions reported were mentioned by both samples: making the ANCSA and ANC work for the people, improving the quality of life for Alaska Natives, passing the corporations and heritage of these entities onto future generations, learning, and cooperation. Two additional assumptions were mentioned only by the past leaders: intentionally blending Western and Alaska Native approaches and connection to all things.

Five of the seven values were mentioned by both sets of leaders: loyalty to family and culture, future generations, sharing and cooperation, learning and acquiring knowledge, and Alaska Natives' quality of life. Respect and connection to all things also was reported by past leaders. The next chapter provides a discussion of these results.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This study examined the influence of traditional Alaska Native cultural values on current business practices within ANCs. Research questions included:

1. What key issues did past ANC leaders face?
2. What basic assumptions and values did these past ANC leaders bring into the organizations?
3. What key issues do current chief executive officers of ANCs face?
4. What basic assumptions and values do the current chief executive officers bring into the organizations?
5. In what ways have the Alaska Native cultural values been carried forward into today within the organizations?

This chapter presents a discussion of the study results. Conclusions are presented, followed by a discussion of the study recommendations, limitations, and suggestions for future study.

Conclusions

Conclusions were drawn in order to answer the research questions. Four conclusions are presented below to address the data gathered for the past leaders, the data gathered for the current leaders, the data gathered that were shared by past and current leaders, and the data related to the future application of Alaska Native cultural values within the ANCs.

Application of Values: Past Leaders

The collected findings suggest that the early leaders and founders of the ANCs embodied an Alaska Native value system. Additionally, they exhibited a

strong commitment to adapting the Western business model on behalf of the people for whom they worked.

Reconciling the two different value systems (Western and Alaska Native) appears to have been achieved by blending lengthy experience in and loyalty to their respective Alaska Native cultural values with commitment to the business ventures' success. Importantly, they filled their own knowledge and skill gaps by contracting with and learning from those who had the needed expertise. Given that the organizations have grown in size and success over the decades, it appears that their dedication and efforts have been carried forward.

Application of Values: Current Leaders

These data suggest that the current leaders are balancing Western business culture with their respective Alaska Native cultural values. This helps explain the success of the organizations and the continued alignment with an Alaska Native value system.

Reconciling the two different value systems (Western and Alaska Native) appears to have been achieved by blending education in business, solid business leadership experience, and awareness of and loyalty to the Alaska Native cultures and values.

All the current executives came into the organizations with a high level of post-secondary education as well as business knowledge and experience. Nevertheless, they still appeared to embody an Alaska Native value system. This duality is evident in the key issues, assumptions, and values they named. For example, their belief that the ANC is an economic tool to advance Alaska's Native people, acknowledgement of the importance of future generations, and

focus on providing dividends and direct benefit programs to Alaska Natives points to their loyalty to family and culture. This is consistent with Barnhardt and Kawagley's (2005) and Worl's (2002) findings regarding Alaska Native cultural values. At the same time, they expressed worry about the sustainability of these practices, revealing their business acumen. Their business acumen was further evidenced by their beliefs that leaders must be knowledgeable, politically astute, and have business savvy to build profitable partnerships and joint ventures.

Application of Values: Shared by Past and Current Leaders

It appears that Alaska Native cultural values have been preserved within the ANCs. Substantial consensus was revealed in the issues, assumptions, and values voiced by past and current leaders. Both samples identified key issues and assumptions of improving the quality of life for Alaska Natives, passing the corporations and heritage of these entities onto future generations, honoring the cultures, maintaining shareholder and stakeholder relationships, and making the ANCSA and ANC work for the people. These issues and assumptions gave rise to common values of loyalty to family and culture, future generations, sharing and cooperation, learning and acquiring knowledge, and Alaska Natives' quality of life. These assumptions and values reflect Alaska Native cultural values (AASB, 2005; Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Case & Volluck, 2002; Kawagley, 1995; Roderick, 2010; Worl, 2002).

Differences also did emerge when comparing the data from the two samples. Issues, assumptions, and values mentioned only by past leaders included having the motivation to serve the people, intentional blending Western and Alaska Native approaches, and respect and connection to all things. Issues,

assumptions, and values mentioned only by current leaders related to maintaining and growing business success. These differences were evident even in the participants' language. When participants spoke of people impacted by their decisions, past leaders spoke of "Alaska Native people," or simply "the people," whereas the current leaders spoke of "shareholders."

These differing findings could be explained by the fact that the past leaders were strongly rooted in their respective Alaska Native cultural values and only beginning to gain awareness of and experience within Western business culture through the ANCs. Thus, they emphasized the core Alaska Native value of respect and connection to all things and also were focused on serving the people and discovering how to blend Western and Alaska Native approaches. Many of the current leaders, in contrast, had grown up or been involved with the ANCs already in existence. These leaders obtained higher education and business leadership experience. By the time they took the helm of the ANCs, they were already versed in blending their own Alaska Native culture with the Western business culture. Consequently, they were less focused on figuring how to blend the two models and, instead, were focused on business success.

The differing orientations might be summarized as *culture-then-business* for the past leaders versus *business-then-culture* or *business-and-culture* for the current leaders. This suggests that past leaders focused on a society of Alaska Native people first, then their respective region, and finally the corporation. The current leaders, in contrast, focused on the shareholder owners for their corporation before or concurrent with their Alaska Native culture. The current leaders' drive to grow successful businesses and engage in opportunities—

including doing business outside of their respective region and Alaska—is a tribute to the early founders and leaders, who were driven to create these businesses that would become successful.

Each ANC manages business demands along with the expectations of all its stakeholders (including shareholders; business partners; business community; other Alaska Native organizations and tribal entities; and municipal, state, and federal governments). Importantly, each stakeholder group has different success measurements. Therefore, the ANCs' success in being Alaska Native organizations and successful business entities at the same time is no small task. This dual success is a testament to the dedication of efforts of both the past and the current leaders.

In conclusion, the findings from this study suggest that two cultures—even those that are quite distinct—can be blended and harnessed for business success. The predominant culture will be determined by the value system brought in by the people responsible for the organization's success. In the process, both cultures are modified and, possibly, it is the best parts of both that continue on in the organization to ensure success. The key features that seem to have enabled the success of the ANCs is the leaders' awareness and commitment to their cultural core values and, yet, openness to learning about the new culture and adopting helpful new approaches. These dynamics could explain why the current leaders have retained their Alaska Native cultural values while also enhancing their foundation of business knowledge and leadership skill.

Future Application of the Values within the ANCs

The fact that the Alaska Native cultural values have been carried forward into the ANCs today has implications for the ANCs' future leaders. The participants in this study explained that many young people are raised in a Western culture and, therefore, may lack a strong connection to the Alaska Native culture. This is particularly true of those who come from outside the culture to work with the ANCs. Any lack of connection to the culture can be problematic, as ANC leaders and consultants are expected to share the value priority about the relationship with and working on behalf of the shareholders. Shareholder leaders not raised in a traditional Alaska Native culture encounter the high context culture of the ANC with more difficulty than those who are from the outside, as people assume they understand the culture. Both of these factors have implications for future leaders coming into the organizations because the emphasis is on developing business leaders from within the culture groups.

A trust relationship with business partners was identified as important and the respect for differences continues to have implications for those conducting business with the ANCs. Business partners held in high regard often demonstrated an awareness of their own personal value system while being committed to an Alaska Native value system which led to a successful interface of the different cultures.

Recommendations

I offer the following recommendations for individuals and organizations that seek to work with an ANC:

1. Understand your own individual and organizational value system first then define the potential value differences you may face with the ANC. Do not presume that what is important to you or your organization is the same for the ANC.

2. Learn about the relationships and especially the different stakeholder groups that influence the ANC's decisions for awareness and alignment to business initiatives. Do not ignore the important relationships that can influence the ANC decision makers.

3. Be aware of the ANC's decision-making and problem-solving culture, as these can influence your results and may cause unnecessary delays and frustrations if the ANC values flexibility.

4. Seek cultural awareness guidance applicable to the specific ANC with whom you are developing a relationship. Do not take for granted that all ANCs are the same, or that Alaska Native people are the same, or all Alaska Native communities are the same. Seek out those who can explain how the ANC culture translates into business relations and practices. In addition, understand the accepted behaviors or necessary ways of being when communicating, which lead to developing relationships based on trust. Behaviors such as being prepared to listen and learn from the ANC leadership, being authentic and sincere, and exhibiting genuine commitment to the ANC's values in all business transactions.

These insights are specific to the Alaska Native culture groups; yet, they may have value for other initiatives planning cross-cultural integration—whether that concerns indigenous cultures seeking to form Western business

organizations or whether it concerns the blending of organizations through joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions, or other events.

Study Limitations

Several limitations affected this study. First, the methods were comprised of Western approaches to studying an indigenous people's value system with an emphasis on an either-or epistemology and studying separate systems. This approach naturally is at odds with Alaska Native approaches, which feature connectedness and a systemic view of life. Given the dissonance between the research approach and Alaska Native approaches, it is possible that the data could not be fully captured as expressed. This limitation was controlled for given that the researcher also was Alaska Native.

Second, the study participants consisted of past and current chief executives of eight different organizations. It is uncertain how the data might have been different if the viewpoints for all 12 ANCs had been presented or if more leaders throughout the organizations' lifecycles had been involved in the study. Future studies could draw a larger sample of leaders to control for this limitation.

Third, this study described Alaska Native cultural values as if it was one thing. Although similarities exist across the culture groups, each of the Alaska Native culture groups and the 12 organizations has its own unique culture. For example, differences emerged within the samples, depending where the majority of the shareholders resided (e.g., in a rural region with one culture group versus being in multiple urban areas with a collective Alaska Native identity). Consequently, the values described by the chief executives who represent a rural

and single culture group with a recent history of Western contact were somewhat different than what was described by the chief executives from urban ANCs. Additionally, those with a longer history of Western contact often have different perspectives than those with more recent contact. This study focused on the common issues, assumptions, and values that emerged across the cultures. While this has value, future studies could more deeply examine the various types of Alaska Native cultural values.

There is a great need for further studies about the unique nature of the ANCs which brings an opportunity to understand the complexity of culture within a business model. The untold stories of contemporary leaders' perspectives are a ripe opportunity to learn from the people who own and manage the companies. This paper intends to provide baseline data about Alaska Native cultural values and generate interest in further research about Alaska Native organizations.

Suggestions for Future Study

Several questions arose during this study that could be explored for future research. First, it would be valuable to examine the impact that shareholder value systems have on the management and Board decisions. Examining this influence could reveal how and why Alaska Native cultural values get passed on through generations of leaders and shareholders.

Second, more deeply understanding how and why certain cultural values get reinforced and continued in an organization could be achieved by examining which stakeholder groups affect ANCs' accountability and performance measures. For example, it would be helpful to examine the influence of regulation by a funding source on organizational culture and values. In such cases, it is

possible that the organization might more strongly favor and embody the source of financial backing.

Third, the regional for-profit ANCs are a handful of more than 200 Native organizations established as a result of ANCSA. A study about the Alaska Native value systems which include all Alaska Native village and regional for-profits would provide important data. The many nonprofit Native organizations and Tribal entities could be a separate study or included in the above for more data.

Fourth, given the leaders' focus on future generations and the fact that future generations will eventually need to lead the ANCs, it is important to examine the Alaska Native identity and culture as described by the younger generation. Part of this study will require examining the degree to which young Alaska Natives value their Native identity and the factors by which the identity varies (e.g., location of current residence, location of origin, location of ancestry). Because leaders play an influential role in the culture and fate of their organizations, understanding the views and values of young Alaska Natives is important to anticipating the future of the ANCs.

Summary

This study examined the influence of traditional Alaska Native cultural values on current business practices within ANCs. Five past and eight current chief executive officers of ANCs were interviewed to determine the impact of traditional Alaska Native cultural values on the ANCs. Past leaders were asked 12 questions about the ANC's startup and growth years, with special focus on the organization's leadership and values. Current chief executive officers were asked six questions including about the leadership legacy of the past ANC leaders and

founders. Interviews were conducted by telephone or in person and lasted 30 to 60 minutes. Thematic analysis was used to generate findings. The study findings revealed substantial similarities from the two sets of leaders.

The key issues raised by the past and current chief executive officers were compared to determine what issues have carried forward today. Five of the eight total issues mentioned by the leaders were shared by members of both samples: making the ANCSA and ANC work for the people to achieve business success, Alaska Natives' quality of life, future generations and continued heritage, honoring the cultures, and maintaining shareholder and stakeholder relationships. Two issues were mentioned only by past leaders: having the motivation to serve the people and differences between Western and Alaska Native approaches. Maintaining and growing business success while providing direct benefits to shareholders was mentioned only by the current leaders.

The key assumptions about the issues were analyzed to discern the values held by the ANC leadership. Five of the seven total assumptions reported were mentioned by both samples: making the ANCSA and ANC work for the people, improving the quality of life for Alaska Natives, passing the corporations and heritage of these entities onto future generations, learning, and cooperation. Two additional assumptions were mentioned only by the past leaders: intentionally blending Western and Alaska Native approaches and connection to all things. Maintaining and growing business success while providing direct benefits to shareholders was mentioned only by the current leaders.

The commonly stated values across the different Alaska Native culture groups were used to compare the values held by leaders of the ANCs. Five of

the seven values were mentioned by both sets of leaders: loyalty to family and culture, future generations, sharing and cooperation, learning and acquiring knowledge, and Alaska Natives' quality of life. Respect and connection to all things also was mentioned by past leaders.

Substantial consensus was revealed in the issues, assumptions, and values voiced by past and current leaders. It was concluded that the early leaders and founders of the ANCs embodied an Alaska Native value system. Additionally, they exhibited a strong commitment to adapting the Western business model to work on behalf of the people for whom they worked. It appears that Alaska Native cultural values have been preserved within the ANCs and current ANC chief executives are balancing Western business culture with their respective Alaska Native cultural values.

Although several limitations affected this study and continued research is necessary to more deeply understand the interplay of the cultures, the study results suggest that blending two diverse cultures within the context of a corporation is possible without sacrificing business success or the central values of either culture.

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Appendix
Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Participant: _____

Principal Investigator: Lorraine Henry
[contact information]

Title of Project: The Application of Cultural Values by Contemporary Alaska Native Leaders and ANCSA Corporations: Individual and Organizational Implications

1. I _____, agree to participate in the research study being conducted by Lorraine Henry under the direction of Dr. Ann Feyerherm.
2. The overall purpose of this research is to learn how the actions and practices of the contemporary Alaska Native leaders and the current ANCSA corporations were influenced by traditional Alaska Native cultural values. This will be an interactive inquiry process to understand past and current actions and enable future action for organizational change.
3. My participation in the study will be as the ANC CEO. I understand that the possible benefits to myself or society from this research are: This study is relevant to demonstrating how a traditional culture with the values and identity can impact business practices. This study has significance for effective business practices and what can be learned from Indigenous experiences.
4. I understand that I may choose not to participate in this research.
5. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may refuse to participate and/or withdraw my consent and discontinue participation in the project or activity at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.
6. I understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries I may have concerning the research herein described. I understand that I may contact Dr. Ann Feyerherm if I have other questions or concerns about this research. If I have questions about my rights as a research participant, I understand that I can contact Pepperdine University and Dr. Feyerherm at [contact information].
7. I will be informed of any significant new findings developed during the course of my participation in this research which may have a bearing on my willingness to continue in the study.
8. I understand to my satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have received a copy of this informed consent form which I have read and understand. I hereby consent to participate in the research described above.

Participant's Signature

Date

I have explained and defined in detail the research procedure in which the subject has consented to participate. Having explained this and answered any questions, I am cosigning this form and accepting this person's consent.

Principal Investigator

Date