

UCLA

UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

A Case Study of the Cook Inlet Regional, Incorporated 2000 Special Distribution

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2sj7p2sz>

Author

DuBois, Peter James

Publication Date

2013

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

A Case Study of the Cook Inlet Regional, Incorporated 2000 Special Distribution

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in
American Indian Studies

by

Peter James DuBois

2013

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

A Case Study of the Cook Inlet Regional, Incorporated 2000 Special Distribution

by

Peter James DuBois

Master of Arts in American Indian Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Duane W. Champagne, Chair

This case study involves Alaska Natives and how traditional narrative influences economic ethic. Alaska Natives are organized into Village Corporations and regional Alaska Native Corporations, with Village Corporations composed of traditional villages and Alaska Native Corporations roughly corresponding to traditional cultural areas. In the year 2000, CIRI gave a special distribution of \$500 per shares to its shareholder for a total of \$50,000 for most shareholders. I interviewed CIRI shareholders who received this amount on how they used the money from the special distribution, and classified uses as traditional, mainstream American capitalist, or as uses that could be characterized as either. For this case study, I discuss traditional Yupik narrative and cultural values and how the uses characterized as traditional are consistent with traditional cultural values.

The thesis of Peter James Dubois is approved.

Paul V. Kroskrity

Carole E. Goldberg

Duane W. Champagne, Chair

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Table of Contents

1. Introduction and Literature Review (page 1)
2. Alaska Natives and Traditional Narrative (page 5)
3. World Views (page 6)
4. Mainstream Americans and Economic Windfall (page 12)
5. Alaska Natives and Native Capitalism (page 13)
6. Methodology (page 14)
7. Conclusions (page 18)

Introduction and Literature Review

There is a constant tension between traditional beliefs and practices and modern economic forces for indigenous people. In the year 2000 the Alaska Native Corporation Cook Inlet Regional Incorporated (CIRI) gave a special distribution of \$500 per share to its shareholders. This thesis presents a case study of how shareholders used that special distribution. Alaska Native Corporations were created by the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) with the goal of making market-based profit, but also with the goal of preserving traditional culture. The term Alaska Natives is used to describe the Inuit or Eskimo people of coastal Alaska, Aleuts of the Aleutian Islands, and indigenous people of the interior of Alaska. This case study will examine to what extent CIRI shareholders used the special distribution in a traditional subsistence labor ethic manner and to what extent shareholders used the special distribution in a capitalist manner that could be characterized as consistent with either Western modernization theory economic development or consistent with an Alaska Native interpretation of rational capitalism, and to what extent CIRI shareholders used the distribution in ways that could be characterized as consistent with both capitalist and traditional values. Traditional subsistence labor ethic is characterized by living on the land and with the land in a way that natives find meaningful and consistent with tradition.ⁱ For this study, Western modernization economic development theory is an anthropological and sociological model. This model considers traditional economic ethic as the least advanced form of economic ethic and assumes progress towards rational capitalism automatically brings positive cultural progress. Rational capitalism is defined as an economic system that favors investing capital to accumulate wealth, with positive moral judgments assigned to accumulating wealth and negative moral

judgments assigned to uses of money that do not accumulate wealth. Traditional economic ethic is defined as a task-oriented, non-capitalist system of production, distribution, and consumption of resources employed by some indigenous communities.ⁱⁱ For this study, traditional economic ethic is assumed to assign positive moral judgments to uses of resources that strengthen family and community relations. Traditional economic ethic also assigns negative moral judgments to individual accumulation of wealth at the expense of family and community relationships. Traditional economic ethic also assigns positive moral values to uses resources that are sustainable and negative moral values to overusing and overexploiting resources. Examining how CIRI shareholders adapt elements of traditional values and mainstream American capitalist values as an ongoing process allows for a discussion of the role Alaska Native Corporations play in both preserving traditional Alaska Native culture and in helping Alaska Natives to take part in the 21st century economy.

This case study will examine how CIRI shareholders used the special distribution and how those uses can be characterized. Some uses will be characterized as traditional uses, some will be characterized as mainstream American or capitalist uses, and some will be characterized as consistent with both as the two categories are not mutually exclusive. The category of traditional uses is defined as uses that strengthen family and community relationships, and includes giving money to relatives and taking time off from work to visit with family. Mainstream American capitalist uses are defined as paying off debt or investing to accumulate wealth. Some uses fall into both categories. Buying a house or a car may be typically thought of as a capitalist use of money, since a house increases in value and a car has capitalist value as an item that one can use to take out a loan against. Several CIRI shareholders explained that buying a house or a car are also considered traditional uses by Alaska Natives, since you need a place to

live and means of transportation. These uses are necessities for most Americans as well, but CIRI shareholders reported that they view buying a car or house as solely a traditional use. The case study will also briefly discuss the importance of preserving traditional culture, the importance of market-based economic development, and the importance of self-determination of Alaska Natives to choose to what extent they incorporate traditional values into their lives and to what extent they choose to value economic development and capitalist uses of money.

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 divided land and cash payments among thirteen regional Alaska Native Corporations (ANC), which roughly correspond to traditional cultural areas. Alaska Natives received 100 shares of stock in these for-profit corporations, and Alaska Natives living in rural areas received 100 shares of stock in a village corporation as well (Huhndorf, p.385, 2011). ANCSA was created by a Congressional act rather than by a treaty, and has been revised and amended with input from Alaska Natives over the past 40 years.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Alaska Federation of Natives was the key lobbying group representing Alaska Natives. The Alaska Federation of Natives was formed in October 1966, when more than 400 Alaska Natives representing 17 Native organizations gathered for a three-day conference to address Alaska Native aboriginal land rights.^{iv} From 1966 to 1971, AFN worked primarily to achieve passage of a just and fair land settlement. Their input included the goals of protecting aboriginal rights, preserving traditional culture for its intrinsic value, and permitting Natives to determine their own destiny.^v ANCSA extinguished aboriginal title, in exchange Alaska Natives retained 44 million acres of land divided among the regional corporations and received \$962.5 million dollars for the creation of and to be administered by the Alaska Natives Corporations.^{vi}

Congress intended that management of the capital and the land would be in Native hands. Second, Congress desired Native management to be free from Federal, State, and local non-Native government control but not in conflict with government objectives. Congress recognized the necessity of the land base to Alaska Native cultural survival, its expectations centered on commercial use of the land for improving Native social and economic conditions, allowing for Native self-determination, and ensuring complementary Native and State goals.^{vii} ANCSA Corporations are incorporated under state law and have all the powers permitted by the Alaska Corporations Code unless specifically limited by ANCSA.^{viii}

The dual federal-state status creates a unique relationship with the federal government. The stock in the regional and village corporations is inalienable unless the Native shareholders vote to remove the restriction. The Self-Determination and Education Act of 1975 recognizes ANCSA village corporations as “tribes” and implies their “governing bodies” can obtain self-determination contracts so long as they permit the “maximum participation” of Natives in their affairs.^{ix}

It is important to note that ANCSA is land claims legislation. Its stated purpose is to settle Alaska Native claims “rapidly, with certainty,” but “in conformity with the real economic and social needs of Natives.” By its terms ANCSA was not intended to terminate Native social and economic programs so long as they are necessary to meet real Native needs. In 1988 Congress amended ANCSA to clarify “notwithstanding any other provision of law, Alaska Natives shall remain eligible for all federal Indian programs on the same basis as other Native Americans.”^x

There are regional non-profit corporations in each of the twelve Alaska Native regions, in addition to the regional for-profit corporations. These regional non-profit Native corporations were formed from some of the advocacy organizations which pursued the settlement of the Alaska Native claims. Subsequently, the Native non-profit corporations became service delivery vehicles primarily for Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Health Services programs in rural areas of Alaska under provisions of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Act.^{xi}

Cook Inlet Regional, Incorporated is the corporation for Alaska Natives living in Anchorage. Enrollment was based on the region an Alaska Native declared as their permanent residence as of April 1, 1970. For Alaska Natives who were students and Alaska Natives who were employed seasonally in urban areas but who regularly returned to traditional fishing villages or hunting villages, this required a difficult decision. The choice of enrollment affected future benefits received from the resulting enrollment in a regional corporation and possibly a village corporation.^{xii} According to shareholders interviewed, Cook Inlet pursues the goals of promoting economic development and preserving traditional culture by providing cash dividends and distributions to shareholders.

Alaska Natives and Traditional Narrative

Alaska Natives combine elements of non-capitalist economic ethic and capitalist economic ethic in their decision-making. The two are often thought of as separate and incompatible, if not polar opposites. "In gift economies people come together to exchange inalienable goods in order to make or reaffirm relationships; in commodity (market) economies people come together without forming enduring relationships to exchange alienable goods in

order to accumulate things.”^{xiii} There is emerging scholarship on economics and morality which challenges the assumption that capitalism is inherently amoral and possibly immoral, and the assumption that every transaction and interaction in a non-capitalist society has a moral dimension. This scholarship examines how rational capitalism has some of the moral characteristics often attributed to gift economies, how non-market societies incorporate market economies into traditional cultural and value systems, and how an examination of both lends itself to a more complete understanding of economics and morality. The position this thesis takes assumes that there is overlap or mutual exchange between gift economies and market economies. Gifts teach and reaffirm cultural values; this is more strongly associated with non-market economies but is also present in market economies.^{xiv} In contrast, increasing capital as an end in and of itself is strongly associated with capitalism.^{xv}

Alaska Native traditional land rights are relational. An Alaska Native has a right to use a site because their grandparents hunted there and had a relationship with the animals in the area. The point is not that the land belonged to the Natives, but that the Natives belonged to the land.^{xvi} This view of land rights provides a context for understanding Alaska Native views on subsistence and traditional narrative.

World Views

This paper will examine how Yupik religious worldviews, creation stories, and folk tales contribute to the development of a form of Native Capitalism utilized by the Alaska Native Corporation Cook Inlet Regional, Incorporated. Weber’s work in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* provides a model for examining how religious worldviews contribute to the development of an economic system and an economic ethic. For the sake of this paper, Cook

Inlet's Native Capitalism is defined as a form of capitalism employed by Native Americans that is consensus based and incorporates investment in means of production for the purpose of redistribution of wealth as a major component, in addition to investment in the means of production, labor, capital, and land, for accumulation of wealth as a secondary goal. This can be contrasted with Rational Capitalism, here defined as an economic system which advocates pursuing investment for the accumulation of wealth as the primary goal and is centered on market exchange.^{xvii}

The Yupik creation story tells how my people were created by Sedna the Evil Sea Witch. The title expression "Evil Sea Witch" is most likely a European translation. In the stories Sedna could be generous towards her people when she was inclined to be, but could be scary and dangerous at other times. When translated from a European perspective, a woman with mystical powers who can be scary and dangerous becomes an evil witch. The most traditional telling of the story I am familiar with tells of how Sedna spurned the men of her village and married a dog spirit. The men of her village tried to kill Sedna by taking her in a boat out to sea and throwing her into the sea. She was holding onto the edge of the boat, so they cut her fingers off and she fell into the sea. She went on to rule an undersea kingdom bordering the afterlife, meanwhile her fingers became the seals, fish, whales, and land animals the Yupik use to survive.

Because she has no fingers, the sins of the world collect in Sedna's hair. Sins of the world is most likely a European translation, but here the sins of the world represent transgressions by the Yupik causing disharmony with the environment or with the spirit world. When Sedna's hair becomes too tangled, she becomes upset and withdraws the animals the Yupik need to survive. When this happens, a shaman or medicine man with the power to

communicate with spirits is sent to placate Sedna. This brave soul brings gifts to Sedna, tells her how beautiful she is, and brushes out her hair. When Sedna is placated, she returns the animals.^{xviii}

When examining this story, it is important to note that the community has a relationship with Sedna as a group- she rewards or punishes the entire community as a collective. Transgressions are not punished individually, but rather Sedna withdraws subsistence resources from the group. The shaman or medicine man brings gifts to Sedna seeking to restore balance and harmony, and seeks a restoration of well-being for the group. The shaman or medicine man does not profit from this endeavor, except that he may find some favor in the afterlife, or at least may have an easier journey to the afterlife.

One can also infer a tale of morality regarding trying to impose human values onto the spirit world. The men of the village sought to punish Sedna for marrying a dog spirit and rejecting the men of the village as marriage partners. The result of this action gave Sedna great power over the Yupik, and led to Sedna ruling an undersea kingdom bordering the afterlife. In Judeo-Christian belief systems, the rules of the supernatural world and the rules of the earthly world are meant to be logical and easily understood by humans. In the Yupik belief system, the rules of the supernatural world and the earthly world are unpredictable, not necessarily set in stone, and must be navigated carefully. It is likely that Sedna represents the universe, in this worldview the universe can be a harsh and dangerous place. Sedna is very arbitrary and dangerous, granting favor or dispensing harsh judgment at her whim.

The Yupik rules within a Yupik community have their own logic, and are predictable. The availability of food and good weather are not predictable, particularly if the people are not

acting in harmony and do not placate Sedna. The world is a moral and logical place, but the demands for maintaining harmony and good ethical behavior are beyond normal human abilities. The punishment for “sins” occurs in this world rather than in the “next” world. Human nature can be unpredictable and capricious, thus nature is unpredictable and capricious.

The moral imperative of the traditional narrative requires humans to support harmony with sharing, non-accumulation and avoidance of overexploitation of resources without an imperative for individual gain. This moral imperative lends itself to the traditional economic ethic values of consensus and community well-being, as well as the values of avoiding overexploitation of resources.

A key element of Yupik worldview is living in harmony with animals. The Yupik do not ascribe to a Western conservationist approach based on managing animal populations through quotas of killing animals. The Yupik approach to hunting and subsistence involves living in harmony and peace with humans, and respecting animals. The Yupik belief is that animals have souls and will be reincarnated if treated respectfully. The Yupik believe that a seal can recognize the virtue of a hunter who lives in accordance with Yupik rules and lives in harmony, and that the seal will offer itself to the virtuous hunter.^{xix} The Yupik believe that a seal who offers himself to a hunter and is treated respectfully will be reincarnated. In this understanding, the hunter is not killing the spirit of the animal. Through ritual and respect, the spirit of the animal is preserved and will be reborn, and will replenish the earth with continued possibilities of well-being, as long as the people behave properly with giving the animals due respect for preserving their spirit being. The Yupik Bladder Festival is an annual ceremony held to honor the seals and other animals who have given themselves to the Yupik. It is believed that animals honored in

this way will be reincarnated and available to offer themselves to a virtuous hunter again in a future life.^{xx}

A contemporary example of the danger of not treating animals with proper respect is an incident that happened on Nelson Island in the spring of 1979. Alaska Fish and Wildlife officials had found several headless walrus carcasses. Whoever had killed the walruses had taken the valuable ivory and left the majority of the walruses to waste. An old Yupik man said “if they had been treated properly, they would have been able to return. Now they are gone forever.”^{xxi} In the Yupik belief system, animals that are dishonored or treated disrespectfully will not return, and will be gone forever. This worldview might contribute to Cook Inlet’s version of Native Capitalism, which involves investing for profit but does not favor pursuing profits at the expense of all other concerns. The continuing availability of resources, future harmony and well-being requires respecting the spirits of animals, plants, and all animate beings in the universe. Otherwise the world is out of order, and this disharmony is harmful to the village or collective community. Such disharmony can only be avoided with proper moral and economic actions.

An important element of Yupik worldview is the importance of every human and animal having an awareness, and importance of respecting the mind or awareness of others. This belief system stresses the power of thought, the importance of thoughtful action so as not to injure another’s mind or awareness, and the danger of pursuing one’s own desires without regard for the mind or awareness of others.^{xxii} This belief plays an important role in both hunting and social organization. There is a traditional belief that one must respect the rights of all other living creatures.^{xxiii} As mentioned before, one of the Yupik beliefs is that seals can recognize whether or not a hunter lives in harmony with others in accordance with Yupik rules and customs. Living

in harmony with other human members of the village community is just as important as living in harmony with animals in order to be a successful hunter. For a hunter, their offenses and transgressions will come back to haunt them^{xxiv}

Western observers have commented on the generosity of the Yupik, and their willingness to share food with strangers and with fellow villagers. This may be an extension of the beliefs of living in harmony and in the reincarnation of animals that have been treated respectfully and properly. The Yupik are willing to share food, but it is important that the food has been taken in an appropriate way.^{xxv} This belief system views animals as an endlessly renewable resource as long as they are treated properly and taken in an appropriate manner. Partaking of animals taken in an appropriate manner is a joyous occasion, and sharing food and resources contributes to living in harmony with others.

Traditional Yupik leadership relies on elders playing a central role in teaching the community the importance of living in harmony with others. Leadership is not limited to elders, elders and knowledgeable community members dictate how the community should live. Anyone who speaks well and is a voice for the people can be a leader.^{xxvi} I argue that the Yupik worldview lends itself to a belief that a successful hunter or shaman is successful because they live in harmony with others. Living in harmony with others is a prerequisite for success as a hunter or shaman, and this quality is the quality that leads to an individual being recognized as a leader. Leaders honor and observe the moral codes that lead to harmony. Like a seal the Yupik recognize a virtuous person, and reward that person with trust and reciprocity. There is no harmony without the proper actions of all the people, including the proper moral behavior and

necessary ritual actions. These are the basis of continuing availability of physical and economic resources.

This discussion of traditional Yupik narrative and values is useful for discussing contemporary Alaska Native uses of money and resources and how Yupik Alaska Natives integrate traditional economic ethics with capitalist economic ethics. Uses that can be characterized as traditional are consistent with the values promoted by the narrative and values discussed in Yupik creation teachings.

Mainstream Americans and Economic Windfall

There is some research on mainstream Americans who win the lottery and how they make use of a windfall similar to the CIRI special distribution. This research provides an example of everyday Americans coming into money unexpectedly, and provides a contrast to CIRI shareholders. In the article “Lottery Winners: Myth and Reality” H. Roy Kaplan discusses the findings of a fifteen-year study of lottery winners who won amounts ranging from \$50,000 to several million dollars.^{xxvii} Thirty-seven percent of the respondents invested money in stocks, bonds or real estate and 33 percent gave money to their children. Twenty-three percent used money to purchase homes and twenty percent used money to remodel their current living quarters. Ten percent gave substantial sums to charity, seventeen percent used money to liquidate debt, and thirty-seven percent used money from the lottery winnings to travel.^{xxviii} These findings provide a baseline for comparing CIRI shareholder uses of the special distribution with mainstream American uses of a windfall of money. There are strengths and weaknesses to these findings. The majority of lottery winners in this study are Euro-Americans from middle-class backgrounds, providing a suitable sampling of “mainstream Americans.” Many of the

winners elected to receive their payment in a lump sum rather than in installments, providing an adequate equivalent to the CIRI shareholders who received \$50,000 in one sum. The weaknesses include lack of detailed information on the background of the lottery winners, and the lack of an opportunity to interview any of the winners. As an aggregate the group works to provide a standard for mainstream Americans and use of an economic windfall, but there are no individual details available. And the lottery winners bought lottery tickets and were seeking this economic windfall. The behavior of CIRI shareholders includes individual shareholders who did not expect or plan for an economic windfall.

Alaska Natives and Native Capitalism

This case study focuses on how individuals made use of the 2000 CIRI Special Distribution, but it is important to discuss Native Capitalism as it relates to Alaska Native Corporations in general and CIRI in particular. Native American economic success challenges mainstream American assumptions that Native Americans are poor, antimaterialistic, and out of the space and time of modernity.^{xxix} Native Americans are not entrenched in the pursuit of individual profit and often use revenue to revitalize traditions and cultural values.^{xxx} Native Americans pursue economic success in part to provide for the welfare of tribal members and reduce dependence on the federal government.^{xxxi} Indigenous corporations strive to maximize profit within a framework of traditional cultural values and economic sustainability (Bunten, p.3). Economic success and traditional culture are not mutually exclusive. There is a perception in mainstream American culture that indigenous people who are financially successful lose part of their indigeneity, but some indigenous peoples use financial success to revitalize their

culture.^{xxxii} Similar to the Seminoles of Florida, Alaska Natives use revenue generated by Alaska Native Corporations to fund cultural museums and cultural activities.^{xxxiii}

Methodology

The study design included phone interviews and online surveys of CIRI shareholders who received \$50,000 from the 2000 Special Distribution. Phone interviews began with relatives of the researcher using a snowball study design, with interviewees recommending other CIRI shareholders as potential interviewees. CIRI posted a link to an online survey on the CIRI facebook page. Some CIRI shareholders sent partial surveys via email rather than complete the online survey.

The responses are a concentration of counter-cases to maximization theory. This case study provides a theoretical rather than empirical study of these counter-cases. There were four telephone interviews averaging 20-25 minutes, four complete online surveys and three partial surveys sent via email. CIRI does not release names of shareholders or contact information. Three of the telephone interviews were conducted with relatives of the primary investigator, and one telephone interview was conducted with a friend of a relative.

The key concepts being investigated include traditional and capitalist or mainstream American uses of money and resources, and what factors influence CIRI shareholders when they make decisions involving use of money and resources. The term economic ethic is useful in academic literature but is generally not part of everyday conscious decisions on economic behavior. The questions “how would you characterize your economic ethic” and “what factors influence your economic ethic” would not be likely to produce useful or meaningful responses. The interviews and surveys approached the topics of economic ethic and traditional narrative by

asking interviewees and respondents about how they used the special distribution, and then asked about traditional behavior and narrative as general concepts.

The phone interviews and online surveys included the same set of questions. The phone interviews provided a change for follow-up questions and greater depth. The set of questions began by asking about uses of the distribution and then transitioned to questions about traditional values and traditional beliefs. One of the last questions asked interviewees and respondents what they would do if they received another special distribution. In phone interviews the researcher could expand on this question. This question is significant as it asks interviewees if the factors influencing their decisions and behavior when they received the special distribution are as strong now as they were in 2000. The questions included asking about what interviewees and respondents consider traditional uses of money and what they consider mainstream American uses of money.

I am categorizing CIRI shareholder uses of the 2000 Special Distribution in three ways: 1) Traditional Uses, 2) Capitalist Uses, and 3) Other. Each category requires some explanation. The two main traditional uses revealed in the interviews and surveys are taking time off from work, and giving money to a relative for a specific purpose. Capitalist uses include opening a business or going to college. The other category includes uses that are not specifically traditional or capitalist, or uses that could be categorized as either.

The two uses I categorize as traditional are taking time off from work, and giving money to a relative for a specific purpose rather than for investment. Traditional Yupik Eskimo beliefs include not taking more resources than necessary for survival, and not wasting any resources. One possible interpretation of these beliefs would be using the special distribution to take time

off from work, since one would not need to acquire more of the resource cash until the special distribution was spent. Some of the phone interviews support this interpretation. One CIRI shareholder used the special distribution to take two years off from work. The shareholder had health issues making this time away from work advantageous. It is worth mentioning the fact that indigenous people do not separate time into categories of “production on the clock” and “leisure off the clock.”^{xxxiv} Euro-American time oriented labor assumes a positive moral value assigned to wage labor, with a negative moral value assigned to time not spent contributing to production. Indigenous people tend to have a task oriented view of labor, focusing on tasks providing for a need (food, clothing, or shelter for example). A Euro-American capitalist view assumes a binary of work/production that produces wages earned, and leisure/lack of production that does not produce wages. From an indigenous perspective, a surplus of cash might be interpreted as freedom from needing to perform tasks that result in wages, and freedom to focus on tasks that provide for other needs. These other needs might include social or cultural needs.

The second traditional use is giving money to a relative for a specific purpose. There tends to be an assumption that traditional indigenous economic systems reinforce culture and social relationships through the use of barter and social capital. There also tends to be an assumption that currency breaks down traditional culture and social relations, and is a deculturizing force.^{xxxv} Yupik Eskimos had gifting ceremonies to celebrate giving a blanket or parka to a relative or community member who needs the item.^{xxxvi} Giving money to a relative for a specific need is a way CIRI shareholders continued this tradition. Examples include giving a son \$200 to buy clothes, giving money to a relative to fix a pick-up truck, or giving money to daughter to buy furniture for her family’s house.

Capitalist uses include starting a business, going to college, or using part of the special distribution to pay off a mortgage. Going to college or paying off a mortgage could also be viewed as a traditional use. The CIRI website spotlights shareholders who used the special distribution to open a business or finish a college degree. Buying a house or paying off the mortgage on a house could be viewed as a traditional or capitalist use. Buying a house is typically thought of as a capitalist investment, since the house is likely to increase in value and can be sold for a profit in the future. But in Alaska, Alaska Natives often buy a house because it is in a Native community, and they buy a house with the intention of living in the house for the rest of their lives and leaving the house to their children. Alaska Natives tend to view buying a house as a traditional use as a traditional subsistence lifestyle requires shelter.

Because Alaska Native Corporations were created with the goals of promoting economic development and preserving traditional culture, the uses that could be categorized as either is likely to expand. Several phone interviews and online surveys mentioned formal education as a traditional value, although non-Natives might view pursuing a formal education as a Euro-American value more in line with economic development. A college or university education often leads to a higher-paying career and might be thought of as an investment. The CIRI shareholders interviewed all viewed a college education as solely a traditional value and not as a Euro-American value. This distinction bears further investigation in future research. Buying a house or a car could be viewed as a capitalist use, since both have value as capital and can be used as collateral to borrow money. But a house and a vehicle are necessities in Alaska, and can also be viewed as traditional uses of money.

Conclusions

The central question of this paper asks to what extent Alaska Natives maintain traditional cultural values in terms of economic ethic, to what extent are Alaska Natives adopting mainstream American capitalism, and to what extent Alaska Natives combine the two into a modern tradition. Understanding the question requires a discussion of economic ethic, traditional narrative, and mainstream American capitalism. Answering this central question involves a discussion of both the role CIRC as an Alaska Native Corporation plays in promoting economic development and preserving traditional culture and the success CIRC enjoys in these goals.

CIRC shareholders preserve traditional culture and pursue economic development as an ongoing process. The Alaska Natives who were either interviewed or replied to surveys voiced a story of preserving as much traditional culture as possible, limited by the constraints of how much traditional culture had been passed on to them and the necessity to survive in a world that involves more market commerce than subsistence hunting and fishing. The goal of preserving traditional cultural values is interconnected with economic values. Alaska Natives make decisions on whether or not to live in a rural village as part of an Alaska Native community, which often has fewer economic opportunities, or live in a city with greater access to economic opportunities. This decision influences the opportunities available to their children. Living in a village provides a greater opportunity to learn and preserve traditional culture. Living in a city allows for a better public school education and more lucrative economic opportunities in adulthood.

Alaska Natives make different decisions regarding the extent to which they maintain traditional culture and the extent to which they adopt mainstream American capitalism. None of the CIRI shareholders expressed any judgmental opinions towards Alaska Natives who make different decisions on culture and capitalism. The CIRI shareholders expressed respect and admiration for uses of the special distribution that were obviously successful in a goal of preserving traditional culture or obviously successful in a capitalist endeavor. Traditional Yupik culture and mainstream American culture allow for poor judgment within their frameworks, and some CIRI shareholders expressed opinions on uses of the special distribution that could be characterized as poor judgment in both frameworks. Some CIRI shareholders shared opinions on Alaska Natives who chose to use the special distribution in ways that could not be characterized as successful in either preserving traditional culture or as successful in a capitalist endeavor. These opinions were critical of poor judgment in terms of having nothing to show for having spent the special distribution, but were not overtly critical of cultural choices.

In the same vein, shareholders judged their own use of the special distribution in terms of whether the choices they made were successful for preserving traditional culture or for pursuing mainstream American capitalism. The phone interviews and surveys ended with the question “what would you do if you received another special distribution?” This question asks shareholders what they would do the same and what they would do differently. It also indirectly asks if the cultural and economic factors influencing the decisions they made following the 2000 special distribution are still as strong, or if those factors have changed. The majority of small sample of shareholders who participated in this study replied that they would use another special distribution in similar ways. These shareholders used the special distribution in either mainly traditional or a mix of traditional and capitalist uses. Some shareholders did not reply to this

question in the online survey. All of the shareholders interviewed by phone answered this question. No shareholders replied that they would use another distribution in significantly different ways, either all of the shareholders who took part were happy with the choices they made or if they had regrets they chose not to answer this question.

The role CIRC plays as an Alaska Native Corporation is part of why the central question is relevant to indigenous people in general, which in turn is part of why the central question is relevant beyond the field Native Studies. Native Corporations are a viable model for indigenous people to organize and interact with market economies and nation-states. CIRC pursues its goals of promoting economic development and preserving traditional culture by providing cash dividends and distributions to shareholders and letting shareholders decide how to preserve traditional culture and pursue economic development. This approach is not the only possible approach but is an effective approach. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss global environmental concerns and the importance of sustainable resource management, indigenous studies are relevant to furthering understanding of environmental concerns and sustainable resource management. The success of CIRC in promoting economic development and preserving traditional culture shows that Native Corporations are viable for advancing indigenous peoples and for preserving indigenous cultures.

-
- ⁱ Kuokkanen, p.1, 2011
ⁱⁱ Pickering, p.86, 2004
ⁱⁱⁱ Huhndorf, p.387, 2011
^{iv} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alaska_Federation_of_Natives
^v ANCSA 1985 Study, p.ES-3
^{vi} Huhndorf, p.385, 2011
^{vii} ANCSA 1985 Study, p. ES-5
^{viii} Case and Volluck, p.336, 2002
^{ix} Case and Volluck, p. 337, 2002
^x Case and Volluck, p. 337, 2002
^{xi} Case and Volluck, p. 168, 2002
^{xii} ANCSA 1985 Study, p. III-4
^{xiii} Gregory, 1982, 10-18
^{xiv} Osteen, p.9, 2002
^{xv} Weber, p.12, 2010
^{xvi} Case and Volluck, p.175
^{xvii} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perspectives_on_capitalism
^{xviii} Philip, p.168
^{xix} Fienup-Riordan, 1990, p.45
^{xx} Fienup-Riordan, 1990, p.45
^{xxi} Fienup-Riordan, 1990, p.47
^{xxii} Fienup-Riordan, 1990, p.168
^{xxiii} Fienup-Riordan, p. 205
^{xxiv} Fienup-Riordan, 1990, p.173
^{xxv} Fienup-Riordan, 1990, p.180
^{xxvi} Fienup-Riordan, 1990, p.199
^{xxvii} <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2F01367438>
^{xxviii} Kaplan, p.9, 1987
^{xxix} Cattelino, p.11, 2008
^{xxx} Darian-Smith, p.109, 2004
^{xxxi} Cattelino, p.138, 2008
^{xxxii} Cattelino, p.62, 2008
^{xxxiii} <http://www.ciri.com/content/history/NewsDetails.aspx?ID=751>
^{xxxiv} Pickering, p.86, 2004
^{xxxv} Cattelino, p.62, 2008).
^{xxxvi} Fienup-Riordan, p.42, 2000

References

- Rauna Kuokkanen (2011). From Indigenous Economies to Market-Based Self-Governance: A Feminist Political Economy Analysis. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 44, pp 275-297. doi:10.1017/S0008423911000126.
- Kathleen Picker (2008). Decolonizing Time Regimes: Lakota Conceptions of Work, Economy, and Society. Online, available at: anthropology.colostate.edu/pdf/DecolonizingTimeRegimes.pdf
- Roy and Shari Huhndorf (2011). Alaska Native Politics since the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Spring 2011, pp 385-402. doi:10.1215/00382876-1162507
- ANCSA 1985 Study: Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). [Washington, D.C.?]: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1984. Print.
- Case, David S., and David A. Volluck. Alaska Natives and American Laws. [Fairbanks, Alaska]: University of Alaska, 2002. Print.
- Gregory, C. A. Gifts and Commodities. London: Academic, 1982. Print.
- Osteen, Mark. The Question of the Gift: Essays across Disciplines. London: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Weber, Max, and Stephen Kalberg. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism: With Other Writings on the Rise of the West. New York: Oxford UP, 2010. Print.
- Philip, Neil. Illustrated Book of Fairy Tales. New York: D K, 1998. Print.
- Fienup-Riordan, Ann. Eskimo Essays: Yupik Lives and How We See Them. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1990. Print.
- Roy Kaplan (1987). Lottery Winners: Myth and Reality. *Journal of gambling behavior*, Volume 3, Issue 3, pp 168-178
- Cattellino, Jessica R. High Stakes: Florida Seminole Gaming and Sovereignty. Durham: Duke UP, 2008. Print.
- Darian-Smith, Eve. New Capitalists: Law, Politics, and Identity Surrounding Casino Gaming on Native American Land. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2004. Print.