Mission
Working Together to Achieve Excellent Health

Vision
Through Native Self-Determination and Culturally Relevant Health Systems, We Strive to be The Healthiest People.

Values
Optimism – Compassion – Pursuit of Excellence – Personal Growth
Importance of Family – Trust
Elder Knowledge

COVER PHOTO: Connor Berlin, son of Health Aide Rhonda Jackson, in front of the Kwethluk River during spring break up.

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YKHC administers a comprehensive health care delivery system for 50 rural communities in southwest Alaska.

The system includes community clinics, sub-regional clinics, a regional hospital, dental services, behavioral health services including substance abuse counseling and treatment, health promotion and disease prevention programs, and environmental health services.

YKHC is a Tribal Organization authorized by each of the 58 federally recognized tribal councils in its service area to negotiate with the Federal Indian Health Service to provide health care services under Title V of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975.

YKHC, along with 22 other Tribal Organizations, is a co-signer to the Alaska Tribal Health Compact, a consortium which secures annual funding agreements with the federal government to provide health care services to Alaska Natives and Native Americans throughout the state.
YUKON-KUSKOKWIM HEALTH CORPORATION

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Elected by the Tribal Councils of each of the 58 federally recognized Tribes in the YKHC service area, the Board of Directors is the chief policy-making body of the corporation, exercising overall control, management and supervision.

Executive Board
Walter Jim ..........................Chairperson
Darren Cleveland ............1st Vice Chair
Geraldine Beans ..............Secretary
Bonnie Persson..................Treasurer
Moses Owen, Jr ..................Sergeant-at-Arms

Walter Jim, Ex-Officio
Sam N. Tinker, Sr
Walter Jim, Ex-Officio
Mary Willis
Mary Ayunerak

Human Studies
Bonnie Persson
Alton Alexie
Mary Ayunerak
James Nicori
James Sipary

Adolph Lewis
Geraldine Beans
Abraham David
Gloria George
Mary Willis

ANHB

By-Law Committee
James Sipary
James Nicori
Geraldine Beans
Chris Larson
Mary Ayunerak

Adolph Lewis (MSAPC)
Geraldine Beans (MSAPC)
Marlin Deacon (MSAPC)
Mary Ayunerak

Abraham David
Michael Hunt
Gloria George
Sam N. Tinker, Sr
James Sipary
Patrice Doughty

Compensation Committee
Adolph Lewis
Sam Tinker
Gloria George
Abraham David
Geraldine Beans
Walter Jim, Ex-Officio
Dan Winkelman, Ex-Officio

Corporate Compliance/Quality Assurance
Adolph Lewis
Stanley L. Hoffman, Jr.
Mary Willis
Moses Owen
Mary Ayunerak
Walter Jim, Ex-Officio
Dan Winkelman, Ex-Officio

Policy Committee
Patrick Tall
Bonnie Persson
Stanley L. Hoffman, Jr.
Moses Owen
Adolph Lewis
John Uttereyuk
Walter Jim, Ex-Officio
Dan Winkelman, Ex-Officio

Corporate Capacity and Culture
Adolph Lewis
Moses Owen
Geraldine Beans
Gloria George
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Mary Ayunerak
Walter Jim, Ex-Officio
Dan Winkelman, Ex-Officio

Board Appointments
ANHB: Darren Cleveland
Moses Owen—Alternate
ANTHC: Walter Jim
1st John Uttereyuk
2nd Alton Alexie—Alternate
Lifemed: Patrick Tall
James Nicori
Dan Winkelman

2021

The health and safety of our people has been top priority—not just in fighting the pandemic, but in continuing to provide the quality of health care you expect and deserve. From the village clinics to our new state-of-the-art Bethel hospital, YKHC is there for you and your family.
Leadership Message

As you know, this was our second year responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. We had a two large waves of sub variants, named Delta and Omicron with the former subsiding before Christmas of 2021 and the latter subsiding over the last two months.

Together, in one of the remotest regions of the United States, we:

• helped almost 20,000 customers get vaccinated with a safe and effective, life-saving vaccine;
• educated the region’s 30,000 customers on how to mitigate the chances of infection;
• educated how to reduce transmission when either infected or when a village experienced widespread community transmission;
• administered over 180,000 COVID-19 tests;
• educated school leaders and communities on how to keep schools, sports and other vital extracurricular activities safe and open;
• helped to keep businesses safe and open;
• provided healthcare guidance to almost 16,000 individuals and families with COVID-19;
• provided healthcare to 148 inpatients who were hospitalized due to COVID-19;
• provided healthcare to 249 individuals with in-region medevacs;
• provided 40 individuals with out of region medevacs;
• provided healthcare to 50 individuals who died from COVID-19 and consolated their families;
• helped to end COVID-19 waves sooner rather than later, and thereby helped to keep our health system from becoming overwhelmed in an effort to reduce unnecessary hospitalizations and deaths.

We could not have accomplished this without our 1,400 employees working together as a team, nor without your vital engagement, participation and help. Quyana.

This is our seventh year in a row of a multi-million dollar capital improvement plan that replaces old equipment with new equipment. Over the last two years, we spent more than $15 million on new equipment that improved our response to the COVID-19 pandemic and also improved the delivery of healthcare throughout the entire Yukon-Kuskokwim region. This year, we are purchasing over $2.5 million of new equipment to continue modernizing our healthcare system for your benefit. YKHC’s finances have never been stronger. We continue to deliver quality healthcare while paying off our debt for the new hospital, while keeping our wages competitive and modernizing our infrastructure.

We announced in the Messenger a few months ago that we are building a new 109-room customer lodging facility. It will be on the hospital campus and within walking distance of the hospital. It will be a high quality and safe facility for all customers.

The location is near the existing hostel. Site preparation will quickly ramp up this spring. It will be completed over the next two years. We are all looking forward to a nice, new facility that is large enough to handle all customer volumes, regardless of season.

Occasionally when the winter weather deteriorates, village customers are unable to make it home until the weather improves. Sometimes there are no rooms available at our current 24 room hostel or elsewhere in Bethel. We all look forward to the day when customers no longer have to sleep on cots because no rooms are available in Bethel. That day is coming two years from now, and will be a joyous occasion for all!

Quyana to all 1,400 YKHC employees for all that you do each and every day! Quyana to all our customers! Please do not put off your health care. Get your annual physicals, preventative screenings and medical advice. YKHC is here for you and your family.

Sincerely,

Walter Jim
Chair of the Board of Directors

Dan Winkelman
President & CEO

Suicide Prevention

YKHC’s Behavioral Health Preventative Services offers Calricaraq to educate the public about suicide awareness and prevention.

Suicide is a complicated issue and there are no easy answers. But with awareness and understanding all people can help prevent suicide in their communities.

The Wellness Wheel

The mind, body, heart, and the spirit are four parts of a whole person. Understanding the interconnectedness between these four quadrants, and learning how to take care of each, can contribute to a healthy balance in our lives.

Workshops

Throughout the year, Preventative Services provided a series of two-day adlvoraq training sessions. Participants gained understanding in the philosophy of adlvoraq by exploring issues within Native communities and utilizing original interventions developed by Native Yup’ik professionals.

The trainings described how Native values and teachings from elders is applied to issues such as depression, substance abuse, domestic violence, and suicide.

Our culture has many tools that can help us survive, stay healthy, and be OK. For any and all Behavioral Health crises, from suicidal ideations to concerns regarding how a person is acting, 907-543-6499 is the number to call.
Sugary drinks are the number one source of added sugar in the American diet and the consumption of these beverages increases risk for developing diet-related health conditions such as diabetes, obesity, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and cancer.

Drinking just one additional serving of a sugary drink each day increases your risk for developing type II diabetes by 15–18%. In an effort to combat these negative health impacts, YKHC launched an educational campaign to encourage folks to drink fewer sugary drinks.

The ads were published in the YKHC Messenger and on the YKHC facebook page. Additional information has been published to encourage reduction in sugary drinks and improve the health of your families.

Choosing water is a slam dunk!

There’s no way to leave it all on the court when sugary sports drinks are slowing you down! Get game-ready by drinking water.

Sugar in soda and sweetened drinks promotes tooth decay. Seven out ten children in the YK Delta undergo invasive dental procedures due to tooth decay—this is far greater than any other place in the country.


3. Imamura F, O'Connor L, Ye Z, Murin I, Hayashino Y, Bhupathiraju SN, Forouhi NG. Consumption of sugary-sweetened beverages, artificially sweetened beverages, and fruit juice and incidence of Type 2 diabetes: systematic review, meta-analysis, and estimation of population attributable fraction. BMJ. 2015; 351. DOI: 10.1136/bmj.h3576

Increase Cancer Screening

Colorectal cancer rates are high in the YK Delta. Prevention is possible through screening. Here are a few of the ways YKHC has been working to improve screening rates:

- **New Test.** Cologuard is a test that checks for cancer DNA in stool samples. It has been used successfully in the Lower 48 as part of routine screening for colorectal cancer. Patients who get a Cologuard test and it is negative do not need to be screened again for three years. A positive result may be a sign they have pre-cancerous or cancerous cells or another issue. They are fast-tracked to get a colonoscopy.
- **New position.** A grant-funded full-time Patient Navigator assists patients with their screening decisions and appointments.
- **New position.** A second full-time case manager assists in the surgery department for dental surgeries, endoscopies and colonoscopies.
- **New position.** A fulltime endoscopy/colonoscopy scheduler will help with patient scheduling. This position will be funded by grant funding for six months, then will be a regular part of YKHC staff.

In addition to new positions, ANTHC and YKHC are collaborating for a fuller understanding of our patients’ colorectal health through key interviews and focus groups. The following three structured activities will provide leadership with important feedback that can help guide future improvement.

- **Provider Interviews.** We are asking health care providers what we can do to improve. Health Aides have been invited to interviews on what makes it hard or easy to get patients their life-saving screening.
- **Patient Experience Survey.** We are asking patients what they choose for screening and why.
- **Patient focus groups.** We will do patient focus groups to get more feedback from patients on what improvements can be made.

**Cologuard project by the numbers:**

- 1510 patients reviewed (Goal review 4315 total) 35% accomplished.
- 91 patients have requested colonoscopy.
- 270 patients have requested Cologuard test.
- 42 patients have declined.

YKHC’s surgery department is also working to reach out to patients to schedule colonoscopies. Providers are referring patients for colonoscopies and ordering an iFOB test when needed (Immunological Fecal Occult Blood Test). This is a stool sample test that helps a provider determine if a colonoscopy is needed. It is also used as a diagnostic tool for other medical issues.

Building capacity at YKHC is a goal of the Research department. Over the last year our staff has attended focus group training, increasing and improving skills of staff who live and serve in the YK Delta.

**CANCER SCREENING WITH COLOGUARD**

A Cologuard kit is sent to patients who choose to use it.

A pre-paid express mail shipping label is provided to patients so their kit returns to Anchorage within 72 hours of their sample collection.

To use Cologuard we set up a lab station at the Alaska Public Health Laboratory to preprocess samples.

The sample is processed in the Sample Mixer and data is entered in software.

The sample is homogenized in the Sample Mixer, then the coordinator pipets stool into tubes.

The processed patient samples are transported from the State lab to ANTHC where they are stored in a -80C freezer.

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PROJECT COMPLETION

The PJCP received its Certificate of Substantial Completion on March 23, 2021, meeting the goal of being on time and within budget. The Indian Health Services conducted their final inspection and acceptance on April 6, 2021, signing the last amendment to the Joint Venture Agreement for Phase 3. The new south entrance to the hospital opened to the public, providing direct access to the Emergency Department. The new south parking lot opened up availability of much-needed parking space. The new entrance also provides access to the main security desk and offices, and access to the West Wing building connection.

The new staff lounge, conference room, training room, staff restrooms/locker rooms, and workshop for medical equipment maintenance and repair were all turned over from the contractor at the end of March.

CARE DELIVERY: Successfully complete the Paul John Calricaraq Project

The PJCP has been a Joint Venture Construction Program offered by the Indian Health Service to acquire, construct, or renovate a health care facility and lease it to the IHS, at no cost, for a period of 20 years. The IHS funds the staff, operations, and maintenance of the facility.

YKHC’s application was submitted in November 2014, accepted in January 2015 and signed in March 2016. Five years later, in March 2021, the new hospital and renovation was complete.

The expansion increased outpatient clinics from three to seven, automated the Lab and Pharmacy, brought Dental, Optometry and Behavioral Health together in the same facility, and upgraded Inpatient, OB, and infusion services.

These were the principles that guided the project throughout: Represent the YK Delta’s culture and identity, promote customer centered care, preserve affordable cost and sustainable operations.

Entrance to the expanded and renovated Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Regional Hospital.
Improve Patient Experience

New Hospital – New Equipment

YKHC purchased more than $20 million of new state-of-the-art equipment for our new hospital.

In our laboratory, we added a Roche COBAS 6800 batch molecular analyzer. This enhances our ability to analyze COVID-19 samples quickly and on-site. Prior to obtaining this equipment, samples had to be sent to ANMC, the State, or private laboratories, resulting in a delay of several days to two weeks. In addition, the analyzer is capable of processing a variety of other samples, many of which we previously had to send out for testing.

In our Diagnostic Imaging department, we purchased a new CT scanner, allowing a remarkable improvement to our service compared to the old scanner. It scans faster and has better image quality while using 30% less radiation. Additionally, we have added new services, such as bone density testing and 3D reconstruction—and the scanner’s capability has room to grow.

The Outpatient Surgery department opened for business. We have expanded the number of beds in the preoperative admission and postoperative recovery bays. In addition to two new operating rooms, we now have a dedicated procedure room for endoscopy services. We have also purchased brand-new endoscopy equipment, bedside monitors, laparoscopic surgery equipment, and anesthesia machines to replace older equipment.

With the opening of an inpatient unit for psychiatric care, the Diagnostic, Evaluation, and Treatment unit (DET) will help and treat people experiencing severe psychiatric issues, such as psychosis and suicidal ideation. This will reduce the number of people who have to be transported out of area and increase prompt treatment.

Powerchart Maternity

Powerchart Maternity is a new Cerner solution that is part of RAVEN, our Electronic Health Record (EHR) that will be in use in 2023.

This new program will allow us to more easily track the health information for our moms and babies throughout the pregnancy to provide the best possible care. The program has built-in parameters to assist our health care workers in providing the best evidence-based medical care for our pregnant moms before the baby is born and will link to the hospital care they receive once the baby is delivered.

This also will provide information to our health care workers who are taking care of newborns so that they can easily access the health information of the birth mother—which is important to know when taking care of our youngest patients.

The project to build out this new program will kick off June 2022 and we expect to have this in use for appointments by early next year. Our patients shouldn’t notice any difference in the excellent care they receive while pregnant, but our health care workers should notice a big difference in the ease with which they can review and access the information needed to safely care for our pregnant moms and babies.

Strengthen Village Health Programs

Community Health Aide Program

“Despite a challenging year dealing with COVID-19 effects in the YK Delta, I would like to recognize the response of all CHAP staff with resiliency and commitment to patients and the communities we serve.” – Asela Calhoun, MA, PhD, CHAP Director

A shout of recognition goes to the CHA/Ps who practiced in their home villages as well as the float CHA/Ps who traveled to cover the clinics with high outbreaks of COVID-19 cases—doing testing, vaccinations, and patient treatment. New BP/SP02 machines were deployed to clinics to expedite patient care.

Field Supervisors focused on recruiting new Health Aides and re-entry Health Aides to rebuild clinic staffing. As part of these efforts, YKHC Leadership introduced a new $5,000 sign-on bonus for newly recruited CHAs and a pilot to mentor new applicants to pass the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) required for entry into the CHA program. The Training Center staff continued to train CHAs, even with reduced cohorts for safety, supporting the Health Aides in their professional growth.

The CHAP Itinerant Program PA/NPs Advanced Practice Providers (APP) continued to be a first line of response during the pandemic, as new variants appeared and outbreaks intensified. The program provided rotations to villages with the highest rates of COVID-19 cases.

The program also focused on recruiting more providers to increase clinic coverage. Seven additional providers were added to the program. This growth is an amazing achievement considering the staffing challenges across the country. The additional providers will increase YKHC’s capacity to care for patients close to home in coming years, while giving support and relief to Health Aides for needed breaks. Collectively, the providers made 1,342 village visits and completed more than 6,000 patient visits.

The Immunizations department successfully rolled out the full range of COVID-19 vaccines in the YK Delta, achieving the second highest rate of immunization in the State of Alaska for patients five and older. The department provided twice as many vaccines in 2021 than the previous year. The CHAP registration staff managed to complete thousands of Quick Registrations done at clinics during mass testing and COVID-19 vaccinations.

Kudos to all for outstanding teamwork and positive attitudes, filled with kindness toward each other.

Health Aide of the Year: Bobby Heckman, CHP

Bobby was selected by CHAP as Health Aide of the Year for 2021, in recognition for his work at Pilot Station Clinic. He has been a Certified Community Health Practitioner (CHP) for many years.

Bobby has served his community with a compassionate and caring heart that shines through all he does. His work reflects a deep commitment to the mission and values of YKHC and a personal commitment to treating every patient with respect, dignity, and value. He is a role model for the Health Aide profession.

Bobby is well loved in his community and even the children know who he is and what he does as a Health Aide.

Here is a poignant story of his exemplary patient care—after caring for a very ill patient who was on weather hold for a medevac for a long time, he sat with the patient giving comfort tirelessly.

As Bobby did all he could medically, he also sang Russian Orthodox songs that brought soothing comfort to the patient until he passed. We are grateful for his caring heart in giving what he had to offer, not only in this instance, but in continuing to give for all of his patients.

Thank you, Bobby, for your service. You are appreciated. Quyana!
COVID-19 Response

In 2021, the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, people of the YK Delta came together to reduce the spread of the virus. Everybody played a part.

Individuals got vaccinated, encouraged their friends to get vaccinated, got tested, wore masks, practiced social distancing, reduced travel, avoided large gatherings and postponed events. Village and tribal leaders provided guidance, implemented lockdowns and worked tirelessly to protect their communities.

YKHC providers and health aides gave COVID-19 shots to children as young as five years old and boosters to eligible residents. They answered questions about the vaccine and cared for people who were ill with the virus. YKHC shared reliable, accurate information about COVID-19 and the vaccines through virtual townhalls, on our website and on social media.

While each person has a story to tell about their own experiences with COVID-19, we all shared some significant milestones in the fight against the virus.

January

• COVID-19 vaccines are available to all YK Delta residents ages 16 and older.
• YKHC Project TOGO visits every village in the Delta to distribute COVID-19 vaccines.

February

• New cases of COVID-19 in the YK Delta decline more than 75% from January, starting a downward trend in new positive COVID cases that lasts until June.

May

• COVID-19 vaccines are approved for children ages 12-15 years old.
• New positive cases in the Delta drop to their lowest point in 2021.

June

• The Delta variant arrives and quickly becomes the dominant strain in the region. New positive cases start to climb.

August

• Students return to school safely with universal masking, social distancing, regular surveillance testing and other “layers” of protection. Vaccinations are strongly encouraged for all eligible students.

September–October

• Booster shots are approved for eligible individuals who received their second dose of vaccine at least six months before.
• As cases in the region, state and country rise, YKHC activates COVID-19 clinical guidelines and asks residents to take extra care.

November

• COVID-19 vaccinations are approved for children ages 5-11 years old. YKHC partners with schools and parents to distribute vaccines to children in this age group.

December

• The omicron variant started spreading quickly through the U.S. and the world. YKHC leadership started planning to ensure we could continue to care for our patients when the omicron variant arrived in the YK Delta in early January.

The challenge of testing and vaccinating was met in various ways in YK Delta communities.

2021 DHAT GRADUATES

Natalia Shantz, originally from Hooper Bay, and Jerilyn Glenn, originally from Emmonak, graduated from the Alaska Dental Therapy Education Program June 24. They applied and were chosen by YKHC for sponsorship in 2019. YKHC agrees to support a certain number of students through school in exchange for successful completion of the program and a commitment to come back and work for YKHC upon graduation.

It is an intense, two-year, seven-semester, full-time training program. We are very excited that Natalia and Jerilyn persevered and joined our team of dental providers in July.

YKHC has been employing Dental Health Aide Therapists since 2004. We started out with two DHATs, and with the graduation of Jerilyn and Natalia, we now have 16 DHATs actively practicing in our region. Villages that are lucky enough to be covered by DHATs have had significant increases in access to care. Villages with a higher number of DHAT treatment days have more patients seeking preventive care, fewer teeth being pulled and fewer children needing to be treated in the operating room for full mouth rehab.

YKHC also worked with YKHC’s Behavioral Health Services to offer presentations on substance abuse disorders to local high school and college students. There will be more in 2022.

Working in collaboration with South Central AHEC, the healthcare apprenticeship program began in fall 2021 with six YKHC employee apprentices. These employees were able to “learn at lunch” and earn certifications and skills without having to take time off work.

YK-AHEC also worked with YKHC’s Behavioral Health Services to offer presentations on substance abuse disorders to local high school and college students. There will be more in 2022.

Working in collaboration with South Central AHEC, the healthcare apprenticeship program began in fall 2021 with six YKHC employee apprentices. These employees were able to “learn at lunch” and earn certifications and skills without having to take time off work.

YK-AHEC supported a mini health camp for high school students organized by the Lower Kuskokwim School District in December. Through travel funding, guest speakers and hospital/lab tours, YK-AHEC worked with APU and YUUT to provide students with health career related activities.

In the last quarter of 2021, AHEC worked closely with CHAP and our partners YUUT and AVCP to increase the number of candidates in the Community Health Aide Trainee program. It is encouraging to see the positive impact that has resulted due to these partnerships.

YK-AHEC is working closely with Alaska Pacific University (APU), which oversees the LPN program, assisting with the recruitment of YKHC employees for next year and in the placement of current LPN students. The LPN classes are held on the YUUT campus, the result of a YUUT/APU collaboration.

Alaska Health Education Center: YK-AHEC 2021

Raising awareness of health careers and supporting students and medical residents through scholarships, internships, residencies, clinical rotations, and placement in health careers are the integral components of YK-AHEC. In alignment with one of YK-AHEC’s goals to expose students to primary care delivery in rural and/or underserved settings, YKHC preceptors provided enormous support to resident physicians and health professions students on clinical rotations throughout 2021. We salute the dedicated and committed YKHC preceptors for aiding in this critical component of learning for healthcare students. Dental, Optometry, and Pharmacy are the most popular specialties.

Scholarships were offered to nine students in 2021. Orientation and career workshops for KUC nursing students and YUUT certified nursing assistant students were conducted in fall 2021 with the goal to continue to provide and expand these workshops going forward.

YK-AHEC is working closely with Alaska Pacific University (APU), which oversees the LPN program, assisting with the recruitment of YKHC employees for next year and in the placement of current LPN students. The LPN classes are held on the YUUT campus, the result of a YUUT/APU collaboration.

Continue to Improve Cash Flow

As COVID-19 continued to affect patients and staff, FY21 looked a little different than many others in the past.

During the past two years YKHC has invested over $15 million in capital back into the organization for the benefit of our patients and employees. Some of the highlights are listed below:

- All village clinics received new anti-microbial office furniture.
- Qavartarvik Hostel received all new furniture for the rooms including new sleeping chairs and TVs.
- Roche Cobas 6800 testing machine that allows YKHC to process COVID-19 and other tests inhouse so we are not reliant on outside processing.
- Water and sewer hook-ups for the Kongiginak and Quinahagak.
- Village clinics were receiving new computers to facilitate a better experience with virtual patient visits.
- All village clinics and SRCs have new vaccine refrigerators with freezers that allow them to store vaccine and tests safely in more locations.
- Rooms in our SRCs were renovated to operate on TigerTouch.
- Roche Cobas 6800 testing machine that allows YKHC to process COVID-19 and other tests inhouse so we are not reliant on outside processing.
- Village clinics will be receiving ATV emergency vehicles for transportation.
- Four new buses were purchased for patient transportation from the Bethel airport to YKDRH.
- A new air handling system for the Elder’s Home that allows air conditioning in the summer.

These are just few of the significant improvements that YKHC has done in order to respond to this pandemic while taking care of our communities.

YUKON-KUSKOKWIM HEALTH CORPORATION

REPORT TO THE PEOPLE 2021