



Purpose:

The purposes of holding a community health forum were threefold: (1) with the Baseline Report completed by the North Slope Borough, we wanted to present the findings to the community so that we all have a better understanding of Wainwright's health, (2) use the information to start changes needed to address health priorities, and (3) discuss with one another how we can start that change, and exchange diverse ideas.

Attendance:

The Wainwright Community Health Forum held on February 6, 2013 at the Wainwright Community Center had approximately 22 attendees. Doreen Leavitt, NSB Health Director, facilitated the evening's agenda. Heather Dingman, NSB Mayor's Office, presented findings from the Baseline Community Health Analysis Report, and Jeff Prater, Samuel Simmonds Memorial Hospital Administrator, discussed upcoming changes and expectations with the new hospital and answered questions regarding ASNA/SSMH issues.

Method:

The forum was setup using the community café model; three questions were asked to attendees, to whom they discussed with other attendees at their table; at each question, attendees would switch tables, with a different set of attendees. Table hosts were asked to ensure all table participants had voiced their ideas and comments, and wrote the main themes down.

Café Questions:

The questions asked were:

- 1) What does a healthy North Slope mean to you?
- 2) What assets does the North Slope have that encourages it to be a healthy community?
- 3) What do you think are the most important health issues we face as North Slope residents?

10 minutes were given to each question.

Outcome:

Discussions from all tables were recorded into an online site, www.wordle.net. The site generated a picture of words that were used most often, with larger words representing words



A list of activities discussed included getting involved in sports, taking part in cultural activities such as Eskimo dancing, whaling, hunting and carrying on a subsistence lifestyle, and taking part in community gatherings.

Social Problems: Drug/Alcohol Abuse, Smoking

"A social problem is a social condition or a pattern of behavior (such as substance abuse) that harms some individuals or all people in a society and that a sufficient number of people believe warrants public concern and collective action to bring about change" (Kendall, D. *Social Problems in a Diverse Society* (4th ed) Boston: Pearson, 2007, p. 4.).

Drug/alcohol abuse and smoking were stated as serious concerns by participants. It was suggested that more education about the consequences of drug/alcohol abuse and smoking should be taught in schools. It was also stated that there aren't any real resources for smokers who want to quit; the local Clinic turns to the hospital in Barrow, but the hospital does not have any resources for quitting smoking. This is seen as a real need that is not being met in Wainwright. The NSB Health Department just recently secured grant funding for a Tobacco Cessation Program and will work with all North Slope villages in getting the resources they need.

Eating Healthy: Subsistence Foods, Healthy Store-Bought Foods

The third most discussed topic was eating healthy – having access to subsistence foods, such as maktak/whale meat, fish, and caribou meat, as well as healthy store-bought foods, such as fresh produce. Having access to both was stated as very important for a healthy lifestyle. Participants voiced concerns over soda ("pop") consumption and the amount of junk food that are offered to youth, and overall bad eating habits.

Both in Atqasuk and in Wainwright, a similar topic arose comparing the old ways and modern times, concerning the importance of drinking water. It was a common practice to haul water from the ocean when it was frozen; it made people more active, and the fresh water was used to make coffee, tea, or to drink by itself. That practice isn't used anymore, and children are growing up drinking soda, energy drinks, and juice, because it's easily accessed.

Access to Healthcare/Health-Specific Concerns

In the interagency meeting, access to healthcare was a highlighted concern that most attendees had expressed. Challenges to access were cited: high airfare costs to Barrow limit residents from getting better healthcare, such as adequate prenatal care or medevacs. Residents are wary of using medevacs because of the potentially high costs they will incur. In most cases, improved communication between ASNA and the clinic staff could alleviate most of these concerns. Attendees stated they'd like to be better informed about health, in general, and asked about the possibility of having traditional healers with the new hospital. Hospital Administrator Jeff Prater talked about that possibility with attendees.

