



Alaska Native Health Board

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FACT SHEET

MYTH: *Alaska Natives drink more than non-Natives.*

FACT: There is no statistical difference between the binge drinking and heavy drinking rates of Alaska Natives and non-Natives.ⁱ

MYTH: *Most of the homeless people in Anchorage are Alaska Native.*

FACT: Alaska Natives are a minority (35%) of the Anchorage homeless population.ⁱⁱ

MYTH: *Homeless people in Anchorage are chronic substance abusers.*

FACT: Only a small percentage of Anchorage homeless (about 15%) are chronic substance abusers. By comparison, about 30% are in families with dependent children.ⁱⁱⁱ

MYTH: *Homelessness is caused by “in-migration” of Alaska Natives from rural areas.*

FACT: Homelessness results from people having to choose between housing and other basic needs.^{iv} One major factor is that the Alaska Department of Corrections discharges 8,000 persons per year with no housing placement. A major economic factor is average “fair market” rent vs. average wage: between 2002 and 2009, rents rose faster than wages in Anchorage, and homelessness increased.^v During about this same period of time, the percentage of Alaska Natives among the Anchorage homeless did not increase.^{vi}

MYTH: *Sexual assault against Alaska Native women is not a problem in Anchorage.*

FACT: The rate of sexual assaults against Alaska Native women in Anchorage for 2000-2003 was over 7 times the rate for White women. From 2003-2007, the rate of forcible rapes in Anchorage was nearly three times the national average.^{vii} So far in 2009, almost 400 sex crimes have been reported to APD—140 more than at this time last year.^{viii}

MYTH: *There isn't much that can be done to reduce homelessness in Anchorage.*

FACT: Increasing the supply of affordable housing is an effective way to reduce homelessness and save money.^{ix} A University of Pennsylvania study shows that supported housing for the homeless can save \$16,282 per person per year by reducing the use of public services such as shelters, police calls, emergency calls and incarceration.

ⁱ Alaska Department of Health & Social Services/CDC, “2007 Behavioral Risk Factor Survey,” pp 21-24.

ⁱⁱ Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, “Statewide Homeless Survey,” Summer 2007.

ⁱⁱⁱ Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, “Statewide Homeless Survey,” Summer 2007.

^{iv} Alaska Commission on Aging, “Position Paper on the Alaska Housing Trust,” February 2008.

^v Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority “Affordable Appropriate Housing Focus Area Presentation,” August 2009.

^{vi} Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, “Statewide Homeless Survey,” Summer 2007.

^{vii} Andre Rosay, PhD, University of Alaska-Anchorage Justice Center, “Sexual Violence in Alaska,” June 2009.

^{viii} State Trooper Col. Audie Holloway & APD Sgt. Ken McCoy, Ak Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing, August 2009.

^{ix} Anchorage Coalition on Homelessness, “Cost-Efficient Solutions to Homelessness,” September 2008.