COMMUNICATION IS KEY: AN ASSESSMENT OF OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION TO AID ALASKAN TRIBES IN THEIR SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT EFFORTS
Session: Poster II, Breakout Room #3
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Alaskan tribes have been left out in the cold to manage solid waste in their community with little government support. Rather than having a trash collecting service or city dump, 9 out of 10 Alaskan tribes have waste disposal dump sites in their communities (Zender). The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is providing resources but is lacking in several areas to help Alaskan tribes combat this issue. The purpose of this study is to help understand what communication and resources the EPA can provide to Alaskan tribes to aid in their waste management. I completed my internship with the EPA and worked in the Land, Chemical and Redevelopment Division. I gathered my data by conducting interviews with EPA, state, and tribal employees. I also collected data by analyzing EPA Tribal Environmental Plans (ETEP) created by tribes. The data showed a form of communication that was lacking was face-to-face interaction and that there was a significant amount of resources available to tribes weren’t all in one place making them hard to find. My data showed a need for more face-to-face communication which can be achieved by the EPA implementing a mentorship program where tribes who have had solid waste management success can be a resource to other tribes struggling. My findings also showed a need for all the resources provided by the EPA to be in one place, this can be accomplished by creating a baseline waste management guide for rural Alaskan tribes with all the resources EPA provides.