



# Building a Bridge: Bringing Cultural Relevance to Government-Run Environmental Engagement Programs in Alaska

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## Background:

- Alaska holds the largest Indigenous population in the U.S., located across many diverse linguistic and geographical regions (fig. 1).
- Alaska requires culturally relevant education in curricula, but it is still not widely implemented in Federal environmental science engagement programs.
- My research aims to identify promising approaches for creating culturally relevant programs in the Iñupiaq region of Alaska, through the NOAA Live! Alaska webinar series.

## Research Question:

What are promising approaches to navigate the similarities and differences in Indigenous Knowledge from different communities when creating environmental engagement programs in the Iñupiaq region of Alaska?

## Internship and Methods:

### Internship

Planned, facilitated, and moderated NOAA Live! Alaska webinars (fig. 2).  
Created a Story Map showing the reach and popularity of season one across Alaska.

Held interviews with Alaskan educators who attended past webinar(s).

Conducted a literature review on Iñupiaq culture and strategies for implementing culturally relevant education.

### Research Methods

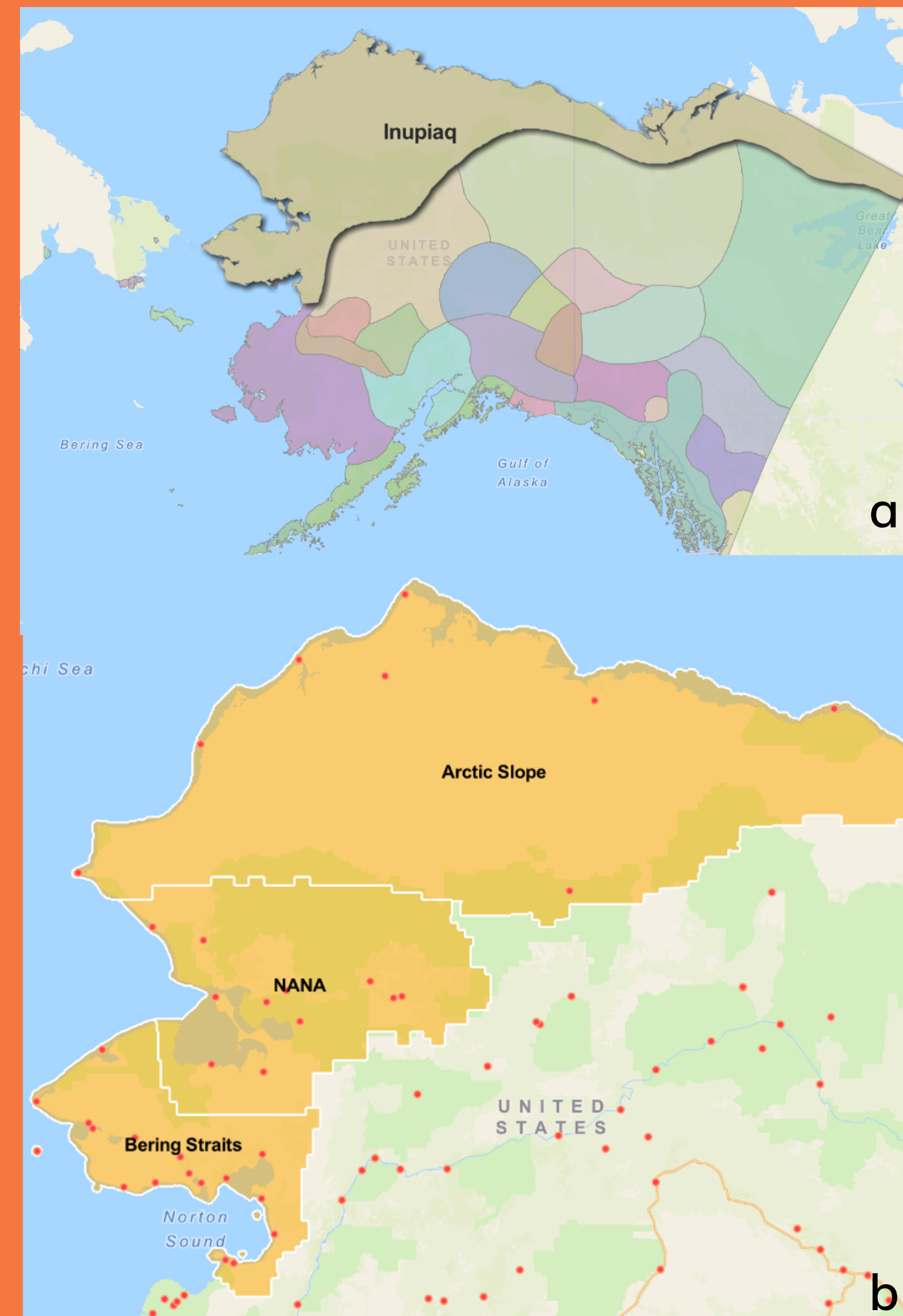


Figure 1: Panel (a) highlights the Iñupiaq region amongst the many linguistic and geographic regions of Alaska. Panel (b) shows the three Native corporations (shaded in yellow) of the Iñupiaq region along with 36 communities that (marked in red) reside there.

## Results:

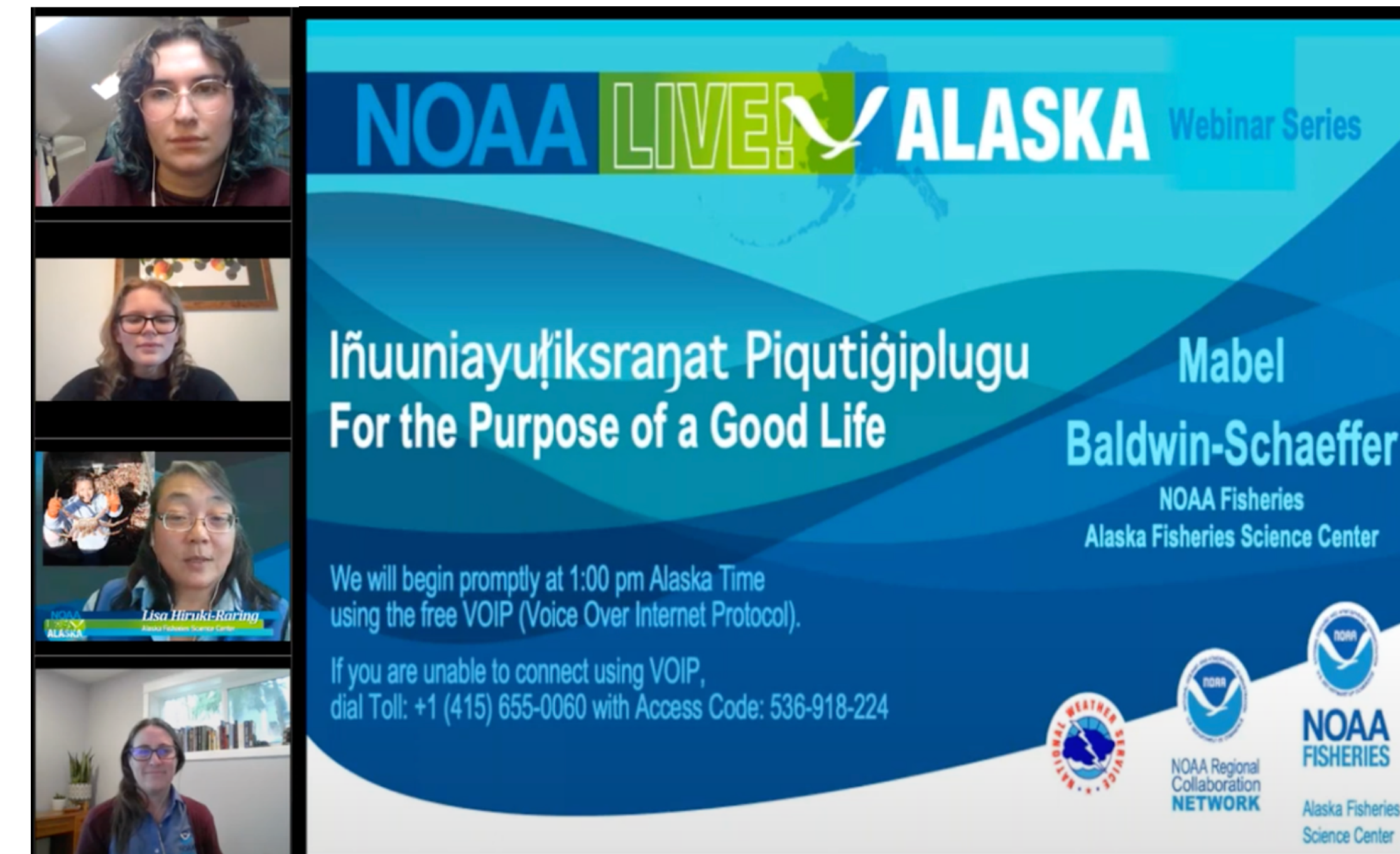


Figure 2: Image is from webinar I helped produce. According to interviewees, webinars that collaborated with community members and included messages that aligned with the local Iñupiaq cultural values were more popular than presentations from scientific researchers.

## Approaches:

- Collaborate with Iñupiaq Elders, community members, and educators (fig. 3).
- Work with presenters to acknowledge the Iñupiaq values of the community (fig. 2).
- Emphasize the connection between cultural practices to western science.
- Facilitate presenters to create their message in a storytelling narrative.
- Partner with educators to create relevant place-based supplemental activities.



Figure 3: Collaboration between Elders, community members, and educators is a promising method to navigate the cultural diversity of the Iñupiaq region.

## Implications:

- NOAA should implement the five approaches and continue to research culturally relevant education to avoid reproducing settler colonialism in their engagement programs.
- Acknowledging Indigenous Knowledge will build a bridge to future government collaboration and promote cultural healing across communities.
- Including diverse knowledge systems in environmental engagement creates a more well-rounded education and fosters cross-cultural understanding.

## Acknowledgements:

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