

The Maniilaq Tribal Doctors Program

Presented by:

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Services



MANIILAQ
ASSOCIATION





Maniilaq Association & its Service Area

- Maniilaq Association is the Tribal Health Organization for the 11 villages of the Northwest Arctic Borough and Point Hope.
- The Maniilaq Service Area encompasses a remote area of 39,000 square miles.
- The area has a population of approximately 8,000 residents, 70% of which are Alaska Native (Iñupiaq).
- The region is characterized for its extremely high costs of living and remote access.





Cheryl Richards

Tribal Doctor, Maniilaq Association

[Tribal Doctor video](#)

Tribal Doctors Program Overview

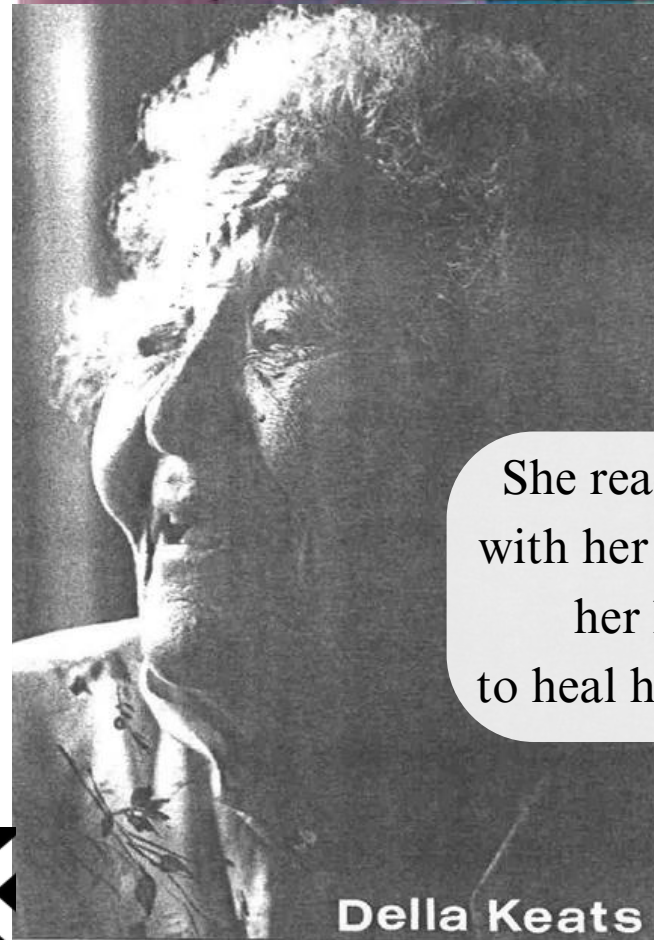
- The Tribal Doctors Program, based at Maniilaq Health Center, provides holistic care grounded in traditional Iñupiat medicine and healing practices.
- It was first established in 1975 by one of Alaska's most widely respected Tribal Doctors, Della "Puyuk" Keats.
- The program was established to expand access to culturally informed care for communities across the Maniilaq Service Area.



"If we love each other, try to help each other - it all works right."
-Della Keats

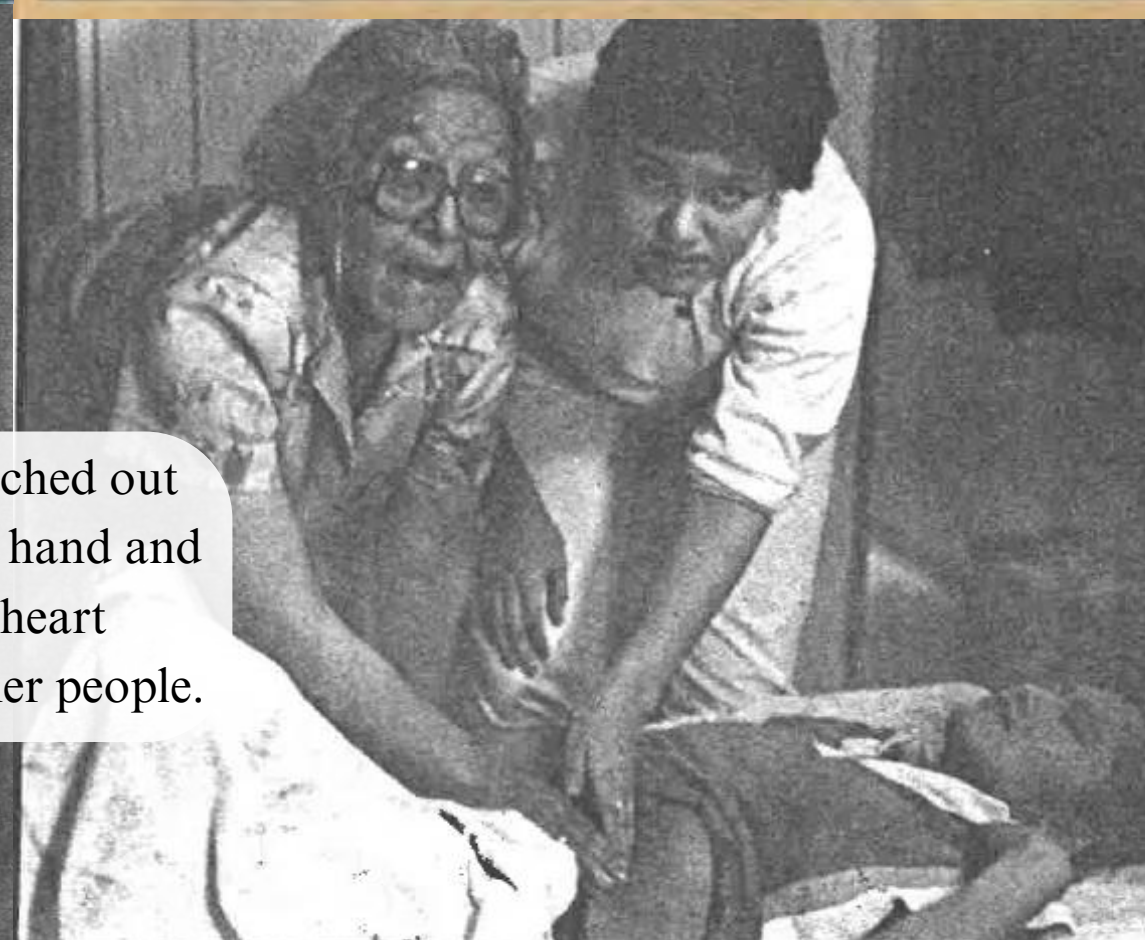


They call her Puyuk. She heals people.



She reached out with her hand and her heart to heal her people.

Della Keats





Addressing Rural Health Disparities

Geographic isolation:

Limited access to health care across Alaska's rural and remote communities due to distance, weather, and transportation barriers.

Provider constraints:

Persistent healthcare workforce shortages and provider turnover contribute to inconsistent care delivery and unequal health outcomes in rural Alaska.

Lack of culturally relevant care:

The introduction of Western medicine disrupted traditional Iñupiaq healing practices, creating cultural disconnects that can affect trust, engagement, and overall health outcomes.



Program Design & Implementation

Role of Tribal Doctor:

Serving as a health practitioner integrating traditional Iñupiat healing practices with the broader healthcare system to support patient wellness.

Scope of practice:

Providing traditional healing services and patient support in collaboration with medical providers.

Outpatient Integration:

The Tribal Health Doctor is embedded in the Outpatient Department, giving direct access to OPD, Inpatient, ER, and Long-Term Care as necessary.





Tribal Doctor Services

- Hands-on therapeutic techniques to relieve pain, and improve mobility.
- Address joint misalignment, sprains, and related physical injuries.
- Education on use of local herbs and plants to support wellness and healing.
- Culturally grounded support for pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum wellness.
- Guidance on nutrition, lifestyle practices, and preventive health rooted in Iñupiat knowledge and values.





Selection and Training

- The selection and training process
- 2-5 year training schedule
- Ability to travel throughout various regions of Alaska
- Considerations for replication



A wide-angle landscape photograph showing a gravel road curving through a vast, flat, green field. In the distance, a body of water is visible on the left, and a single wind turbine stands on the horizon. The sky is filled with heavy, grey clouds.

Questions:

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