



KAWERAK, INC.

REPRESENTING

Brevig Mission

Sitaisaq

Council

Diomedede

Injaliq

Elim

Niviarcaurluq

Gambell

Sivuqaq

Golovin

Chinik

King Island

Ugiuvak

Koyuk

Kuuyuk

Mary's Igloo

Qawiaraq

Nome Eskimo

Sitnasuak Inuit

Savoonga

Sivungaq

Shaktoolik

Saktuliq

Shishmaref

Qikiqtaq

Solomon

Anjutaq

St. Michael

Taciq

Stebbins

Tapraq

Teller

Tala

Unalakleet

Uᅇalaqᅇiq

Wales

Kinigin

White Mountain

Iᅇaᅇuik /

Nutchirviq

May 18, 2020

To: The Research Community
From: The Kawerak Board of Directors

Re: **Statement regarding research and related activities in the Bering Strait region under COVID-19 conditions**

Dear Colleagues,

Kawerak prioritizes the health, safety, and well-being of region communities above non-essential activities, such as research-related activities. As of today, all of the villages in the Bering Strait region have instituted travel bans and Elim, Unalakleet and the city of Nome all now require essential travel permits to enter the communities.

Kawerak Inc. is recommending that all research activities that involve travel to Bering Strait region communities, including Nome, or which require physical proximity to Bering Strait residents, be indefinitely postponed. This may change based on the developing COVID-19 situation, guidance issued by the CDC and state of Alaska, and guidance issued by the Tribal governments in our region.

Activities that we recommend the research community postpone or cancel include:

- Travel to Nome or Bering Strait villages
- Meetings in Nome or Bering Strait villages
- Meetings in locations like Anchorage which would require Bering Strait residents to leave their homes
- Research vessel crew changes in Nome
- Scheduling/rescheduling of meetings in Nome or Bering Strait villages before the end of 2020

Additionally, we always encourage researchers to engage with Tribal members as true and equal members of research teams - both now, and in the future. Our current situation is an opportunity to critically examine whether or not this is happening, and how it can more effectively happen in the future. Given the delay, postponement, and cancellation of travel for field research activities, we encourage the research community to find ways to embrace and leverage your rural and Tribal counterparts. However, any requests to assist with fieldwork must be able to be completed without the breaking of social-distancing guidelines, must include appropriate compensation and acknowledgements, and must include

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appropriate training. This may mean that not all field tasks can be completed this year as our communities work to remain safe and healthy.

All community-specific travel bans and other guidance should be followed. No travel to region communities should be planned or conducted without prior consultation with and approval from the designated village contact person (<https://kawerak.org/covid-19-response/>).

We ask that the research community follow these recommendations, and other community-specific guidance. Kawerak and the Bering Strait region values research activities and the research community, as well as our various partnerships and collaborations. During this time, we request that the research community respect and understand the particular challenges and dangers that Indigenous communities in our region (and other parts of the state) are facing. We also encourage the research community to consider ways to stay connected to us (Kawerak and communities), and to develop and enrich existing relationships to promote successful, efficient, and co-productive research to take place as we emerge from this challenging situation.

Sincerely,
KAWERAK, INC.



Frank Katchatag, Board Chair

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