Let My People Go Hunting and Gathering: How Alaskan Employees Create Sustainable Careers Balancing Traditional Heritage Work and Wage Employment

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Abstract

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Born to "walk in two worlds", Indigenous employees in Alaska sit at the intersection of dominant U.S. culture and Alaska Native culture. Drawing from in-depth interviews, a month-long ethnographic participant observation in rural Alaska, and archival data from employees and employers, I explore how workers conceptualize modern and traditional careers and sustainably navigate multiple possible livelihood strategies amid rapid change. From my analysis emerged two diverging individual approaches: In "cultural modeling ", workers view traditional work as an inherited right, prioritize subsistence hunting and gathering, and engage in employment for financial needs; in "cultural translating", workers view heritage practices as privileges to be earned, put wage work first, and only prioritize subsistence seasonally. I illustrate the importance of organizational and communal support in maintaining this balance, as well as the individual and societal consequences when the balance fails. This research advances theories in tradition, sustainable careers, culture, and Indigenous management literature by developing a theory to explain how workers balance traditional and modern work approaches. It examines how

individuals leverage temporal, ecological, organizational, and social resources to create sustainable careers that fulfill obligations across multiple domains, and demonstrates how societal culture shapes individuals' conceptualization of careers and daily domain prioritization decisions.

To mama,

who is always there for me,

even though she still asks: "Is it a business school that you're going to?"

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Table of Contents

"We need to work our wage job to buy toilet paper and gas for fishing. We need to do subsistence hunting and fishing to put food on the table" (8T)

"We were colonized to think our traditional ways of life are not jobs. But a job isn't just a western wage-earning job. It is also traditional harvesting, that took up a lot of time and created a lot of value" (23M)

INTRODUCTION

Management scholars have recognized the changing nature of work, examining topics such as gig work (Cropanzano et al., 2023), digital nomads (Prengler et al., 2024), and artificial intelligence (Leavitt et al., 2021). Such inquiries, however, predominantly examine WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic; Henrich et al., 2010) populations, overlooking contexts where many navigate the transition from traditional, heritage livelihood activities to wage employment (Whiteman & Cooper, 2011). Caught between tradition and modernity, many workers prefer to hold onto both to build a sustainable life (e.g., Chakrabarti, 2021; Mitra, 2015). Such dual engagement is especially prevalent in the Global South and among Indigenous[1] communities. For example, Tanzanian farmers and micro-entrepreneurs also work simultaneously as family planning counselors for nonprofit organizations, frequently fulfilling both roles simultaneously (Shulist et al., 2023). Nomadic and Pastoralist groups, from Maasai cattle herders in East Africa (Buzinde et al., 2014) to Bajau sea nomads of Southeast Asia (Stacey et al., 2018), increasingly participate in cultural tourism alongside their traditional practice and earn cash to equip their ancestral skills with modern tools. Religious and ethnic minorities like the Amish in North America (Hurst & McConnell, 2010) sell their arts and farm goods in modern markets while maintaining their valued practice of traditional farming and crafting. While an increasing number of workers incorporate wage employment to mitigate

[1] Indigenous peoples are defined as "Those, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories" (UN State of World's Indigenous Peoples, 2009, p. 4). I use "Indigenous" and "Native" interchangeably throughout.

financial risks and connect their community to a broader world, many choose to continue their efforts in the traditional heritage work[2], driven by deep-rooted values to preserve cultural traditions, inherit family trade, practice theology, and maintain ethical norms and customs (Godfrey, 2011).

Despite prevalent individual participation in both worlds, the industrialized world view dominating management research continues to merely consider urban wage employment as the default way to make a living (Kelliher et al., 2019). Traditional and heritage livelihood activities, such as Indigenous hunting and gathering, subsistence farming and herding, and small-scale artisan practices in emerging markets, are often considered less productive and legitimate (Bastien et al., 2023; Salmon et al., 2023). Such a narrow and cookie-cutter approach to work, however, has repeatedly caused cultural, identity, and environmental disruptions, leaving many sinking to the bottom of the economic ladder. For example, efforts to reduce unemployment among the Roma people in Europe created a cycle of government assistance dependency and displacement (O'Higgins & Ivanov, 2006), permanent settlement programs that forced nomadic herders to fixed locations in Asia have led to overgrazing and environmental degradation (Zhang et al., 2020). The Green Revolution in India and Mexico, which replaced indigenous crops with hybrid crops to alleviate poverty, resulted in excessive use of pesticides, increased farming expenses, and elevated debt and suicide among farmers (Eliazer Nelson et al., 2019; Harwood, 2020). Such efforts to "modernize" and eliminate traditional heritage work often leave many to fail in both worlds, as they "try to assimilate them into a society that was not ready to receive

[2] Research has examined traditional and heritage craft (Ocejo, 2017; Kroezen et al., 2020) —"craft occupations with stories histories that provide value through connection to tradition" (Fetzer, 2025). In this research, I expand this definition beyond crafting occupations, and use the term "traditional heritage work" or "traditional livelihood activities" to capture people's and communities' inherited occupation and way of work that is deeply connected to tradition

them, while taking away all the skills necessary to function in their own society." (Gagné, 1998, p. 363). As a result, such pressure to "modernize," paradoxically, only drives a deeper divide between the two worlds for many and leaves them on the edge of society.

Aiming to understand the lived experiences and explore interventions directly from those caught in the divide between modern and traditional work, this research investigates how and why Alaska—especially Alaska Native[3]—workers balance wage work in the cash economy and their traditional subsistence hunting and gathering efforts. By investigating tensions and approaches to manage these tensions, I seek to build a new theory about human sustainability at the often-contentious nexus between modern and heritage ways of working and living. Drawing on interviews, ethnographic observations, and archival data from workers in Alaska, I demonstrate how individuals navigate between the dominating U.S. culture and the traditional, local Alaska Native work culture to achieve career and life sustainability. My findings reveal two distinct individual pathways to navigate their new reality: those who adopt a more western view engage in what I term as *cultural translating,* prioritizing wage work and articulating traditional land-based culture and lifestyle to the western workplace to earn the right to subsist. Those who adopt a more Native view engage in *cultural modeling*, prioritizing subsistence harvesting and only focusing on wage work as needed to afford subsistence tools and mitigate financial uncertainty. Such individual efforts, however, are unsustainable without support from organizations and local communities. Workplaces and managers that generate seasonal or relevant jobs using heritage skills, provide flexibility, and embrace traditional values end up with grateful, loyal employees and thriving communities. At the same time, the lack of such

[3] I recognize that "Alaska Native" refers to a diverse range of cultural groups within Alaska, including groups such as the Aleuts, Iñupiat, Yup'ik, Cup'ik, Athabascan, and Tlingit and Haida peoples. Each with their unique culture and tradition. In this research, I use "Native", "Indigenous" and "Alaskan Native" interchangeably to describe all Indigenous peoples of Alaska for brevity and readability reasons.

organizational support causes immense cultural loss and financial precarity, both at the individual and the societal levels.

This study makes three theoretical contributions. First, by exploring the work and livelihood of individuals at the intersection of multiple cultural and economic systems, I adopt a tradition-as-resource view and illustrate how traditional heritage work can coexist with, or even act as a resource to modern wage work, providing cultural enrichment, renewal opportunities, and integrated meaning that eventually lead to a sustainable career. By viewing tradition as a resource rather than a constraint to sustainable careers, I challenge management literature's artificial dichotomy between either the "WEIRD" or the marginalized populations (Hamann et al., 2020; Pitesa & Gelfand, 2023), and explore the experience of those who live in between. Second, I contribute to the work-life and sustainable career literatures by showing how employees leverage temporal, ecological, and social resources across seemingly disparate life domains. By examining Indigenous subsistence—an activity that expands conventional work-home categorization—I illustrate how one endeavor can simultaneously fulfill multiple life domain needs, and challenge the compartmentalized assumption that efforts in different life domains, and engagement in western and traditional work, are mutually exclusive (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014). Third, I extend the literature on culture by examining how cultural values shape individual careers and daily work-life prioritization, and how organizational practices either undermine or reinforce cultural continuity. While full-time wage employment are assumed to be the default form of career path (Moen & Han, 2001), and work-life decisions are believed to be mainly made at the individual level (Leslie et al., 2019), I echo recent calls to develop culturally sensitive theories of work-life (Powell et al., 2009), and showcase how culture can plant deep roots in individual decisions. This research also reveals specific mechanisms through which

organizations can actively support employee sustainability while advancing societal equity and cultural preservation. By identifying these mechanisms, I offer paths for managing tensions between Western organizational demands and traditional cultural practices, demonstrating how organizations can become agents of cultural sustainability rather than acculturation. Overall, these insights echo recent calls to tackle societal grand challenges through management (George et al., 2016) and inductive research (Eisenhardt et al., 2016), extend management inquiry beyond the WEIRD population (Cheon et al., 2020), and enhance our understanding of sustainable careers in increasingly diverse and flexible work environments (Kossek et al., 2025).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditional Heritage Work Around the World

Shaped by historical, cultural, environmental, and economic factors, traditional heritage work can be formed at the family, community, or racial-ethnical level and becomes closely tied to one's identity and communal culture. Such heritage work is often the default livelihood activity among Indigenous communities—numbering more than 370 million in around 90 countries around the world (UN State of World's Indigenous Peoples, 2009). With related knowledge and practices passed down across generations, heritage work profoundly impacts individuals' choice of livelihood, as youth socialized within these contexts typically anchor their career trajectories to community expectations and family traditions. For example, pastoralism is a way of life that involves raising and herding livestock while migrating in search of fresh pasture and water following seasonal patterns. Migratory pastoralism is practiced in 25% of the land areas across the globe (Nori et al., 2008). In regions with erratic climates and limited farming resources, pastoralism has long been the default career in many communities: from horse breeders in central Asia (Irvine, 2022), Sami reindeer herders in Scandinavia (Axelsson-

Linkowski et al., 2020), Maasai cattle breeders in sub-Sahara Africa (Spear & Waller, 1993), to llama and alpaca breeders in the Andes (Westreicher et al., 2007). Other forms of traditional heritage work include fishing in the Pacific islands and Arctic regions, farming and woodworking in Amish communities, and subsistence farming and entrepreneurship efforts across rural areas in the less industrialized world (Viswanathan et al., 2012).

Notably, beyond their economic function for survival, such traditional heritage work also accrues deeper cultural and identity meanings over time, making them a critical way to communities' sense of self. Many Indigenous groups derive their identity from such tradition, so much so that heritage work is reflected in the naming of the group or ethnicity. The Massai people in Africa are referred to as "people of the cattle" (Galaty, 1982), the Tlingit of Canada and Alaska are named as "people of the sea/tides" (Thornton, 2011), while the Arctic Iñupiat people identify themselves as "people of the whale" (Sakakibara, 2012). Research demonstrates that even in more industrialized nations, such traditional work can still improve psychological well-being and strengthen community resilience by maintaining social ties and collective knowledge systems (Poe et al., 2015). Recent trends, such as globalization, climate change (Berman & Kofinas, 2004), and technological advancement (Axelsson-Linkowski et al., 2020; Mamedov et al., 2016), however, present significant challenges to the continued practice of such heritage work and force many to negotiate priorities between either their past cultural heritage or future economic adaptation. When caught between the mainstream and one's cultural tradition, many face the challenge of maintaining and shifting between the two, resulting in increased responsibilities and decreased well-being (Haar & Martin, 2022).

Tradition as Constraints and Resources

Tradition, defined as "consciously transmitted beliefs and practices expressing identification with a shared past" (Dacin et al., 2019, p. 359), was historically considered as a constraint and "antithetical to modernity" (Kant, 1784/2009), This perspective characterized traditions as antiquated and static social artifacts that elites use to hold the ordinary people back from advancement and innovation (Rosen, 1988). Anthropologists distinguished the "traditional societies" that they do field work in from the "modern societies" they originated from (Jacobs, 2007). In this perspective, tradition constitutes the barrier modern society must conquer before advancement, and tradition followers are conceptualized as passive actors who accept habits and customs without rational thoughts and reflection (Durkheim & Coser, 1997).

While some still hold this perspective, social scientists have increasingly shifted from such a "tradition-as-constraint" view to a more "tradition-as-resource" view (Dacin et al., 2010; Shils, 2006; Soares, 1997). Rooted in the wisdom accumulated through generations, tradition is considered a dynamic resource actively adapted and guarded by custodians (Shils, 2006). Rather than being the opposite of modernity, traditions under this lens can exist alongside modernity, and multiple traditions can coexist (Gusfield, 1967). Critically, traditions are actively managed resources and are consciously selected and maintained by their custodians—those who invest in ensuring the continuity and carrying the custom forward (Eyerman & Jamison, 1998). In this way, tradition serves as an essential foundation for group identity, especially in work settings. For example, French chefs derive collective identity from the French culinary customs (DeSoucey, 2010), while custodians of a declining tradition can actively resurrect a collective identity of bystanders by creating authenticating experiences and advocating for social engagements (Howard-Grenville et al., 2013). This creates a reciprocal relationship between custodians and traditions. On the one hand, custodians consciously choose and continue the

traditions that fulfill their needs. On the other hand, traditions carry symbolic meanings, which help explain custodian behaviors in the past while guiding behaviors in the future. In organizational settings, individuals use organizational tradition and history to communicate and create community (Howard-Grenville et al., 2013), select rituals that allow for institutional maintenance, such as the British class system (Dacin et al., 2010), while entrepreneurs and brands derive legitimacy and authenticity by invoking history in their storytelling (Hatch & Schultz, 2017).

The "Modernization" of Traditional Work

These two competing conceptualizations of tradition manifest in diverging responses to traditional heritage work across organizational contexts and communities around the world. As suggested above, many societies' first reaction towards heritage work is to "modernize" it by introducing new technologies and seemingly more productive ways of livelihood to replace the "outdated" way of life (Sanders & Lynam, 1981). One example is many countries' organized effort to replace nomadic pastoralism with permanent settlements and farming practices in the past decades (MacKay et al., 2014). Key features of pastoralism involve seasonal mobility and shared common property of natural land resources, which directly oppose many societies' economic ideals about modernity that feature permanent residence and private land ownership (International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, 2022). As a result, governments have "nationalized," confiscated, and privatized grasslands and forests and built infrastructure for permanent settlement (Fratkin, 1997). Research documents how these one-size-fits-all "modernizing efforts" result in disastrous individual, communal, and environmental outcomes. Numerous herders are displaced from the land they know, connect with, and derive meaning from. They suffer from decreased dignity and self-determination, and have no choice but to find

temporary work in the urban area (Haug, 2002) or become routinely dependent on government assistance (Nori et al., 2008). Further, the often dryer and seasonally erratic climate makes farming practices unsustainable, leaving areas under the nomad settlement policy with severe grassland degradation (Zhang et al., 2020). In extreme cases, such forced settlement can lead to catastrophic ecological outcomes, including the draining of the Aral Sea, formerly the fourth-largest lake in the world, in merely 50 years (Micklin, 1988). On the contrary, migratory pastoralism has been found to be between two to ten times more productive than ranching alternatives in the dry lands across Africa and is critical for ecosystem health and sustainability (Davies & Hatfield, 2007). When traditional pastoralism is allowed with group property ownership, the grasslands are much less degraded than those shifted to permanent settlements (Nori et al., 2008).

Such "modernizing" approaches towards traditional work extend beyond pastoralism. For example, the Green Revolution was an initiative adopted by many Asian and Latin American governments and policymakers to replace indigenous crops with high-yielding crops and fertilizers to alleviate hunger and poverty. Yet in India, the increased dependence on chemical fertilizers increased debt and suicide among small farmers, caused the extinction of indigenous crops, and created an economic crisis that forced farmers to abandon their traditional livelihood and turn to other occupations (Eliazer Nelson et al., 2019). In Mexico, the fertilizers damaged soil fertility, threatened animal and human health, and led to deforestation (Harwood, 2020), forcing an estimated twenty-five million peasants out of the rural communities into Mexican cities or the U.S. between 1950 and 1976 (Sanders & Lynam, 1981).

Coexistence of Traditional and Wage Work

Given traditional heritage work's economic, environmental, cultural, and identity significance, many participate in both wage employment and heritage work at the same time. Indigenous groups in the Arctic, from the Inuit in Greenland to Iñupiat in Alaska, maintain the practice of subsistence fishing and hunting on ancestral lands (Kuokkanen, 2011) while also seeking cash income by holding seasonal or full-time work (Huskey et al., 2004). Villages in the Peruvian Amazon depend both on forest foods and cash income for food security (Begazo-Curie & Vranken, 2025), and Sami reindeer herders in Europe continue their herding practice with handcraft, real estate investment, and tourism-related activities for income (Dana & Åge Riseth, 2011). Rural subsistence farmers in Asia work on farming following crop cycles while turning to seasonal migration to urban areas to subsidize family income during less busy seasons (Mobarak & Reimão, 2020). Having to work in such a dual reality with diverging cultural expectations and economic systems, however, may lead to extra burdens on the individual. Māori scientists, for example, have to bear extra responsibility at work and shift between cultures with increased workload (Haar & Martin, 2022). This raises critical research questions: how do individuals positioned at these cultural, historical, and economic crossroads balance and negotiate between traditional and modern spheres to achieve a sustainable livelihood? To answer this question, I undertake a qualitative, inductive study to capture how Alaskan employees navigate between wage employment and traditional subsistence hunting and gathering activities, as well as the support that enables and sustains this.

METHOD

Taking an inductive approach rooted in grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), I collected data through semi-structured interviews, ethnographic participant observation (Angrosino, 2009), and archival records to achieve methodological bricolage (Pratt et al., 2022) and build trustworthiness for this study. Initially inspired by my experience working and doing subsistence in rural Alaska, I first conducted forty-six semi-structured interviews with employees from diverse racial, demographic, and geographical areas across the state, observed a week-long online work training for Alaskan employees, while also analyzing the archival data from both informal subsistence reporting and formal organizational archives. Second, to unpack the dynamic balance and prioritization process, I then conducted a month-long in-person participant observations of work, subsistence, recreational, community service, and religious activity in three rural Alaskan village in the summer of 2024, when individuals frequently stay active for 18 to 20 hours daily to engage in multiple activities to maximize the extended daylight. Such inductive approach is ideal for studying under-theorized concepts such as subsistence hunting and fishing and non-wage work (Edmondson & Mcmanus, 2007), and for addressing "how" and "why" questions (Pratt & Bonaccio, 2016).

Context

Alaska is one of the most recent U.S. states and is the largest state by area. Three key factors make Alaska a suitable context for understanding sustainability, culture, and the interaction between traditional work and wage work.

First, Alaska is home to 229 federally recognized tribes (U.S. General Services Administration, n.d.) and has the highest percentage of Indigenous population in the U.S. It is one of the most culturally diverse states with a strong native cultural heritage (U.S. Census

Bureau, 2020). Under the Alaska Native umbrella, a total of 11 native cultural groups speak 20 official indigenous languages across the state, bringing an observable cultural influence on employees' occupational and career choices. The coexistence of Alaskan Native cultures and U.S. national culture provides an ideal setting to understand and compare the impact of subgroups and mainstream national culture on individual approaches to sustainability, and how one navigates traditional and wage employment.

Second, Alaska's unique dual economy—where a cash economy and a subsistence economy coexist and complement each other (Huskey, 1990)—provides a natural setting where individuals can choose more than one way to work and provide. Subsistence is a widespread traditional practice worldwide that involves small-scale fishing, farming, and gathering activities (Banbury et al., 2015; Vergara & Barton, 2013). Subsistence in Indigenous communities, especially in North America, refers to how "individuals produce, using culturally relevant and traditional methods, goods or services that are predominantly consumed by their own household or used for noncommercial trade or barter" (American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Service, 1973). Despite being located in the wealthiest country in the world, Alaska is mainly rural, with 86% of the local communities not accessible by the road network (*Alaska | RURAL.Gov*, 2023). Such duality of urban and rural, cash and subsistence, allows many individuals to customize careers to suit individual needs. Data indicate that up to 80% of rural Alaska residents partake in both wage employment and subsistence activities (Goldsmith, 2007), with subsistence providing approximately 75% of food in rural communities (Mitra, 2015). Such dual work engagement allows a unique parallel to explore how individuals customize their careers and prioritize multiple traditional and modern livelihood activities for cultural balance and enrichment.

Third, spanning a vast area, Alaska has one of the most extreme climates and physical environments on earth. The state has long, harsh winters and short summers with extremely long daylight. In some areas, the sun doesn't set for more than two months in the summer (Climate Prediction Center, NOAA, 2025). Residents routinely experience dramatic seasonal shifts in their work and non-work life, exposing them to complex working conditions, highly seasonal workload and productivity fluctuation, and varied food intakes accordingly (Goldsmith, 2007). Such extreme weather can disrupt work and sleep schedules, requiring flexibility and resilience from both workers and employers. Lacking behind in infrastructure development, Alaska residents navigate one of the highest costs of living in the country (Council for Community & Economic Research, 2023) and one fifth of all census areas in Alaska are considered "food deserts"—meaning a significant percentage of the population is low-income and at least 33% have limited access to a grocery store (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2025). Such extreme climate, limited infrastructure, and high cost of living make balancing multiple work engagements critical for food security and human sustainability. Overall, the strong influence of the natural environment and seasonal change made Alaska an ideal context for adopting a temporal lens on how individuals balance different work and incorporate environmental factors to build a sustainable life.

Data Collection

I collected data from December 2022 to July 2024, resulting in 46 semi-structured interviews, 30 days of continuous in-person participant observation, 7 days of online observation, and over 300 pages of archival materials. I triangulate between interviews, field notes, and archival data to build trustworthiness.

Exploratory data. Early in the process in 2020, I spent one month as a seasonal worker in Tokeen, Alaska. My daily work included both a cash component by helping at the small family oyster farm to aid the commercial sale of oysters to restaurants, and a subsistence component by assisting in berry and mushroom picking, salmon filleting, and log splitting for winter storage. I had informal, unstructured interviews with six community members, inquired about what subsistence means and why it is still necessary, and prioritized tasks based on weather conditions. These initial insights provided the initial awareness of such a dual engagement lifestyle and the challenges of living such a lifestyle. Photos and diaries from this time were referenced later when building the formal interview protocol.

Interviews. I started the primary data collection by conducting semi-structured interviews with employees who hold wage work and reside in Alaska. Forty-six participants were recruited via emails to a statewide Alaska Community email subscriber list, physical flyer handouts at one key employee conference in Anchorage, online via Alaska-themed social media groups on Facebook and Reddit, and snowball sampling. All interviews except one were conducted remotely via Zoom or phone calls by me. 59% of participants identify as Alaskan Natives[4], 63% live off the road system, and 40% are male. Participants represent broad ethnicities and geographic locations (See Table 1 for participant demographics). All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim, lasting between 40 to 127 minutes.

Ethnographic Study and Field Notes. I conducted a month-long in-person participant observation in three rural Alaska communities with dominant Iñupiat, Athabascan, and Non-Alaska-Native cultures in 2024. I started the first fourteen days in a coastal Iñupiat village (Site A) off the road system in Northwestern Alaska, located 3 hours via bush plane from Anchorage,

[4] six non-Native participants live in mixed racial households with Alaskan Natives (often via marriage), making 70% of all participants living in Alaska Native households.

Alaska. The village has two small grocery stores and one gas pump. All goods are either shipped in via barge (twice in the summer) or plane. I stayed with a family of six that consisted of one non-Native parent, one Native parent, three of their children, and one child's partner. One member holds permanent full-time employment, while the other all hold seasonal, contractor jobs or internships. All family members routinely participate in subsistence hunting and gathering activities, and the family collectively owns three ATVs (for winter hunting and trapping), two cars, and two boats (for crabbing, seal hunting, and fishing). The day length was close to 23 hours during the field work in June. The family routinely stayed awake from 7 am to 3 am the next morning to fit in their subsistence activities after work (e.g., one trip to harvest herring eggs required all to stay up until 5 am the next morning). I observed their wage work schedules and recovery routines, and participated in subsistence activities such as fishing, herring egg harvesting, crabbing, seal oil processing, and plant gathering (beach greens, Eskimo potatoes, wild rhubarb, willows). I also attended key family, community, and religious events, including a funeral, potluck, religious ceremonies, youth camp, and community service such as trash clean-up and fundraising.

I then flew to Fairbanks and got picked up by the family from the second site (Site B), an Athabascan village accessible via a two-hour dirt road in Interior Alaska. Both family members hold full-time jobs, but the nature of their employment (e.g., teacher) allows flexibility to engage in subsistence full-time in the summer months. The day length was close to 20 hours, and the family routinely stayed awake from 10 am to 4 am the next morning. This was both because of their flexibility with work, and that the cooler temperature and fewer mosquitos made nighttime an ideal time to work on projects such as cutting and organizing wood. I participated in

subsistence fishing, logging, a funeral, and a potlatch, visited elders in the village, and conducted ethnographic interviews with residents.

I then went to the third family via a 1.5-hour car ride on a dirt road, then a three-hour boat ride to the last site (Site C) with eight dogs and two family members. One member holds a full-time job with summer off, while the other takes on seasonal, one-off jobs. The family usually lives in a dry cabin[5] they rented in the small town, but during summer months they were building their own property on a five-acre plot of land in the woods that is only accessible by boat. I joined them for a week when they set up camp on a nearby riverbank. Daily tasks involved cutting, peeling, and logging trees, using their dog team to help with pulling heavy equipment, and fishing and mushroom hunting to supplement food for themselves and the dogs. The day length was close to 20 hours, and the family routinely worked between 10 am to 7 pm. They boated back to town for food and gas (for construction equipment such as the chainsaw) resupplies every other week, and stayed in camp the entire summer before wage work starts again.

Appendix B shows selected images and activities during the participant observation at site A. Over 300 pages of field notes were taken via voice memo, three physical notebooks, and video recordings. Content ranges from daily work routines and schedules, general happenings in the community, informal interviews with host families and community members, as well as reflection of my own physical and mental states before and after subsistence and work.

To better understand the employer support and expectations, I conducted a seven-day online observation by joining an online training program hosted by an Alaskan organization

[5] A small house without running water. The city offers free water stations for residents to fill up, and the family have a small solar panel to access limited electricity at selected times.

(hereinafter "Team Bridge[6]") that onboarded and shared wage work best practices with rural Alaskan employees. After gaining initial insights, I also conducted an in-person focus group interview with six employees from Team Bridge to member check (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to explore the common conflict they help solve when training employees from rural Alaska communities, perceptions and attitudes about careers, and how organizations adapt to support employees' cultural and subsistence needs across seasons.

Archival data. To sensitize to the context, I engage with archival data throughout the data collection process. Archival data include Alaska work and subsistence-themed memoirs, employees' family subsistence archives, public announcements on subsistence and employment information at local information bulletins, as well as selected Native Corporations' reports on native lifestyle, subsistence, and the rural economy. I also reference extensive visual resources; for instance, one participant featured on National Geographic's documentary *Life Below Zero: First Alaskans* shared the documentary, and another participant who writes Alaska Native-themed children's books shared writings on subsistence and rural living.

Data Analysis

I undertake the active categorization approach (Grodal et al., 2021) to generate and refine theoretical categories by moving between data collection, data analysis, and existing literature. Specifically, my analysis evolved in three overlapping phases: coding of interviews, further categorization through ethnographic field notes, and coming back to the literature. Figure 2 mapped out the iterative process.

[6] All names for places and organizations during the primary data collection are pseudonyms for the purpose of confidentiality. I anonymize the place names and list the region instead, as villages often have small population (e.g., one village of the ethnography has a total of 150 residents), and identities are easily detectable in such small communities with job titles such as mayor. This organization's primary goal is to help onboard and train rural area employees, clarify best practices for their work responsibilities, and bridge the cultural difference between rural Alaska communities and more western-oriented organizational rules.

I began the analysis by open coding the interviews line by line, episode by episode, focusing on participants' narratives around work demands, routines, and environmental influences of working in Alaska. At this stage, I adhered to the data and used participants' own terms (Charmaz, 2014). After this, I engaged in axial coding, where I drew from existing theory and synthesized segments of data by clustering themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

As themes solidified, I recognized the need for workers to engage in both wage work and subsistence, and their constant effort in balancing the two domains. The data suggests two diverging paths: one emphasizes wage labor as the primary obligation and fits subsistence in after work hours, while another treats subsistence as a time-sensitive, culturally essential practice to which wage labor must yield. Throughout the coding, I used memos and biweekly discussions with my committee to reflect on participants' framing of time, energy, and purpose (Locke et al., 2022). However, the interview data skewed towards the first choice, and the data categorizations showcased why and how people prioritize wage work to fit subsistence, without a detailed explanation of the second paths. For example, themes about those prioritizing subsistence are either not directly from the participants (e.g., I have a coworker quitting the job so they can have time to go seal hunting), or only happened in the past for participants (e.g., When I lived in the villages, I went from goose camp to fish camp to moose camp). Such skewness is partially due to the online and remote format of the interviews: interview data suggests that those who prioritize subsistence often have less stable access to the internet and are reluctant to commit to appointments in advance due to frequent schedule changes, thus it is challenging to recruit them via online methods. With these insights, I decided to conduct in-person participant observation to 1) understand why and how some workers prioritize subsistence over wage work and 2) document first-hand the physical and mental outcomes of such a balance (Spradley, 2016). As a

result, I selected ethnographic sites of different infrastructure (i.e., site A doesn't have access to road but site B and C do), cultural background (i.e., site A is Iñupiat, site B is Athabascan, while site C is non-Native), and individual work formats (i.e., Sites' host families include members with full-time, permanent jobs, and those with part-time jobs) (Spradley, 1979).

Upon returning from the ethnography, I focused on the puzzle of "doing both subsistence and wage work" and selectively coded the fieldnotes (Locke et al., 2015). Specifically, following Grodal et al's approach, I first split the themes into two categories of "wage-first path" and "subsistence-first path", and dropped the categories on recreational subsistence (e.g., hunting for fun; growing vegetables for ethical reasons) due to its irrelevance to the puzzle (Grodal et al., 2021). Then, I contrasted and related the two paths to establish why workers choose those them, and sequenced each path to connect how they use individual adaptation, organizational, and ecological resources to balance. The field notes captured the embodied rhythms, behavioral adaptations, and the support needed for both paths, filling out the previously missing picture of the subsistence-first path. My own fatigue, near-death experiences, shifting sleep cycles, and mental state during the participant observation also served as reflexive data (Cunliffe, 2003) that underscored how difficult it is to maintain productivity under such extreme seasonal conditions.

As insights coalesced, I connected all themes in the dynamic process and fit with each other to form an overall explanation. To achieve this, I engaged in multiple rounds of memo writing, team discussion, and member checks (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014) with stakeholders both from organizations and employees' communities (Spradley, 2016). The data suggest that while the dominant culture considers a wage work career the default, such cultural dominance is challenged in societies at cultural intersections like Alaska, with the dominating work ideal accepted to varying degrees among Alaskan Native employees. Such different cultural

endorsements shape whether they anchor on either wage work or subsistence, influencing their prioritization pattern throughout the year and their career path. The culturally anchored "why" of subsistence subsequently influences "how" they prioritize—either via "cultural translating" to earn the right to subsist after wage work, or via "cultural modeling" to make money via work so they can better exercise their inherent right of subsistence. Through cycles of iteration and constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I analyzed how each group secured support (e.g., flexible work policies, supervisor understanding, peer support), and the organizational and personal costs when such supports were absent. Archival documents and training materials further contextualized these processes from employers' perspectives. See Figure 1 for the emergent process model.

FINDINGS

My analyses revealed why employees choose both subsistence and wage work, and why it is difficult to participate fully in both. Subsistence hunting and gathering is often the earliest way of work that Native individuals are exposed to, while western education and wage employment come after due to legal and cash demands. As a result, individuals navigate the tension by prioritizing one while maintaining access to the other. They determine whether to passively adapt to wage work policy or proactively advocate for subsistence rights, and navigate temporal, ecological, and social resources to enable both. Beyond these individual efforts, organizations and communities provide critical support to allow access to the non-prioritized domain. One group of workers—especially women, individuals from families prioritizing western education, and those from communities with greater access to wage jobs—tend to prioritize wage employment. Others, especially men, those who grew up in families prioritizing cultural practices, and those from communities with few wage jobs, tend to lean heavily into

subsistence. The former engage in cultural translating to earn the right to do subsistence after first completing their work, while the latter consider subsistence an inherent right and engage in cultural modeling to share subsistence knowledge, supplementing with flexible, seasonal, or one-off jobs. However, such prioritization might shift throughout their lifetime due to financial needs and organizational supports[7]. Of note, it's easier to change from cultural translating to modeling, due to the accumulated credentials one can build when translating, such as advanced education and employment history. Organizational and community support sustain both paths. When not supported, those doing cultural translating have to give up subsistence and suffer from cultural loss, while those doing cultural modeling face financial precarity, which perpetuates the economic inequality between Native and non-Native communities. When supported, employees are grateful, loyal, and productive at work while staying culturally enriched and embedded. Below, I first outline why most Alaskan workers feel the urge to do both subsistence and wage work, before diving into what shapes their diverging paths and how they navigate each path sustainably. I also outline how organizations and non-indigenous stakeholders engage in "cultural observing", where they respond to such efforts with varying levels of approval.

First Comes Subsistence

Termed "our way of life" (30T, 39M) or "living off the land" (12T, 16T, 26T, 39M, 41M, 46T)[8], subsistence hunting and gathering is how generations of Native families put food on the table. My findings suggest that family and community focus on this tradition means youth are exposed to the fishing-cutting table way earlier than western education or job training. Even

[7] We signal participants strategies by adding the T (translating) or M (modeling) after their assigned participant number. For example, if participant no. 12 chose cultural translating at the time of the interview, they're labeled as "12T". Participants who don't actively participate in subsistence, but are influenced by others' subsistence practices, are labeled with O to indicate cultural observing.

[8] While both subsistence and wage work are important for all Native workers, the importance of subsistence is repeatedly mentioned by those doing both cultural translating and modeling, while the importance of wage work, especially its non-economic significance, is mainly noted by those doing cultural translating.

today, subsistence carries economic, relational, and cultural significance across most Alaskan communities.

Traditional Way of Economic Survival. For most of history, subsistence activities that harvest food and supplies directly from the land were the only way that Alaskan Natives worked: "You could move me back to 8000 years ago, and the landscape might be a little bit different, but my people would still be picking berries." (23M) This ancestral influence shapes subsistence's role as the first way of work today. As one participant noticed, "Most people's grandparents don't have western jobs." (6O)

Subsistence activities have been fundamental for Native communities' food security and quality. Different subsistence opportunities abound all year round (3O, 5M, 6O, 8T, 14M, 15M, 18M, 23M, 24M, 25M, 26T, 28M, 29M, 31T, 33M, 35M, 38M, 39M, 40M, 41M, 42T, 45T, 46T): Ice fishing, trapping, caribou hunting, and wood gathering in the winter; marine mammal, bird, egg, and beaver hunting in the spring; fishing and berry picking in the summer; moose, caribou, and more fishing in the fall. Hunting and gathering bring food security, as the remoteness of many communities means money can't necessarily buy food from the store with cash, since Alaska is "at the bottom of the supply chain." (34T) One informant emphasized, "People from out of state think the villagers can just buy things. But they don't want money because they can't do anything with money. You can't buy what you need when what you need isn't accessible." (4T) Transportation and supply chain disruptions are frequent, as *"*The flights are always unpredictable, while the barge only comes in 2-3 times a season to coastal communities, and both are heavily dependent on the weather.*"* (Field note, day 6) Commonplace weather disruptions made food from the store highly unreliable. At its extreme, emergencies can completely shut down a community's access to store-bought food: "During COVID, villages

were on complete lockdown, and they couldn't fly out or fly in unless it was for medical reasons." (30T) As a result, subsistence food from the land keeps the communities alive in uncertain times when stores fail: "We had a lot of soup and salmon during the pandemic. We weren't worried because stores didn't catch much salmon anyway." (44T)

Even when food is stocked on the grocery store shelf, the high cost makes it difficult for families to rely solely on store-bought food. Many describe the price of groceries as "Astronomical (15M)" and the motivation for subsistence as "Survival (14M)", as "One moose can feed a family of six for an entire year, and that's a lot of money when you're paying $13.99 a gallon for milk." (8T) Many participants reported subsistence as the primary source of food (5M, 8T, 14M, 15M, 18M, 23M, 24M, 25M, 26T, 28M, 29M, 31T, 33M, 35M, 38M, 39M, 40M, 41M, 42T, 45T) while store-bought food is supplemental: "90% of our food comes from subsistence, our meat is moose or muskox or caribou…the only things we buy from the store are bread, milk, eggs, butter, and condiments." (38M)

Importantly, subsistence food is of much higher quality than food from the grocery store. Village stores are stacked with shelf-stable provisions, making nutritious and fresh food a luxury. Food directly from the surrounding land and water affords improved health and quality of life in the rural area. "Subsistence made our quality of life so much better. Being able to feed my kids fresh salmon and fresh moose every year, that's eating like rich people up here, it's eating better than the rich people because it's all fresh." (20T) Most Native participants grew up on such food rather than store-bought food, so they find the taste particularly satisfying. "It's what we call our native food; it keeps us going and it's more nutritious than store-bought food. It has more essentials to keep us going longer, and some can be used as medicine, too." (24M) Such nutrition and health benefits make subsistence irreplaceable, even when one can afford to live solely on

wage jobs. One participant mentioned, “I went fishing the other day after working two jobs and two nights in a row. I have to do it because store food is not good for you. Subsistence food is good for our bodies.” (45T)

Relational Practice with Family and Community. My findings suggest that generations of practicing subsistence activities make it a critical relational practice within Indigenous communities, extending beyond mere economic necessity. Participants consistently described how subsistence served as a binding communal ritual that established and maintained social connections. These relationships, in turn, facilitated their effectiveness in wage employment contexts. One participant explained: “My job involves teaching and pastoring, which are both people positions. In order to do those roles effectively, I had to be a participant in the community. That's why I went hunting even though I didn't get a whole lot of enjoyment out of hunting. Because that was part of the experience, you've got to participate in the community lifestyle.” (35M) The collaborative nature of subsistence made relationship building a necessity within harsh environmental conditions. One informant note: “you should never be alone on the tundra; you could run out of gas, get lost, fall through the ice, or bump your head and break something.” (28M) Another mentioned: “The Arctic is a place you have to rely on your neighbors to survive.” (Field note, day 15). Over time, subsistence emerged as the essential mechanism for social connection across families and communities.

Subsistence is how one connects with their families. Parents insist on instilling hunting and gathering as family traditions in children, and many grew up doing subsistence as their first form of responsibility. One mentioned, “My family has always done it, and I want to share this with my children and nieces and nephews.” (23M) Subsistence processes, rituals, and language are taught to kids from a young age, as “I need to show and teach my kids traditional values via

subsistence. It's important to continue that traditional way of life." (44T) Kids start their path to becoming hunters or fishermen by being carried around to fishing grounds: "You throw the baby in the baby backpack and haul them down to the river with you." (20T) As they grow older, they assist with simple tasks: "I was about nine when my mom started showing me how to cut a fish and how to braid the fish." (28M) In adolescence, many become independent hunters as they complete this critical "rite of passage, where you have a role and take care of your family." (36T) Youth build friendships by building their skills together: "You start hunting by going with friends", (42T) while adults often form friend groups to make hunting and gathering an important social routine to connect: "We go out in groups of up to seven ladies, and we make gathering for greens fun." (45T) Even when age presents physical challenges to do subsistence, elders still come along to spend time with family. "We take our parents out in the boats with us. Granted, his father can't do a lot of stuff anymore, especially when it comes to moose hunting. But it's just the fact that being out there with him, and just grasping on itself is a big thing. The community is tight. The family is tight." (14M)

Beyond the immediate family, subsistence also ties the broader kinship networks together, including those who have moved out of the villages. One mother described: "My boys return home during hunting season, and it's a big family event. I love it as a mother. I love that my family is all together. It's bonding times extended with each other." (17T) This goes beyond the immediate family, as another mentioned: "I have 43 first cousins, and we would go together and get 300 to 600 pink salmon to cut and dry for 10 families. It's one massive picnic." (42T) An entire village gets together to help, connect, and have fun while doing subsistence. "It's very enjoyable as it becomes a community activity. When your buddies get a moose, you go to their shop and help them process it. And then there's a big cutting and packaging party." (20T)

Ritualized Culture and Identity. Through their role in ensuring economic independence off local lands and connecting native communities, subsistence practices have evolved beyond basic survival to become a cornerstone of Alaska Native culture and identity: ”It’s like practicing religion. You hunt and fish and feel a connection to the past. The more subsistence you know and do, the stronger your identity is as a Native person.” (37M) The ability to survive with subsistence food directly from the local land helps create a sense of independence for Natives, distinguishing the culture and identity from the western world outside: “The reality is, when talking about reclaiming our culture, the drumming, singing, and the language isn’t going to make you more connected as a Native. It is the traditional way of living off the land that brings a sense of peace into myself and who I am as an Alaskan Native.”(41M) Another mentioned the importance of independence: “We can sustain ourselves here. We don’t need airplanes coming in to deliver us food” (18M). Across all Alaska Native groups, from Iñupiat in the Arctic to Athabaskan in the interior, people equate subsistence to the Native culture. Many are devoted to a cultural revival after experiencing generations of shame inflicted on the Native way of life. One mentioned: “Hunting, gathering, and fishing are the biggest part of our culture that we still have alive. Being rooted in this makes me feel like I'm constantly connected to my culture. Subsistence is the easiest thing we've been able to hang on to because there is no way they can strip it away. I don't know my language, but I have my subsistence lifestyle.” (39M) Holding on to such identity can be so powerful, that participants mention “Subsistence is innate to us and you don’t want to lose this identity, because when you do that, then you’re susceptible to turning to bad things like alcohol or drugs or going down the wrong road. But when you’re firm in who you are as a person, that helps us heal from the past and move forward.” (30T)_

Indigenous cultural values are transmitted to future generations through hunting and gathering traditions. Community members enact cultural rules during harvesting: expressing gratitude ("putting fresh water into the mouth of marine mammals to thank them for giving its life to us", 38M), teaching respect ("never play with dead animals", 37M), and ensure sustainability ("only take what you need to respect the land and harvest sustainably", 16T). Passing such traditional practice instills a strong sense of pride as an Alaska Native, and such cultural enrichment is especially important to Natives today after generations of shame: "Throughout the 1940s, 50s, 60s, we were colonized into thinking that we don't need to subsist. We need to be eating from the store. We were shamed for so long and were told that our culture was inferior. In the last 10 years, we have been celebrating who we are more. We are starting to shed some of that shame, realize our strength, and carry our cultural values forward. We're undoing that trauma." (18M)

Then Comes Wage Work

While subsistence maintains economic, relational, and cultural importance, many participants expressed that in today's world, they also need a paid job to meet financial needs, advocate for the community, and avoid boredom.

If people can survive on subsistence alone, they most likely would choose to. However, that is not an option without paid employment in this age—many simply can't afford subsistence without a job. While traditional hunting and gathering used hand-made tools directly from nature, modern subsistence uses manufactured tools that are more efficient but also costly. "To do subsistence nowadays, you have to have gas, equipment, guns, shells, a boat, and all those things cost money. So you have to have some kind of income to live life." (35M) The high cost of tools means those without cash had to give up subsistence or rely on others' help: "Our

community has low to moderate income levels, so some people don't have a boat to go out. The only time they're able to go is with other people that invite them" (29M). Others do it selectively due to the high cost: "When asking a custodian of the clinic why he only does fishing but not hunting, he laughed and said 'You need an ATV or snowmobile to do that, are you gonna pay for one?'" (Field note, day 11). Even when doing the same activity, using more expensive tools often leads to more food. "Today I went to check king crab pots on the ocean with the youngest son of the host family and his friends. Our family's pots got twice as many crabs as the others'. Later, the parents told me this was because they bought a more expensive and larger collapsible pot that made it easier for the crabs to climb in and get stuck." (Field notes, day 3)

Having a stable wage job also helps mitigate the uncertainty of subsistence and builds a buffer for life's emergencies. Subsistence activities do not guarantee a set amount of yield, no matter how much upfront cost you've already put in: "There's never any guarantee because it is fishing. So sometimes you'll take the week off work, go down, and come home with two fish. And you spent all this time, money, and travel, and then you come back empty-handed." (20T) When this happens, people have no choice but to spend money purchasing food: "We had to purchase more groceries because we didn't catch a moose that year." (29M) Climate change exacerbated such uncertainty as they shift familiar harvesting grounds and seasonal calendars: "There are a lot of challenges because of climate change. Not only has that changed the waterfowl migration patterns, but also moose and caribou movements." (44T) In responding to shifting animal migration patterns, federal regulations also limit or close certain subsistence activities for conservation reasons: "We boated 2 hours back to town from camp, and dial into a radio channel trying to get the most updated salmon fishing announcement on this part of the Yukon river. The family was happy when they heard that King salmon fishing is open for two

days, as a full season closure has been the norm in the past few years. We set the net and checked it every morning and evening, but didn't catch any. " (Field note, day 25) In extreme cases, people have no choice but to give up certain subsistence for good: "Until about three or four years ago, I used to go on an annual caribou hunt trip, until they quit coming to the area about 120 miles north of us so I quit hunting for caribou." (42T)

Life uncertainty can also prevent one from doing subsistence and calls for additional cash. Equipment maintenance alters plans: "I didn't fish this past season because of boat problems." (37M) One's mental health can force a break from the physically and time-intensive work: "When I went through my depressions, I wasn't doing any subsistence gathering." (30T) Family care responsibilities and medical emergencies frequently get in the way: "Our youngest son is severely autistic. When he had a traumatic brain injury, we went to the hospital in the city, and it was very hard to take care of him 24/7. So I couldn't do subsistence, and we'd eat from what people would give to us." (45T) Helping support family members for education can also motivate people to work to bring extra cash: "My daughter wants to become a doctor, so I need to support her until she's done with the degree."(40M) Overall, wage employment provides a vital buffer for dealing with life emergencies and caretaking needs.

In addition to economic necessity, wage work has also increasingly become a pathway to serve the Native community (16T, 30T, 34T, 36T, 37M, 38M, 39M, 41M, 42T, 43T, 44T). Participants considered wage work an opportunity to move the community forward: "Some people want to disconnect and stay in this little bubble that we're in, but it's impossible. My job allows us to smooth that transition and move forward in the world while hanging on to our culture. And via my job, I can have a big impact and mold the way." (39M) Nowadays, subsistence access faces mounting challenges and competition from recreational users. As one

mentioned, *"*We have issues right now competing with sport hunters for game on the highways."(36T) Wage employment provides an opportunity to address this issue and advocate for the cultural tradition: "I recognize that you have to be an advocate and be involved in policy and regulation to continue to have access to our resources. You do need to have people involved with the policy and dialogue who understand the system." (43T) For this reason, people are particularly motivated by jobs that directly help with subsistence: "I worked with local fishermen in the region, helping them gear up for the season and get the fuel, the nets, the anchors, and buoys. And I fell in love with the work as I got to work with people living the lifestyle I grew up with." (31T)

In addition to advocacy, many stay in or return to their village and (1T, 8T, 14M, 15M, 18M, 23M, 24M, 25M, 28M, 29M, 31T, 35M, 45T) opt for a wage job as an essential way to serve their communities. One participant in business development mentioned being motivated to work so community members don't need to face displacement: "I know what it feels like to have to leave your home to provide for yourself with a cash job. And if there's an opportunity for us to create jobs for them in the village, then they wouldn't have to go through that and just be home where they want to be. The majority just want to be here. And if I could just help provide those jobs, I want to." (8T) Such a sense of responsibility towards the community also helps keep people in their jobs longer. One said, "I don't trust anyone to do the job. As it stands now, I feel obligated to make sure everybody's got job security by staying in this role." (31T)

Importantly, wage work also provides a routine, a sense of fulfillment, and helps avoid boredom. Intellectual stimulation from work allows for seasonal balance when subsistence is slow. The modern tools make today's subsistence more efficient and create space for downtime. "Subsistence is a lot of work, but it's a finite amount of work until I get enough food for the

winter. If we didn't have the amenities that we have now, like electricity, cell phones, or internet, then yes, subsistence would take up 100% of our time. But no, we live in this civilized world where everything's faster and easier to do. We'd have a lot of downtime on our hands. If I didn't have work, I'd probably lose my mind." (31T) The mental stimulation and routine of a wage job are vital since the harsh environment and prolonged winter season keep people inside. "I need my wage job, not only in terms of the thought process, but also the mental stimulation, especially during times where subsistence activities are a lot slower, like in January, it'll be like 40 below zero, and the animals aren't out moving around on the land, so we're not hunting." (27T)

Rising Dilemma

Given the importance of both wage employment and subsistence, workers actively adapt to maintain access to both: "We come from a subsistence lifestyle, and it's a choice we make to change. Instead of making our own tallow or grease like before, we just go to the store and buy oil now. You have to make adaptations as you go along. Every culture evolves." (44T) This ideal of "walking in both worlds" (4T, 7O, 13T, 26T, 28M, 36T, 37M), however, presents a constant struggle as work and subsistence compete for individuals' time, energy, and resources. Overtime, trying to do both can often mean "failing at both" (26T, 28M), as "walking in both world is a terrible thing to tell our youth, because you're dividing your time between the western society and the native society. And you are marginal at best for each." (37M) While many Native youth are initially socialized into the traditional subsistence lifestyle, they face growing tensions between maintaining these traditional cultural skills and adapting to western educational and employment systems.

The tension builds each day as one treads their path toward independence. The dilemma emerges in early education years. Learning subsistence skills may take precedence over western

education and skill training. As one teacher mentioned, “One reason why our students are typically a couple of years behind in academics is because subsistence plays such a big role in time, energy, and focus. You can't do everything. You only have a limited amount of time. So if you can focus on one thing, it's gonna come out of your focus on the other.” (35M) The traditional way to acquire subsistence skills is also threatened due to generational and regulatory shifts. As one informant mentioned, “ I started a summer youth program at 13 years old to learn subsistence skills and put away fish for the elders. Nowadays, they don’t do them like they used to, probably because of child labor laws.” (29M) As youth transition into adulthood, they abruptly confront the challenge of independence, sometimes in cities away from their familiar land, they struggle as “The wage work system takes out all of the skills and knowledge and purposes they have growing up. You might have a very good, skilled hunter or provider in a city, but his skills are not applicable. They're misplaced.” (36T) As a result, rather than trying to do both, many choose to lean heavily into either the western or the traditional way of providing, while juggling to still fit access to the other as a supplement.

Below, I first map out the archetypical paths that shape individuals into the two diverging paths: those who prioritize western wage employment and solve the dilemma via cultural translating, and those who prioritize traditional subsistence and insist on cultural modeling. I then describe what each path entails and how individuals navigate temporal, ecological, and organizational resources to balance the traditional and western, while organizations and communities provide support to maintain access to both. Finally, I describe how individuals without support, despite their best efforts, are forced to choose only one way of providing while giving up the other, resulting in cultural loss or financial precarity, and how life circumstances can push one to shift between the modeling and translating paths.

Path Divided: Factors Shaping Different Priorities

Road to Cultural Modeling: The Subsistence-first Path. The subsistence-first path entails prioritizing hunting and gathering skills, relying on local land and water for food, sharing subsistence knowledge, and deriving meaning through connection with the land. From an early age, individuals are gradually influenced by family upbringing, community job access, and gender to establish their preferences and skills in preparation for this path.

Those on this path are often born and raised in families that deem subsistence as an integral practice to continue tradition and show cultural pride. From an early age, youth in these families are socialized with extensive exposure and training in subsistence. One informant said, "Subsistence is teaching our children our cultural traditions. We've got to overcome a lot of healing that needs to happen as Alaska Natives, and subsistence plays the key role in that because healing is being able to tie back to who you are." (18M) Such upbringings socialize individuals with subsistence tradition, instilling such cultural preference well into their adulthood: "The oldest son Jacob went on a thirteen-hour snow machine ride to hunt seal in the winter, and the dad said 'you have to start teaching and taking your brother with you now.'"(Field Note, Day 6) Such socialization continues even for families who move to more urban areas and gain access to affordable food. As one mentioned, "I could go to Costco to get what I need, but I want especially to pass on to my children the value of understanding where you come from. And we're going to be able to live off the land to really understand what that means to have those values and instill them in future generations."*(*16T)

Individuals on this path are also often raised in more remote rural areas with limited job availability. Subsistence is prioritized in these areas given the limited education, less resource competition, and the heightened importance of subsistence food. Many rural communities lack

access to education and the resources to pursue it outside. “The issue is that if you grew up in the village, it's really expensive to get out of the village, especially for higher education. So for people wanting additional skills-based or vocational training like bookkeeping, it's expensive to get out of the community to build up people's skill sets.” (22T) Even when equipped with the skills, limited jobs are available to apply those skills. “The lack of wage-earning jobs is the biggest struggle here. A lot of times, for the best, most stable wage-earning jobs, once a person gets in there and becomes good at it, they might do it for the next 30 years. So that job is closed for 30 years.” (35M) Witnessing such a lack of jobs discourages many from investing in the education necessary to pursue the western career path. On the contrary, the abundant natural resources make subsistence a more efficient way to provide. “Having the food in your freezer weighs more than what you have in your bank, because you can have a balance of $0, but you can provide if you have a freezer full of food. You will not go hungry, which is why I put subsistence first.”(41M) Subsistence is a more productive way to live, as “I can do everything right at my front door, I wouldn’t want to be a ‘combat fisher’ who has to fight all the people in the big cities.” (Fieldnote, day 3)

Men tend to become more drawn to the Native path than women due to their heightened identity salience as food providers. One informant mentioned: “Traditionally, the men are in charge of making sure the weapons and the knives are ready. The women are in charge of food preparation. And the more traditional you get, the more you see that it is the man's job to go out and hunt.” (42T) Gradually, such traditional role assignment reinforces the salience of subsistence for men, making hunting and fishing activities highly intertwined with a Native man’s identity. “There was a division of labor… Subsistence is a rite of passage, at least for the male side of it, that we have a role in a process and a purpose in supporting our family.” (36T)

The collaborating nature of subsistence further adds social pressures for men, as men of similar age often form a close circle of hunting groups and are expected to help provide for the elders and community via their hunting cooperation. Over time, “Boys have always been more drawn to subsistence activities than girls.” (Field interview, day 4)

Road to Cultural Translating: The Work-first Path. The work-first path entails prioritizing western education and employment while fitting in subsistence after work. Contrary to those opting for a subsistence-first path, these individuals—often women—tend to come from families prioritizing western work and communities with greater job availability.

Family cultural beliefs about subsistence and wage work shape if and how parents prepare their children for a career. The fraught history has traumatized generations of Natives by instilling a sense of shame in continuing subsistence. As one mentioned, “Natives weren't allowed by law to do any cultural practices and were punished for speaking our language,” (36T) discouraging many from engaging with the western world:“ Some have this trauma around the western system telling you you're not good enough. So why do you want to engage in it? Why do you want to go to school when the school told you that you're stupid? Why do you want to go back to school when you were beaten as a child in school like my dad had?” (18M). Many are still recovering from this shame, are reluctant to teach subsistence, and insist on prioritizing work—“Some people get so far removed from their people, and there’s a whole generation of Natives that don’t feel a connection with their rural community.” (36T) They hope the next generation will survive better in the seemingly overtaking western system: “Coming into the new world, my parents wanted me to focus on school work and bettering my education. They don't really want me to do subsistence. My mom told me no. She didn't want to teach me how to do

too much of the subsistence stuff, because it seems that nowadays, we have to work to survive, so she chose that path for me." (29M)

One's local access to subsistence and wage employment also shapes the necessity and viability of providing via the land. Those who grew up in cities, regional hubs, or communities on the road network are used to stable access to lower-cost food. Subsistence harvest in these areas, on the other hand, can be more competitive and crowded with recreational users, making it more effortful and expensive. One urban participant mentioned, "I had to go fishing down in the Kenai Peninsula with a thousand other people." (36T) Another complained: "Caribou hunting near Fairbanks kind of ends up being a zoo. You go up there, and there's like all kinds of dudes shooting every which way around on four-wheelers." (19M)

The restriction for women to do subsistence pushes many to focus on their western education and employment instead. Ritual and cultural norms limit more time- and energy-consuming activities such as marine mammal and big game hunting to only men. One informant shared: "In our culture, we've never seen women go seal hunting. They were always home taking care of family. I was told that if you go, you're going to scare away the seals." (28M) Even when women do participate, they tend to stay in the camp to help with food processing, which takes up less time and energy. "Traditionally, because big game hunting was such a long distance, you couldn't leave your kids for a long period of time, so you had somebody staying there. But for berry picking and moose hunting, it's pretty much open because you need to bring your wives to go cook your dinner. "(28M) These gender roles, despite being increasingly blurry and having exceptions, still have lingering effects to shape individuals' preferred ways of work. Without the expectation of spending days hunting big games, women can afford to spend more time in western education and skill training.

Two Paths Forward

My analysis reveals how family socialization, community resources, and gender influence individuals to prioritize either wage work or subsistence, while maintaining their involvement in the other as a complementary activity. Informants navigate the two worlds by utilizing organizational, ecological, and temporal resources. Organizations and communities provide different support to sustain these efforts. Life circumstances and a lack of support can urge workers to shift between the two paths.

Cultural Modeling

Given the long-held tradition to live off the land, many participants view the cultural practice of subsistence as an inherent right granted to Natives. They engage in cultural modeling, where they anchor their livelihood on sharing hunting and gathering knowledge, serve as role models of Native cultural practice, and only pick up wage work to help afford subsistence. Two subgroups end up on this path[9]. Some do it by choice: even after they go to more urban areas for western education, they relocate back to villages as they crave to live off the land and pass on the lifestyle to their children. Others do it without choice: Since they never leave the village in pursuit of advanced credentials to maintain a stable western job.

Considering subsistence as an inherited right to natives, those doing cultural modeling path stay on ancestral land and do as much hunting and gathering as natural resources allow all year round. “We have a responsibility to do and teach as much subsistence as we can and continue this culture and way of life.” (Fieldnote, day 4) Wage work, on the other hand, falls behind in priorities. As an observer mentioned, “It's a pretty pervasive cultural thing that work is kind of really far down on your list of priorities.” (6O) Workers on this path don’t shy away from

[9] Herein, however, due to my research question about the process of how they navigate tradition and wage work to create sustainability, I discuss their efforts together.

defending their right to subsistence in front of wage employers and non-Native organizations: “I exercise tribal sovereignty (to do subsistence) when dealing with federal and state organizations. I basically tell them, Look, you're not going to get anything work-related from me at this subsistence time. I'm prioritizing it in my life, and you, as a federal agency, based on the sixth Article of the Constitution that was reaffirmed in 1988, need to respect tribal sovereignty and the fact that we have a right to govern ourselves. We're going to collect fish and berries, and if you have a problem, come back and bring it back up later. I use tribal sovereignty to address the issue—They’re not being equitable to tribal people.”(18M)

Such prioritization of subsistence requires them to be selective about wage work. “When I was in my interview, they asked, Is there anything that would prevent you from coming to work? And I always let them know that I have to do subsistence. I'd have to have subsistence leave. If they didn't provide that for me, I would say bye, have someone else to sit in the office and not go catch fish (laugh).” (28M). When subsistence needs are not fulfilled, they don’t hesitate to quit the job to find a new job that supports it. “If I didn't get the opportunity to fish, I would absolutely just walk away from my job. I'm gonna guess 80% of Alaskan Natives would probably do the same if the employers said, ‘No, you can't go fishing because we need you at work.’ Then the employee would say, ‘Well, then I don't need to work. I'll just go find something else.’ Because it is that important.”(15M) Although they recognize the importance of having wage employment and a stable income, not all have secure jobs that grant flexibility and support for subsistence. Even when one is paid by the hour, they don’t hesitate to sacrifice pay momentarily to maximize subsistence. One informant noticed: “We have a lot of blue-collar trades here, such as carpenters and plumbers. They’re paid hourly, and they still opt to take the time to do subsistence. It’s a sacrifice.” (27T) When full-time efforts fail, they pick up seasonal

employment between the most productive seasons. “A lot of people choose not to work when there's important subsistence that needs to be done. And then when the fall moose season's over, it's time to go to find something else.” (17T) Such an approach makes their employment path seem to deviate from a typical western “career path,” as “Many villagers take whatever job available. A lot of them, frankly, will be really menial tasks.”(13T) and “organizations face a constant transition of turnover and employment, because people are not looking for career, they’re looking for things just to get them by now.” (21T) This approach is viable in the long term because of the different cost structures in rural areas, where people build their own houses without incurring too much cost. “The economic picture is different there, because you don't have to pay a mortgage or land tax. A tribe might help out with housing and certain materials, but generally, people will make their own homes. So you look at it, and you're like, why do all this work? What's the point of accumulating wealth? It’s a pointless exercise. People just want to go in the woods and enjoy it.” (37M).

Notably, while the path of cultural modeling may start as an individual preference for some, it can perpetuate itself once one embarks on this path, because the accumulating distance from western work might prevent one from returning to a mainstream wage career. “When I see younger people that are always making that choice to prioritize culture subsistence, they also have a very unstable employment history. They can't keep a job. They struggle with that.”(36T) On the collective level, this leads communities to “have a human capital issue”.(13T)) As one mentioned: “when looking at our economics, it comes back to this: We have a people problem. Our people need healing and training. And most importantly, we all need to get—I want to call it—onboarding.”(18M)

Prioritizing the highly dynamic subsistence over routine wage work means one needs to stay spontaneous, acting fast according to local environmental conditions. Hunting or gathering during the right time impacts how much fish you get: “I don't set a date on when we're going to go, I just watched the fish counts, and when they start to climb, I just let work know, hey, the fish counts good right now we need to go. And we will just pack up and leave for the week.” (14M) Being responsive is etched into local sayings: “In the area I grew up, if the tide is out, the table is set.” (43T) The short weather and animal migration window for certain activities means that if one acts slowly, they can miss the whole season. “There was a year that we had too many storms and the ice melted, so we couldn't go up to the tundra or the bay because the ice was too thin, and it was too dangerous for anybody to attempt fishing. So we missed the run.” (28M). Responding fast is also a matter of life or death, as harvesting in bad weather can prevent one from making it home safe. “My two brothers died fishing in a boating accident in 2017. It was perfect weather when they left, but the storm started later. Nobody knows what happened, but we found their body on a beach, and the boat’s engine is out.” (Field note, day 11) Another villager mentioned: “My brother and sister-in-law died fishing. His body was almost unrecognizable, and they never found her body.” (Field note, day 13). Such a fast pace in responding to the land can cause individual stress and reduce recovery time at their wage job. Many accept such distraction and disengagement at wage work as a worthy sacrifice for subsistence, as the field note reflected, “We went to get herring eggs from 8 pm, spent 4 hours driving on the ocean, and didn’t come home until 5 am. We had to go at night because the ocean is calmer, and the low tide is also at night. Liam and Willow poured coffee nonstop the next day and told me, ‘There wasn’t a lot of work being done today.’” (Field note, day 7). Such spontaneity means they take extended and last-minute time off from work: “I take every Friday off in summer, and then I also take at least

one full week off to do my fish. If I don't get it all done in the week, then it becomes a juggling act, maybe I'll take an extended lunch to go set my net or take an extra couple days off in July to finish processing." (18M) Overtime, however, the need for extended time away from jobs can hinder career advancement, as one mentioned "we struggle with getting tribal members employed in positions of management or higher, as employees take a free month off for their culture. Well, if you're a project manager or an equipment operator, you can't be gone for a month. We struggle with having beyond laborers." (36T)

To maximize subsistence, people also choose ecological embeddedness by staying in their ancestral land in rural areas, despite the heightened cost, added inconvenience, and lack of infrastructure. "We have years of passed-on knowledge and know how to hunt and fish here. Our location is part of who we are." (38M). Communities influenced by climate change persist while adapting to the new environment. "Climate change put Subarctic Alaska under mounting pressure for coastal flooding, so while many communities historically have their village by the coast, they now have a secondary settlement at higher elevations up the hills. But people only stay on these higher grounds in less busy hunting seasons and move back to their original place for subsistence because that's way closer to where you get your food." (Field note, day 9). Being deeply embedded in one's community can also mean pursuing a western education or career outside can be lonely: "You're hanging out with your cousins all the time, the same people you did for your entire life. You feel really lonely when you leave. That's why many of my students who are really successful and promising have not been successful in college. They just feel too lonely and distant."(17T) Even for those who completed their education and started careers outside of their communities, many still decide to move back for the land-anchored lifestyle they grew up with. "As soon as I graduated from my MBA in (an Ivy League school), I packed up my

truck and drove back to Alaska. I remember everybody was doing consulting interviews in business or investment stuff, and I was like, wow, how much more do I need to know to be able to just live? This is all a scam. People want you to work more than you need… People in western society are commodities in many ways. You're just a number. It's like what they teach in business school: you look at a person and say what's the lifetime value of that customer? That's the system you opt into. You yourself might not have the option of leaving western society, but as Native people, we do. Man, I don't want to be part of this, I barely even want to work." (37M). For many who have built successful western careers outside, returning to the village is the way to give back to the community. "It takes a village to raise a kid, so it's kind of your way of thanking your community by coming back and giving back. Being out thawing water and helping elders is a way of thanking the village for bringing you up into the adult that you are." (39M) The need to reconnect with one's native roots seems to be highlighted after one becomes a parent: "I've lived all over both in and outside of Alaska, but when I found out I was having my daughter, I decided to move back and raise her here because I loved our lifestyle. I just wanted her to be able to explain and experience the same things that I was able to" (39M).

Support for Cultural Modeling

The path to provide mainly via subsistence also calls for extensive organizational and community support. Those who prioritize wage work need support to do subsistence, while those who prioritize subsistence require more cash support to make the lifestyle sustainable.

Organizational Support. Organizations provide critical support to enable cultural modeling via wage job opportunities in slow subsistence seasons (i.e., winter) and that use subsistence skills. "We had a fishery, and local people with small boats provided the fish, and they earned money. But now it's all gone because they had a big fish plant platinum. That was a

tough blow since that's the perfect job that would allow for a combination of subsistence and wage earning." (35M) Organizations that develop culture-related industries help sustain the practice and build communities' financial independence. "If you're a tribal organization, you're getting grant money to do those things to promote those cultural activities. If you're in cultural tourism, you're generating the resources to allow subsistence culture to have speakers and to continue" (36T). Non-cultural and subsistence-related organizations operating in more rural areas have a shared belief in planning around subsistence activities. "It's a common belief that you work around the community, and if they need general laborers, it's the same thing. They have to wait for subsistence to be done first." (4T). Alaska-based organizations are often run by leaders who buy in and practice subsistence themselves: "Organizations are run by people that have that cultural value, and will provide the staff the priority for subsistence when they need to provide for their family." (21T) Some supervisors in rural areas go to such an extent that they allow employees to take time off from their work to pick up higher-paid, one-off jobs so they can bring in more cash to balance. "There was a project where some sandbags needed to be reinforced. My maintenance guy asked if they could do that job for a couple of weeks. And I said, Sure, because I have backup workers, and it's not a high-wage job working for our organization. It's a difference between $15 versus $30 something an hour, so I said go for it." (33M). Employees instill their community values in their everyday work collaboration. "Sometimes people think doing the work means you're just one person. No, it's community-focused, and you can't be a type A personality at work and want only to do it your way. You have to look at their schedule. If they're hunting, call them next week." (4T).

Family and Community Support. One's community[10] and family are essential sources of financial support to allow individuals to live off the land. Family is the most crucial source of subsistence knowledge from a young age. Many were sent to live with elders in the community for years to learn the ropes. "Kids are sent to other communities or apprenticed out to people. They work with different people to learn different skills, and you'll get sent to a different family member. I was 13 when I was sent to learn culture, language, and subsistence. The old woman, Jenny, didn't speak English, so I would hear the language from her." (37M) When one needs specific tools for subsistence that they can't afford, community members chip in. "We don't have a boat, and I would ask a community member who does to either borrow their boat or help them with their harvesting, and we might take a couple of the fish and help them process everything. There's likely not one family in the community who wouldn't help." (23M). Outside of subsistence help, communities also help each other to minimize cash living expenses. Many live with family members well into adulthood to save money. "People have been living here all their lives and have more children than me, and they are still living with their parents. It just becomes a multiple-family home" (28M). When all other efforts fail, community members organize fundraisers, cake sales, or raffles to raise money creatively from community members. "There's a community cakewalk today to raise money to cover the funeral cost – where people bake cakes, sell them at the event to others, and give the money to the family so they can buy a coffin." (Field note, Day 13)

Cultural Translating

[10] In rural Alaska, where villages often have small populations, participants mention that they consider the entire village their community, beyond those with blood ties, since people share a common ancestry and culture (e.g., Kotzebue and Nome are home to Iñupiat natives, while Dilingham is largely Yu'pik).

Influenced by the ideal worker norm and the financial importance of wage work, some workers come to view subsistence not as an inherent right, but rather as a reward to be earned only after one completes wage work. As a result, they put wage work first and balance via cultural translating. Translation occurs at two levels. At the individual level, employees must justify their "nonwork" subsistence needs to gain employer support while conforming to the ideal worker norm. At the community level, employees leverage work as a platform for cultural advocacy, translating Native traditions for broader audiences and legitimizing this practice. In this way, they build careers via employment to serve work, community, and personal development needs, while fitting subsistence after work to supplement family, community, and recreational needs.

Viewing wage employment as a meaningful way to synergize both work and community goals, those engaging in cultural translating accept a prioritization of wage work over subsistence. "I work first because I know once I establish work, everything else will fall in place. And then it gives me that opportunity to jump in my boat right after work to go till nightfall (8T)." Wage work provides an avenue to serve the community beyond direct food sharing, but rather via safeguarding the right to subsist. Worker who translates can instill a sense of community in their work organizations: "The premise is community, about meeting the community need, so it is instilled in everything that you do, whether it's food or subsistence lifestyle, or scheduling at work to make it the appropriate time to be able to go, it is vital to people's core and who we are, and being able to connect to our culture." (16T)

Such prioritization of wage work, however, means they choose to fit subsistence only after finishing work and earning the employers' blessing to do so. "In your traditional corporate structure, you have to earn your right to do subsistence. We're putting into a multicultural melting

pot, and the challenge is, if you want to have those flexibilities of practicing and adhering to your culture, maybe you want to work for a native organization that acknowledges that. Working for a Fortune 500 company that doesn't add another culture is a whole different thing." (36T) To be granted the right to subsist, then, means that employees choose to adapt to organizational flexibility policy passively and only practice this tradition within the organizational bounds. Many save up all their paid time off and sick leave to allow for subsistence, as one informant mentioned: "I had to suffer to work even when I had COVID, because I save everything I can for the hunting and gathering season." (34T) Even when organizational policy allows it, one might still feel bad for taking such time off, as "it's still a headache, because you get punished for it when you get back since there's so much work to do. You feel a lot of guilt for taking that time off." (46T)

Another approach to fit tradition in one's career is via temporal negotiating— alternating time between wage work and subsistence, and adjusting prioritization seasonally. "In the summertime, Alaska shifts gears from working off the computer to working off the land." (18M) Unlike those who do subsistence all year round, those who prioritize wage employment only engage in the most critical types of subsistence after work or with their limited paid time off (PTO). Some choose to put long hours of subsistence after work: "I didn't take off at any time to do subsistence. I just made it happen on the weekends or after work. It'd be like five o'clock and you go out berry picking and then wake up so early, then do it again the next day until the season's over. So it's like working for 16 hours a day." (30T) To fit the ideal worker norm, they also align their subsistence time off with seasons where non-Native employees take off for other family and recreational reasons. "Summer is a season to do things; kids are out of school, and there are great things to do locally. There's family and the lower 48 to do things. Whether it's out

harvesting for your freezer or going to music festivals or events. Everyone takes a couple of weeks off during the summer. ” (46T). They also negotiate with and educate outside stakeholders to justify subsistence needs. “If we work with people from Idaho, you have to explain like when it's harvest time for potatoes, that's how it is for fishing in Alaska. So you have to have some commonality for your extended absence and explain it to them, then they become a little bit more understanding” (31T).

Cultural translating also involves navigating the physical separation of their job and subsistence locations by embracing ecological mobility. Employees with flexibility move their work location during peak subsistence seasons, and they don’t take this for granted— stay longer and feel immense gratitude to employers: “I love the flexibility. It’s a remote position, so during subsistence season, I can travel to an area, work at places like the library in the daytime, and then go fishing. So I like that flexibility and I’m grateful.” (34T) Those without such flexibility, however, move their subsistence location by searching urban subsistence grounds during the weekend. “I left the village for Fairbanks. I didn't know the area, and it was kind of intimidating. I didn't even know where to start, so we just went on hikes and looked around. It felt like out of my territory because that's Athabaskan[11] land.” (30T) Trying to subsist in more urban areas outside one’s traditional land, however, can cost way more time and money. “I live in an urban area, so I gotta pay $20 to go through a tunnel, $20 to park, and then $15 for lunch. Then there's gas and all that. Kenai is three and a half hours away for fishing, and to do that I got to get a place to stay, as opposed to in the community, my friend's boat is parked and we could be fishing two minutes from his house, the place to go harvest is a 40 minute boat ride away, and you're not competing against tens of thousands of people.” (36T) Since urban areas do not have all types of

[11] 11 distinct Alaska Native ethnic groups fall under the Alaskan Native umbrella, the speaker is Yu’pik, while Fairbanks is on the land of the Athabascan people.

subsistence resources, people budget in advance and go back to their home community to hunt, pick berries, and live up their cultural traditions in a short, intensive period using their job-approved leaves and resources. “People leave (the community), but they do come back cyclically for fishing; they'll come back home in the summer, but then they still work and live in Fairbanks.”(11T) Such subsistence and location shifting can be challenging in the long term for families caught in the widening generational divide, as one’s older family members in the village can’t get the help they often get from the young generation who moved away. “It's hard because my kids gotta fly in here. When my mom got older, I provided her with food because she didn't do it anymore. I don't know if they're gonna be able to do that for me. Life is different now. Things are changing.” (45T)

Support for Cultural Translating

To maintain access to subsistence and traditions, those prioritizing wage work seek support from organizations and community members to continue their cultural ties.

Organizational Support. Organizations provide the most crucial form of support in determining whether one’s effort in cultural translating is sustainable. To begin with, the company’s flexibility policy determines whether one can continue to engage in temporal negotiating and ecological mobility. “Folks are likely to be employed where they know they can take time off to fish. People quit their jobs because their employers denied them the time to go fishing. They're like: No, I'm out, I'm gonna get a different job, then if they're not going to respect honor that, then I'm not working for them.” (20T) Even when organizational policy gives room for flexibility, a lot of such support lies in the hands of supervisors. “It's really based on your supervisors’ feel for, is your work caught up, are you able to do stuff?” (15M) Without supervisor support, it’s difficult for employees to take their time off. “When my supervisor didn't

have that understanding, I could feel the resistance. But now that she does, that helps give me peace when I need to, or when I'm doing these activities."*(*34T) Coworkers' understanding also matters: "We put out a big schedule, everybody flags time back and forth to be able to allow everybody to go if they want, so it's just about being kind and thoughtful for community-based needs."(16T) Collaboration efforts such as meetings can be disrupted unexpectedly due to a delayed hunting trip, and coworkers' acceptance of such disruption brings peace. "We scheduled that meeting for when he came back, but he had to extend his leave. Because he had a moose tag and hadn't gotten a moose yet, it was like, Tom's not gonna make it today because he's still hunting the moose, and it was like, Okay, we'll get them next time, no big deal. So it's just acceptance."(46T).

Employers vary in their understanding of employees' subsistence. Decision makers located outside of Alaska rarely understand the importance of subsistence. As a result, they resist giving flexibility to subsistence activities. Those working with non-Alaska-based entities described, "It's a perpetual thing dealing with DC - our head offices. We have to explain that it's different in Alaska. They don't understand that we have to do things differently. No. We can't just drive out to any community and say you can't do this. People have subsistence in the summers. We can't just have meetings in the summer."(46T) Even within organizations in Alaska, such understanding is limited to the busiest subsistence season, often in the summer. This time-bound flexibility might be due to the statewide norm to take time off for recreation due to Alaska's extreme seasonal differences. "He was trying to take a bunch of time off, not during the summer months when we're allowed for flexibility, but other times because not all animals are harvested in the summer months. He wanted to hunt walrus and whales. His supervisor didn't approve it because she needed him around."(18M)

Family and Community Support. Family and community form the most reliable source of subsistence support for those prioritizing wage work, which often enables subsistence after work hours and access to Native food from afar: “If you think about just 100 years ago, we must be community-driven. Someone harvested a moose, and it might be one of the few moose that were available to the entire village that year. Taking care of other people is not just via food, it’s also money, time, resources, love, and education, it’s everything.” (21T) Such help include (“My extended family in Anchorage are not always able to come out or do fishing, so we end up sending them all subsistence food. Not only does our household benefit, but others as well.”, 29M), but are not limited to one’s immediate family (“Your community can include your extended family or friends or anyone beyond that, really there isn’t anyone who wouldn’t be there to give a hand if you need it”, 20T) However, having only family support without employers’ backing can still be difficult, often adding stress, personal sacrifice, and reduced recovery time. “Usually, I work it out with my office, and if I can't figure something out, I'll work something out with my husband, so we can still do what we need to do. It's tough. He would go out with my son or father-in-law, and by the time I got off work, I would go home and finish cutting up the fish and everything else.” (29M). When one can’t have enough time off from work to do subsistence, other community members chip in by doing their fishing for them. One mentioned, “We do proxy fishing for our elders and friends, and I’ll give them all 25 of their fish that’s allotted to them and expect nothing in return, because they’re going to need them for the protein source for the year.” (20T). When people can’t travel back to the village or do subsistence, they have no choice but to rely on care packages from family members. “My grandkids are in the big city for the holidays, so we will have to go to them, and I will bring lots of native food.”(45T)

When the Balance Fails

So far, I've mapped out why Native employees are required to "walk in both worlds", what shaped their preference to lean into either wage job or subsistence, and how they navigate both via cultural translating or modeling. However, such balances require meticulous planning and ongoing organizational and community support. Many have seen their balance fail, having to give up on either subsistence or wage work to focus on the other entirely.

Losing Wage Work: Economic Precarity and Perpetuating Inequality. The ever-rising cost of living and uncertainty of subsistence mean that, without proper support to earn some wage, those choosing to provide mainly by subsistence can face economic precarity. One wage job often provides for many community members. "A lot of young adults are trying to get enough money to support aunties and uncles and cousins and brothers and sisters and nieces and nephews…but there are a lot of organizations that are really critical of employees who have to take time off of work to support family needs. In rural areas, they're very dependent on one another. And that impacts a lot of people if something happens in the family." (21T) Even when one does hold paid employment, subsistence carves into the time for career development and can prevent one from accumulating wealth to deal with life's uncertainty. "I could have made a ton more money if I just focused on teaching. I could have tripled my retirement. You're not accumulating wealth, contributing toward your retirement, and there's a substantial financial cost to subsistence." (35M)

Collectively, extended time without wage work traps many in long-term financial crisis, drives down labor force participation, and inhibits Native communities' economic development: "There weren't a whole lot of local people working because of the scheduling conflict with subsistence. For an industry like construction, you've got compressed timeframes, and you can't

adapt to subsistence." (22T) Federal organizations' deadlines during subsistence season made many communities automatically give up grant applications and their associated wage work opportunities, perpetuating inequality towards Native communities. "Federal and state agencies are not being equitable to tribal people when setting the grant application deadline in the middle of summer, because a lot of people in our region will actually default to giving up and choose subsistence. We need to get enough food for winter first." (18M)

Losing Subsistence: Cultural Loss. When organizations do not understand or support subsistence efforts, employees have no choice but to cut down on subsistence and focus solely on their wage work. Separating from such an essential aspect of their culture and identity can be detrimental physically and mentally. Mentally, being away from subsistence practices can infuse a deep sense of loss:" Sometimes it's really hard to make it work with past jobs, there is no understanding from the corporate perspective of how important it is to us, we are better with our native foods, healthier, less depressed, work harder, and it's part of what makes us who we are, our identity. And when you cut that off, you fall into a deep depression. You're not the same person until you get back to that." (30T). Physically, not eating Native food causes an ongoing state of hunger: "(When eating store food in the lower 48) the food just doesn't do anything for me. I'm always hungry after I eat, and it's just like, god, I'm gonna starve here. You feel miserable. Imagine if you had a stomachache all the time. That's how it felt. I never got used to the food. That food is poison…" (37M)

Over time, the routinized focus of western jobs over traditional subsistence can push this crucial cultural practice to the edge of existence. "There is more priority given to western jobs than what you might consider a traditional subsistence job because we've been colonized. Because we've been told that a western job is the only kind of job there ever is and ever will be,

and your traditional ways of life are not jobs." (23M) Such perception can perpetuate itself and leave those who insist on subsistence at an increasing minority, leaving cultural loss at the societal level. "Given the choice, everyone should prefer a western job, and people that don't are kind of crazy." (26T)

Asymmetrical Recovery from the Imbalance. My findings reveal an asymmetrical pattern in how participants recovered from work-subsistence imbalances. While giving up either work or subsistence can lead to dire consequences, subsistence is easier to re-access after a pause than wage employment. On the one hand, this is because the wage labor market upholds stricter barriers to entry, requiring many to leave their support networks. As one participant explained: "If I had stayed in my home village, I wouldn't have this job now…every single one of my middle school classmates went to high school for just one semester and dropped out."(36T) This educational disruption comes from an insufficient support system in urban areas: "A lot of communities don't have a local junior high school, so kids have to travel outside to go to boarding schools as young as 16 years old. To get started, they need to learn how to pay rent, get a car…all these stuff, without knowing anyone, is really difficult to get on your feet there. That's why a lot of kids from our village don't last very long when they go outside for education" (Fieldnote, day 18).

Participants who remained in rural communities for support and security often encountered employment barriers later. One participant noted: "If you don't have a job, it will still be ok back home, because the communities are close-knit and you can live together with your families." (3O) They often get stuck as they don't meet the standard of the open jobs. One articulated: "We have open jobs, but what we lack is educated, capable community members to fill those positions. Alaska Natives have a low success rate in getting education completed, and

that's really due to financial resources and lack of understanding of the system." (15M) Over time, prolonged unemployment and limited career role models lead to persistent poverty and decreased motivation: "Everybody is getting used to having handouts from the government, and nobody wants to work because you have that and community raffles to raise money and fall back on." (29M)

In contrast, my findings show that subsistence practices can be re-established even after extended absences. Participants who temporarily suspended subsistence activities to pursue education often successfully transitioned back to their communities: "A few people that went out and at least had one or two semesters of school or maybe even got a degree... They come back and they do really well because they understand the responsibilities in wage work…"(9O) Some participants actively created local employment opportunities: "We went to the village council president and said, 'I have a natural science background and would love to move back,' She directed us to the adaptation assessment department, which helps the village adapt to the changing climate, so we took that job and expanded upon the community's needs." (23M) Subsistence skills, conversely, remained accessible through community knowledge sharing: "There were lots of people who are willing to teach us how to go hunting, and I learned a lot from my students. My students would take me out hunting and show me how it was done. And I hadn't really hunted before that point."(35M) Participants who temporarily focus exclusively on wage employment due to organizational constraints, health issues, or caregiving responsibilities often successfully re-engage in subsistence practices when circumstances change. Many decided to move back to provide children with options to live traditional lifestyles (24M, 33M), give back to communities (42T), and reconnect with cultural roots after kids are older (14M, 35M).

DISCUSSION

Building on prior research on tradition (Dacin et al., 2019), culture (Giorgi et al., 2015), and career sustainability (Greenhaus et al., 2024) in organizations, this research develops a theory on how individuals participate in both traditional heritage work and wage employment sustainably. Specifically, I build theory on why and how workers choose to prioritize, balance, and seek support for their ongoing endeavors to do both, and what happens when they are forced to give up one. Drawing on an inductive, qualitative study of Alaska employees navigating dual livelihood activities, I propose an emergent theoretical model of workers' traditional-western dual engagement, depicted in Figure 1, illustrating how workers at cultural intersections achieve access to both sustainably.

To answer my research question on "why and how do individuals at cultural, historical, and economic crossroads prioritize and negotiate between traditional and modern ways of work to achieve sustainable livelihood," I first zoom in on the "why": why do participants choose to continue doing both rather than just focus on one? My findings suggest that Alaska Natives are born to "walk in both worlds" of subsistence and wage work. Living off the land via subsistence emerges as the first way of work for Alaska Natives. Subsistence activities such as hunting and gathering provide reliable, high-quality food, and tie extended family and communities together via collaboration. Over time, have become a cultural tradition and a key source of Native identity. Wage work, however, also serves critical functions today as it helps participants afford efficient subsistence tools, serve their community directly, advocate for culture, and achieve personal fulfillment, especially during slow subsistence seasons.

The need to do both presents a dilemma due to the limited time, energy, and contrasting skill sets of the two roles, urging workers to prioritize one first while maintaining access to the other as much as possible. Informants mention that their local community's access to wage jobs

and natural harvesting resources, family upbringing, and individuals' identity salience shape the path they choose. Specifically, my findings suggest male informants and those from communities with limited formal employment opportunities, particularly those raised in families with strong subsistence traditions, predominantly conceptualize subsistence as an inherent, ascribed right tied to Indigenous identity. In contrast, female informants and those from communities with greater integration into wage economies, especially those from families emphasizing formal education and wage employment, tend to frame subsistence as a right to be earned after one completes wage work first.

Such diverging beliefs about the "why" of the two ways of livelihood determine how workers prioritize. Participants who consider subsistence an inherited right embark on the "subsistence-first path": prioritizing it over wage work, and culturally modeling this heritage way of work in their community all year round; while those who believe subsistence need to be earned choose the "work-first path": finishing work duties and fitting in subsistence afterwards, and culturally translating this practice to a broader audience. Notably, both paths involve individual efforts in negotiating with time and place: cultural modeling requires one to act spontaneously according to natural rhythms (temporal spontaneity) and stay physically embedded to one's harvesting ground in rural areas (ecological embeddedness), while cultural translating requires one to work consistently under a 9-5 routine and travel afterwork (temporal negotiating) away from population centers in search of viable fishing and hunting grounds (ecological mobility). Beyond individual efforts, organizational and community supports sustain such dual engagement in different formats. Those doing cultural modeling mitigate financial uncertainty when organizations generate seasonal, rural-based, and culturally relevant jobs using subsistence skills, and turn to their community as a safety net for an additional financial buffer.

Those doing cultural translating, on the other hand, rely on organizations' flexibility policy to continue their cultural traditions, and depend on their family and community to help with hunting and gathering efforts when work responsibilities keep them away. Without these crucial supports, individuals have to either give up their wage work and face financial precarity, or abandon their traditional subsistence and experience cultural and identity loss. From a societal level, such failures can lead to decreased labor participation, hiring challenges, increased turnover, and inequity.

In sum, in theorizing how Indigenous employees navigate between the traditional and modern forms of livelihood, and the dire consequences when the delicate balance fails, this research contributes to the literature on traditional heritage work, work-life, sustainable careers, and culture.

Theoretical Implication

Coexist Sustainably: Embracing both Tradition and Modern. First, I advance theory on tradition and sustainable careers by showcasing why and how workers mitigate tensions between traditional heritage work and modern wage employment, thereby better engaging in both sustainably. While existing theoretical perspectives are predominantly built based on WEIRD (White, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic, Henrich et al., 2010) employees' experiences (Cheon et al., 2020; Pitesa & Gelfand, 2023) and assume people must choose either their traditional practices or westernized employment (Hamann et al., 2020), I demonstrate that individual, community, and organizational can draw from traditional cultural resources and build a harmonious coexistence between tradition and modern work. Recent management work has deviated from the tradition-as-constraint view, and instead recognized tradition as a resource that its custodians actively shape to fulfill individual and organizational needs (Cancellieri et al.,

2022; Dacin et al., 2019; Fetzer, 2025). Such a resource-based view has, however, largely been examined at the firm level. For example, organizations use historical artifacts to lend authenticity to their actions (Hatch & Schultz, 2017) and offer tradition-preserving products to improve customers' value perception. Extending the tradition-as-resource view to the individual level (Cancellieri et al., 2022), I reveal that Alaska Native workers continue traditional hunting and gathering to access reliable and high-quality food resources, deepen relationships, and celebrate cultural pride. Such relational and cultural resources enrich their wage work in the local community, and the motivation to advocate such tradition to a broader audience keeps many in their wage work. Organizations and managers that respect such traditions and grant flexibility have grateful and loyal employees, while those who don't often face constant turnover, employee burnout, and a distracted workforce. Further, organizations that provide rural, seasonal, or roles using traditional skills can draw from a wide and reliable labor pool, while those that insist on rigid corporate structures can face talent shortages. By recognizing traditional livelihood activities and giving them room to coexist alongside wage work, organizations can help employees lead sustainable lives and allow diverse cultures to thrive.

The analysis reveals two diverging approaches individuals undertake to integrate the traditional and modern worlds sustainably: either by culturally modeling the traditional subsistence and supplementing with seasonal wage work to get by, or by culturally translating and fulfilling needs for cultural tradition afterwards. Such diverging paths to integrate and prioritize suggest that one's value shape their path, and that there is more than one route to sustainability. Answering recent calls by tradition scholars to consider place as "both the rootedness and emplacement of traditions" (Dacin et al., 2019, p. 342), this work shows traditions can follow individual custodians outside of its birthplace, as employees translate

tradition and culture to broader audiences and practice it in urban areas using heritage methods. Notably, one's community provides support outside of work, either by helping with traditional harvesting when one is busy at work, or by pooling financial resources when one lacks wage. By showcasing multiple ways to sustainability in urban and rural environments, I pave the path for a new theoretical stream to transcend the artificial dichotomy between either "WEIRD" or marginalized (Hamann et al., 2020) paradigms in the management literature, and extend our understanding on how workers and their communities can find a middle ground in the liminal space typical in societies undergoing cultural and economic transitions.

Life Domain Synergy and Renewal: Incorporating Time and Place. Second, I contribute to the work-life and sustainability literature by demonstrating how employees synthesize needs from multiple domains in one activity and leverage temporal and ecological resources. Contrary to work-life theories such as boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000) and segmentation theory (Evans & Bartolomé, 1984; Piotrkowski, 1979), which assume that life domains are compartmentalized and compete for limited resources, this research suggests that activities—such as hunting and fishing for those doing cultural modeling and wage employment for those doing cultural translating—can simultaneously fulfill multiple domain needs to allow for long-term sustainability. This synergistic approach enables individuals to integrate maintenance, growth, and generativity functions concurrently (Barnes et al., 2023) rather than expending resources on boundary crossing and role transitions (Kaur et al., 2024).

Moreover, the findings explicate how employees leverage time and place as resources rather than threats to sustainability, which conflicts with previous research's assumption that sustainable careers mean constant productivity and employers need to avoid "disruption to continued employment" (Greenhaus et al., 2024, p. 478). In line with work on the impact of

temporal rhythm (Barnes & Wagner, 2009; Volk et al., 2023) and how default temporal preferences lead to negative stereotypes (Yam et al., 2014) I make a novel contribution by demonstrating that employees can deviate from the full-time norm and intentionally choose seasonal work to still build a sustainable career. By focusing on hunting and gathering from local lands when resources are plentiful, weather conditions are safe, and daylight is long, workers act as cultural models and enjoy cyclical renewal via connecting with their community, culture, and land, allowing them to return to wage work fully rejuvenated. While existing literature has examined renewal opportunities outside of routine time and place of work (e.g., Sabbaticals, Schabram et al., 2022; digital nomads, Prengler et al., 2024), my findings show how such a dynamic and embedded approach within one's work provides a viable path to renewal. By examining how Native employees hunt and gather in uncertain and extreme environments, this work sheds light on how workers still need to adapt to varying climatic and ecological conditions to ensure safety and maximize productivity. In this way, I challenge the assumption that modern employees' physical work environments (Oyedeji et al., 2025) transcend seasonal and environmental influences, and answer recent calls to consider seasonality as "a fundamental variation in human psychology" (Hohm et al., 2024, p. 1). This contribution is particularly relevant today, given the increasing prevalence of extreme weather conditions (Bergmann et al., 2016) and their impact on work relations (Khan et al., 2023).

Cultural Impact on Work-Life. Third, I contribute to the growing literature on cultural influences in work-life and career (Powell et al., 2019) by demonstrating how cultural contexts shape individuals' work-life priorities and career trajectories, and how organizations can design culturally appropriate support accordingly. My findings challenge the assumption that continuous, full-time wage employment represents a universal career ideal (Kelliher et al., 2019).

Instead, I showcase how multicultural societies accommodate diverse career formats, with work-life decisions deeply embedded in cultural frameworks. For instance, some Alaska Native employees view wage employment primarily as a necessity to enable subsistence activities, which they consider their primary career path, given that subsistence provides food security, relational enrichment, and cultural pride. At the organizational level, despite the advancement in organizational and supervisor family support, such support structures are primarily designed for urban knowledge workers from the dominant sociocultural and ethnical groups (Bailyn et al., 2025; Golden et al., 2006) with minimal accommodation for rural and minority employees (e.g., Kamenou, 2008). By examining the unique work-life demands for Alaskan employees from diverse cultural, racial-ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, I illustrate how organizations can provide support via culturally relevant job creation, flexibility, and supervisor support, enhancing a diversity, equity, and inclusion perspective for family-supportive organizations (Kossek et al., 2025). Overall, these findings highlight how cultural contexts can fundamentally reshape the meaning and structure of sustainable careers and determine the optimal format of organizational support.

Practical Implications

This work has several important practical implications for individuals, managers, organizations, and policymakers operating in multicultural societies, particularly those concerned with Indigenous workforce development. My findings suggest several approaches by which organizations, policy makers, and individuals can impact employee sustainability and cultural survival.

First, organizations and decision-makers should recognize and value the dual work identities that Indigenous employees maintain, rather than viewing traditional practices as

competing with “real work”. Creating an inclusive and respectful culture can enrich employees to build connections that benefit their wage work, foster gratitude and loyalty, and enhance work performance due to an increased sense of integrity across life domains. Organizations can demonstrate this respect by designing culturally sensitive flexibility policies—such as seasonal work arrangements, flexible scheduling during harvesting seasons, and remote work options—that help employees fulfill both traditional and wage-work responsibilities. Many informants highlighted how subsistence activities connect them with the community members they serve, improving their wage job performance given its highly relational nature. In a similar vein, practicing one's culture may bring creative perspectives that enhance work efficiency and foster strong relational bonds with clients and coworkers.

Second, organizations can create positions that leverage traditional skills rather than requiring employees to compartmentalize their culture from their work. Jobs that incorporate Indigenous knowledge—such as natural resource management, cultural tourism, arts and crafts, and traditional food preparation—can help bridge the gap between subsistence and wage work while enhancing organizational embeddedness and community connections. This approach recognizes that traditional knowledge constitutes a valuable resource that can enrich organizational capabilities rather than competing with them. Additionally, policymakers should consider granting legitimacy and support for traditional heritage work to remain a viable career path. For example, they can respect the migratory pastoralist lifestyle rather than enforce settlement, allow collective land ownership rather than standardize land privatization, and honor Indigenous land rights to guarantee sustainable cultural practices. When adapted properly, such traditional heritage work can enrich not only individuals but also communities and nations at large. Furthermore, policymakers should consider how employment regulations and social safety

nets can better support individuals who engage in both traditional and wage work. Broadening definitions of "productive work" beyond conventional employment to include traditional subsistence activities could better serve diverse populations and preserve valuable cultural practices. This might include recognizing subsistence hunting and gathering as legitimate forms of work within unemployment insurance systems and creating grants or subsidies for traditional knowledge preservation.

For wage work managers and coworkers devoted to supporting employees in multicultural societies, my findings suggest two ways that may be particularly helpful to support workers involved with traditional heritage work. First, adopting an open, respectful, and culturally sensitive mindset about careers can help ease the burden of ideal worker norms. My finding suggests that many employees experience psychological stress when their managers don't understand the importance of subsistence culture to Native employees and why employees can only request time off at the last minute. One interviewee mentioned how their manager started to support their subsistence time off requests after a trip to Alaska, which led to psychological relief for the employee when requesting future time off. Second, managers should develop cultural competence regarding the communities they serve, understanding how local ecological conditions, seasonal patterns, and community values shape work priorities. This includes recognizing that standardized HR policies designed for urban professionals may need adaptation to accommodate diverse work-life arrangements. Managers and coworkers can plan proactively within organizational structures to ensure time and space for cultural practices. For example, some managers mentioned opening the time-off calendar a year in advance, while others allow last-minute time off when a short weather window opens for subsistence activities. Some coworkers mentioned coordinating with each other so that everyone gets their time off for

moose hunting, which is only open for a limited time. Such coordination benefits extend beyond those who practice subsistence. For instance, summer is often a popular time for vacation among European employees, and such proactive planning allows everyone to take time off without disrupting work and productivity. As evidenced in my data, employees with such supervisor and coworker support experience less stress, more gratitude and peace at work, and tend to remain in their job longer. Those without such support actively seek alternative employers or experience burnout and cultural loss.

Last, my results suggest that individuals can cultivate space to stay connected with their traditions in ways consistent with their personal values, as such connection can balance with or even enhance their wage employment. Career options ranging from family business, entrepreneurship, subsistence hunting and gathering, to heritage craft are all viable ways of making a living long-term. Individuals can create sustainable lives by prioritizing activities that meet and synergize multiple domain needs without having to choose only one over the other. For example, employees who care deeply about both family and hobbies can synergize these domains by involving family members in hobby activities; individuals who value traditional heritage can use traditional work to disconnect from and recharge for their wage employment. Moreover, individuals should utilize changing economic, ecological, and temporal conditions, and prioritize based on seasonal rhythm to help meet maintenance, growth, and generativity demands most efficiently. Both interview and ethnographic informants mentioned finishing time-sensitive work well in advance before the key subsistence weather window opens, and communicating about reduced meetings and last-minute time off when fish return to the local waters. Such dynamic prioritization also applies to those in more conventional careers. For example, working parents can prioritize family time with children during the summer, when

longer sunlight allows for more recreation after work and when the schools' summertime off calls for more parental demands.

Limitations

This research is not without limitations. First, while Alaskan employees represent an ideal sample of people navigating both traditional heritage and wage work, they're situated in a nation with a developed economy in the global north. Many individuals navigating the challenges of these two worlds, however, are located in less developed areas in the global south. Their contexts consist of scarce social resources, a more urgent need for survival, and less structured organizations. Many live in societies with less emphasis on cultural value, inclusivity, and increased resource competition. Moreover, this work focuses heavily on individuals who have a choice in prioritizing their work and life based on personal preferences and cultural values (e.g., those engaging in cultural translating have the means to leave the village, get a western education, and eventually a wage job). In reality, however, many may not necessarily have such freedom, or such freedom might be jeopardized by changing political policies, environmental change, and globalization. To address these contextual limitations, future research should explore how key mechanisms and contexts differ in other areas of the world, and how different national cultures interact with subgroup cultures and traditions when it comes to career sustainability. Research can also conduct longitudinal analyses of individuals' adaptation to the forced abandonment of traditional work. For example, when climate change decimates the available resources for hunting and fishing, and urbanization eliminates grasslands, how do herders and hunters stay connected to their cultural practices and heritage livelihood?

Second, although I emphasized the critical organizational and community support needed for sustainable careers, this work didn't examine how such support can also shape individuals'

preferences for continuing traditional work. For example, it's likely that one who started with cultural translating feels so fully supported by their organizational policy and inclusivity that they gradually shift to take on more cultural modeling as their job encourages it. Conversely, those in organizations that shame heritage work can end up giving up on them faster. Anecdotal evidence from the data suggests that many transition from doing cultural translating in urban areas to moving back to rural areas when they become parents, as they want to give an idyllic and culturally rich childhood to the next generation. I did not inquire about the motivators and outcomes of such transitions. Still, future research should explore what "push" and "pull" factors shift workers' prioritization between traditional and wage work at life junctions.

Third, although my research question's focus on "how and why" calls for an inductive, qualitative study (Pratt & Bonaccio, 2016) in the Indigenous context, future research should explore how such tension between different forms of work plays out beyond such contexts. For example, with the increasing prevalence of gig-work and multiple job holding, how does subgroup culture shape individual value and perception of their multiple lines of work? Alternatively, fruitful research can also come from examining other forms of tradition beyond race and ethnicity-based traditions. For example, how do farmers in rural areas navigate between the family tradition and broader opportunities in more urban areas? Future research can also build upon these inductive insights through complementary methodological approaches. Specifically, scholars might develop instruments to measure the constructs identified in this study—such as "cultural modeling" and "cultural translating"—and test their relationships with career sustainability, cultural identity maintenance, and organizational outcomes through quantitative methods. Mixed-methods approaches could also investigate how prevalent these phenomena are across diverse Indigenous populations and identify boundary conditions for the

theoretical model. Longitudinal designs would be particularly valuable for tracking how individuals adapt their balancing strategies as environmental conditions, family responsibilities, and economic opportunities change over time. Such studies could reveal whether one pathway (subsistence-first or work-first) proves more sustainable over time or whether individuals migrate between approaches across life stages.

Future Directions

Going forward, this work aims to serve as a launchpad for future research to explore career options outside of continuous full-time employment, Indigenous employee experiences, and the impact of natural rhythms at work. First, in examining sustainable careers, it would be crucial for future work to dive into how individuals can craft, and organizations can support careers that deviate from traditional permanent full-time employment (Kelliher et al., 2019). Existing work has already started examining one-off, short-term deviations from the mainstream view of continuous career, such as sabbaticals (Schabram et al., 2022) and digital nomads (Prengler et al., 2024). Research on how routinized individual efforts and structured organizational supports can help sustain one's career and life over the long-term, however, is still rare (Sonday, 2021). Given that employees still feel insecure about and are punished for utilizing flexibility policies, having gaps in between jobs, and signaling non-work priorities (Gonsalves, 2020; Lin et al., 2021), future work should investigate what sustainable, systematic approaches both employees and organizations can undertake to enhance long-term career sustainability without jeopardizing employee job security.

Second, it would be timely to explore how Indigenous workers' experiences differ and how organizations can better support this group of employees that are both highly invisible (i.e., lack of representation in professional workplaces, invisible appearance and skin color cues for

race, Robertson, 2015) and visible (i.e., one person's behaviors and attitudes are considered to be representing all Indigenous peoples, Fryberg & Eason, 2017). Indigenous workers' experiences vary dramatically based on national culture, native national sovereignty, historical events, and broader socioeconomic environments, which determine the diverse approaches that allies, organizations, and societies can best support them (Dai et al., 2023). While this work explores the extreme sample of Alaska Native employees largely from more rural contexts, an increasing number of Indigenous peoples now reside in more urban environments. How, then, do they stay connected with cultural and ancestral roots, heal from historical trauma, and navigate their often token identity (Farero et al., 2024)? How do they emerge as leaders and adapt as entrepreneurs (Salmon et al., 2023)? Fruitful work can result from zooming in on the unique experiences of the world of Indigenous workers, leaders, entrepreneurs, and organizations.

Third, it would be meaningful and timely to explore the impact of natural and social rhythms in organizational life. While management research has focused on both the impact of short timelines, such as daily dynamic shifts between work and nonwork (Columbus et al., 2021; Sonnentag & Zijlstra, 2006), and longer career cycles, from newcomers to bridge careers to retirement (Wang & Wanberg, 2017), we know little about the influence of the mid-range time frame and routines, such as natural seasons, organizational hiring and performance evaluation cycles, as well as employee family demand cycles throughout a year. Answering recent calls to incorporate temporal perspectives to management (Powell et al., 2019; Shipp & Cole, 2015) and the recognition that seasonality is a "fundamental source of variation in human psychology" (Hohm et al., 2024), future work could examine how workers navigate such meso-level temporal cycles and balance their maintenance, growth, and recovery activities based on resources and demands.

CONCLUSION

Taking a tradition-as-resource view towards traditional heritage work, this research challenges the wage-first paradigm underlying many work-life and sustainable career theories. It offers a nuanced framework that shows why and how workers engage in the traditional heritage alongside modern wage work. My model proposes that individuals rooted in cultural values maintain access to both via either cultural translating or cultural modeling efforts and engage in the non-prioritized domain utilizing seasonal, ecological, and social resources. Such dual engagement depends on robust organizational and communal support systems—organizations create culturally relevant jobs and provide flexibility, while communities provide cultural and financial support. Without such support, workers face difficult tradeoffs between exclusively pursuing wage work and suffering from cultural and identity loss, or only practicing subsistence and confronting financial precarity. By documenting these alternative approaches to sustainability, this research invites research on how individuals across various cultural contexts might preserve valuable traditional practices while adapting to changing economic landscapes. The findings suggest that supporting such dual engagement may benefit individual sustainability, organizational effectiveness, and cultural preservation in an increasingly complex global environment.

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TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 1: Emergent Process Model

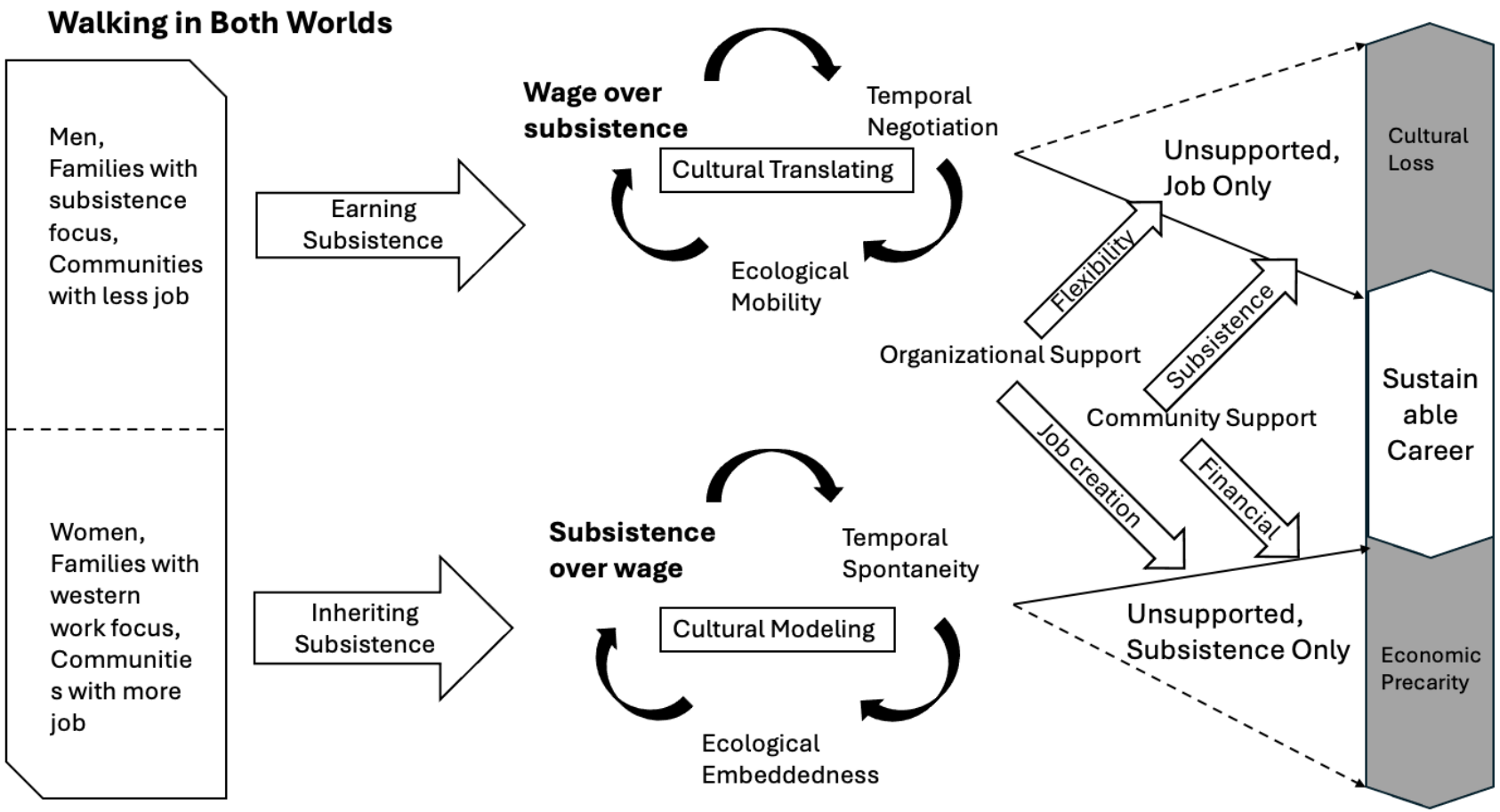
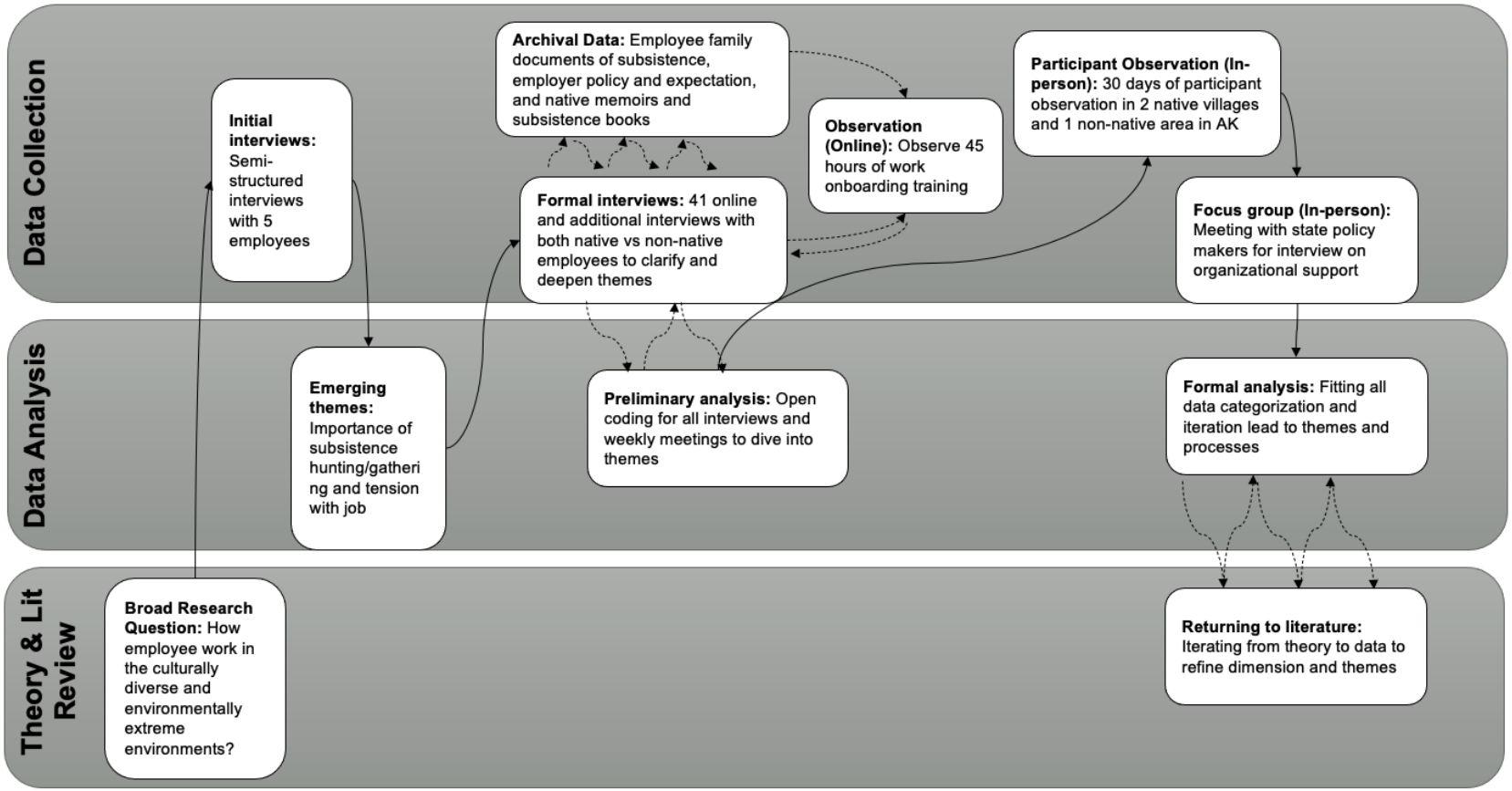


Figure 2: Data Collection and Analysis Process



(Adapting based on format used by Harrison & Rouse, 2014, Figure 1)

Table 1: Interview Participant Demographic Table

Participant	Gender	Race	Location* (Census Area)	Alaska Native Language**	Job Title	Strategy
1	F	Alaska Native	Northwest Arctic	Inupiaq	Finance director	translating
2	F	Caucasian	Matanuska-Susitna	Dena'ina	Business development	observing
3	M	African American	Bethel	Central Yup'ik	City clerk, former correction officer	observing
4	F	Alaska Native	Kenai Peninsula	Dena'ina	Government specialist	translating
5	F	Alaska Native	Yukon-Koyukuk	Tanana	Administrative assistant/entrepreneur	modeling
6	F	Caucasian	Northwest Arctic	Inupiaq	Government director	observing
7	M	Caucasian	Chugach	Alutiiq/Sugpiaq	Construction planning	observing
8	M	Alaska Native	Yukon-Koyukuk	Tanana	Director of operations	translating
9	M	Caucasian	Bethel	Central Yup'ik	Finance assistant	observing
10	F	Caucasian	Matanuska-Susitna	Dena'ina	Emergency coordinator	observing
11	M	Caucasian	Fairbanks North Star	Tanana	Government specialist	translating
12	M	Caucasian	Kenai Peninsula	Dena'ina	Health care worker	translating
13	M	Caucasian	Yukon-Koyukuk	Tanana	Teacher	translating
14	F	Alaska Native	Yukon-Koyukuk	Tanana	Finance director	modeling
15	F	Alaska Native	Dilingham	Central Yup'ik	Government director	modeling
16	F	Alaska Native	Anchorage	Dena'ina	Health care director	translating
17	F	Caucasian	Yukon-Koyukuk	Tanana	Teacher	translating
18	F	Alaska Native	Dilingham	Central Yup'ik	Business development	modeling
19	M	Caucasian	Yukon-Koyukuk	Koyukon	Dog musher	modeling
20	F	Caucasian	Matanuska-Susitna	Dena'ina	Government specialist	translating
21	F	Caucasian	Bethel	Central Yup'ik	City staff	translating
22	M	Asian	Bethel	Central Yup'ik	Tribal administrator/CEO	translating
23	F	Alaska Native	Bristol Bay	Central Yup'ik	Tribal administrator	modeling

24	F	Alaska Native	Kusilvak	Central Yup'ik	Administrative assistant	modeling
25	F	Alaska Native	Bethel	Central Yup'ik	Administrative assistant	modeling
26	M	Caucasian	Northwest Arctic	Inupiaq	Supervisor for trash facility	translating
27	F	Caucasian	Fairbanks North Star	Tanana	Professor	translating
28	F	Alaska Native	Kusilvak	Central Yup'ik	Administrative assistant	modeling
29	F	Alaska Native	Bethel	Central Yup'ik	Administrative assistant	modeling
30	F	Alaska Native	Nome	Inupiaq	School staff	translating
31	M	Alaska Native	Kusilvak	Central Yup'ik	City staff	translating
32	F	Caucasian	Matanuska-Susitna	Dena'ina	City staff	observing
33	M	Alaska Native	Bethel	Central Yup'ik	Mayor	modeling
34	M	Alaska Native	Fairbanks North Star	Tanana	Suicide prevention trainer	translating
35	M	Alaska Native	Bethel	Central Yup'ik	Teacher/pastor	modeling
36	M	Caucasian	Hoonah-Angoon	Tlingit	consultant	translating
37	M	Alaska Native	Fairbanks North Star	Tanana	Professor	modeling
38	F	Alaska Native	Nome	Inupiaq	Tribal nonprofit analyst	modeling
39	F	Alaska Native	Nome	Inupiaq	City staff	translating
40	F	Caucasian	Prince of Wales-Hyder	Tlingit	Entraupreneur	modeling
41	M	Alaska Native	Nome	Inupiaq	Environmental director	modeling
42	M	Alaska Native	Nome	Inupiaq	Grant director	translating
43	F	Alaska Native	Anchorage	Dena'ina	Nonprofit director	translating
44	M	Alaska Native	Anchorage	Dena'ina	Federal government native liason	translating
45	F	Alaska Native	Nome	Inupiaq	Airline manager	translating
46	M	Caucasian	Anchorage	Dena'ina	Anthropologist	translating

*Location is based on official administrative division used by the state and federal government, I didn't include specific city location to ensure the anonymity of participants

**The Alaska Native language is included as proxy to the unique local culture of Indigenous groups across Alaska, and is coded based on the interviewee' residence. Source of language division: Krauss, Holton, Kerr, and West. 2011. Indigenous Peoples and Languages of Alaska. Fairbanks and Anchorage: Alaska Native Language Center and UAA Institute of Social and Economic Research. Online: https://www.uaf.edu/anla/collections/map/

Table 2: Additional Quotes to Support Main Themes

Construct	Representative Quotes	Participant ID
Why subsistence?		
Subsistence brings reliable, quality food	I had to learn how to cook, how to prepare, store, and dry food. Make sure we have something for the winter because in the village, you don't have the 24 hour grocery store, you don't have an access road to run away somewhere else.	28M
	As a single parent, and with the cost of everything increasing. Sometimes I might not have enough to buy groceries like I want to or we experienced a crunch during the holiday season	34T
Subsistence is part of Native culture and identity	Harvesting our salmon…give you a connection through time with your ancestors that you can't get back. we are the link. So this left hand is the link to the future that I am learning to fillet a salmon, and this right hand is the one to the back…I am using the traditions that we have. So in relationships with salmon or berries or moose, I'm using what my mom has learned because she's passed that down on to me, and I'm learning it now so that I can hand it off to somebody next. And without being able to participate in traditional harvesting or subsistence, then that means that this hand has been cut off , and this other hand actually a little bit too, because then I'm not connected to my traditions and my ancestors nearly as strongly and solidly as I would be if I had that connection	23M
	Subsistence is good for people in recovery. I'm also someone in recovery (from alcohol), and I found a lot of strength in practicing cultural traditions, and harvesting food off the land. It keeps me grounded in who I am and doesn't create room for self doubt and pity, when addiction can come in and take over in those moments	18M
	If you ask my students, who are you, they will say, I'm so and so whatever their name is. What's important to you? And they'll say, like, going berry picking with grandma, or moose hunting in the fall with my dad. Tell me something about yourself. I got my first caribou last year. It's kind of the first things that they'll reach for when their identity. It is fascinating, it's really pretty cool. A lot of the the ways that they connect with their heritage are through those activities. The bits of the language that they know, most of them don't speak Tanana really at all, but they know the words for like moose	17T

Subsistence connect family and communities	Subsistence supplements my diet, it is a part of my home, it keeps me part of my culture. It allows me to continue to be a lifelong learner. the first time that I had actually gone through the entire value chain of catching the fish, cleaning and cutting it processing. It was for my mother's memorial that year, the year later party, which is like a whole cultural thing. It was important because it was something that she was very good at. And it was also something that my aunts were able to give me gentle nods on corrective action. And it's a part of me that keeps reminding me where I'm from.	36T
	For indigenous communities, understanding where you come from and a lot of traditional practices are really important to have a sense of self. It also has to do with the connection to the community. We spend a lot of our summers in my husband's home village. It's a different experience, because it's a small town, it's a kind of connection with people that's very difficult to replicate elsewhere.	27T
	It's a big family thing. We do everything together as a family, none of us do anything alone. So that was a big thing. We're a big family, but we're really close. Our family doesn't spend time together that often; they live right next door, and I don't even see them every day so when we do subsistence activities together, it's our fun time together.	39T
Why wage work?		
Work affords subsistence and cash needs	In order to subsistence you need to have some sort of income. You need to purchase fuel, equipment, snow shoes, ATVs, boats, motors, all of those things that we need in order to provide ourselves with the means to do it. I know there's a big push to go back to the old ways of living. But it comes to a point where, are you willing to use dog teams and pull your boats up river in order to put fish away, to go back to learning how to build the tools to do these activities, how to make a bow and arrow, how to raise a dog team, all of this extra work takes time and I don't think anybody really wants to do that	41M
	People that get jobs want medical benefits so they can get things done such as surgery-I just had a $20,000 surgery that they're not going to pay for so now they're coming after me. I need to get a job.	26T
Work allows one to take care of community	Clerks that stay it's because they have seen what difference they can make in their local community. They've come to that realization of how they can help their citizens	32O
	At our last meeting, when I was in Anchorage, they were talking about commercial fishermen being against people getting put away for subsistence usage. But I made the comment that it depends on where they're from. I'm subsistence first then a commercial fisherman, if we have	41M

	enough salmon for subsistence use first I'd rather have that over going out and having a commercial salmoner.	
Work brings fulfillment	People need to work. when people work, it makes them better people, and when they just don't do anything, and don't have to submit to somebody like a supervisor and go to work every day and do those normal disciplines of going to work and, and getting up early and taking care of businesses and putting in a day's work. It just tears the soul out of individuals.	9O
	There's only so much I can enjoy from doing nothing to where it gets, it becomes a burden. So no, if you're telling me I, I could just subsist and not work. I couldn't do it, I would find something to do that that would eat up my time.	31T
Walking in both worlds		
Having to walk in both worlds	Everyone in Alaska and rurals places have to manage both because we need the money for the toilet paper. We need the animals for the for the food	8T
	Just in the past 10 years, it's crazy how far we've come. I think if technology wasn't moving as fast, subsistence would get more important. We have technology pulling us into the Western world but there's also this huge push for reviving our culture, reviving our language, and people realizing that subsistence is at the core of our culture and because we have that drive going right now this bigger revitalization movement and this big connectedness to the outside world is the reason why I think it's gonna keep going in a balancing direction.	39T
Dilemma of living in both worlds	You were either going to choose education or living a subsistence lifestyle and helping your parents	28M
	Everyone in Alaska and rurals places have to manage both because we need the money for the toilet paper. We need the animals for the for the food	8T
	(Subsistence) doesn't fit the normal, lower 48 societal views of normal ways of living. But it's because the focus is completely different. The focus is subsistence, living off the land, and having cultural enrichment. there may be a lot of different ways of making a living, but not all of those are really discussed at the society level, because the subsistence lifestyle is often not the priority. it's just two different worlds and neither is right nor wrong.	16T
	Western job is a cultural elements that's been imposed upon Natives. so I think it's kind of natural that there's a really deep seated ambivalence toward people imposing this structure even though it might have been there for their lifetime, but there's a huge group of people	6O

	who are still struggling with that friction between the Western imposed identity and a lifestyle that had always been there	
Work first, Earning subsistence	I hope that people that are working rural Alaska communities recognize that there are things that are important to the community members, and definitely taking time to subsist is important to many. But I can't imagine federal agencies, even considering changing deadlines to accommodate subsistence harvest	21T
	Taking time off to do subsistence is still a headache, because you get punished for it when you get back since there's so much work to do. You feel a lot of guilt, often for taking that time off. It's a tension point for me	46T
Work later, Inheriting subsistence	You're going to have to make choices between you know, having that consistent job and having the choice to go out and do the moose hunt or whatever subsistence activity, a lot of people work seasonally is kind of the way to handle that.	17T
	In the winter, I'm actually grateful for the job as it gets me out of the house. I'm not much of a fan of working in the summertime	14M
Cultural translating strategies		
Temporal negotiating	I didn't have this flexibility when I worked for my former company at Anchorage, you get time off, but this, this time of the year, we expect you to be here, then if you absolutely have to take time off two days at the most. that's how stringent that work schedule was.	31T
	Well not everyone does everything.The other girls in the office don't go out for kelp. They're big on moose hunting. I'm big on moose hunting but I'm not going to be out there everyday like my brothers. I think different families have different priorities.Some people at our office are big on berry picking while I prioritize hunting, kelp and bird hunting.	39T
	I'm looking at the fish numbers, and they're really running, and I'm like, okay, I want to get my 50 fish and I want to do them in a day or two, I don't want to fish five weekends to get 50 fish, I want to get them done in a day. So if someone calls me and I'm like, Oh, it's a fishing day, I'll call you tomorrow, just leave me a message. They're okay with that, and I'll come in early tomorrow	4T
Ecological mobile	Many people work in town. but during moose hunting or any kind of subsistence, berry picking season, they come down, we take them out in the boats with us.	14M
Supporting cultural translating		

Organizations support via flexibility	A lot of the institutions here have adapted around the fact that we know when it's open season for moose hunting or when it's time to go salmon fishing, like people are gonna be gone and that's okay. As an institution we plan around it.	27T
	I can work half the morning and then go fishing in the afternoon. So rather than take PTO on some days, for a full day, I take PTO for a half day. But the the beauty of having this type of flexibility is I can make up some of those hours by working like maybe one hour later one day and put in a few hours on a weekend on another day. As long as it's within the same pay period.	34T
Community support via helping subsistence	If a family talk about struggles or you might not see them like they normally are and there always has to be a tough reason why. Even if it's not talked about, we'll just be like here, have a quarter of moose.	39T
Cultural modeling strategies		
Temporal spontaneity	You're going to have to make choices between you know, having that consistent job and having the choice to go out and do the moose hunt or whatever subsistence activity, a lot of people work seasonally is kind of the way to handle that. The way it works in some of the small villages is that it's not like you're gonna get fired. Who is gonna replace you? So you kind of have a an unusual amount of power to misbehave in your job.	17T
	So when we think about a Western job, that's Monday through Friday, nine to five. In the summer, traditional harvesting for salmon doesn't care that you have a job nine to five, and if it's nice on a Wednesday, that's the day that you're gonna go out and go fishing because it's not pouring down rain. If you wanted to hang your fish, it's not pouring rain right on your fish	23M
	We have this saying around here that says “the tide waits for no one”. And that is the expression for that is, because sometimes you have to take leave to go and tend to your fishy net, and you have to take adjusted lunches, and sometimes you just have to take personal time off	15M
Ecological embeded	I wasn't going to move farther, no, I have to be in this area. It has to do with family, networks and the connections to our land, to our waters and to our food. what does money mean when you don't have connection to your family and to your place?	43T
	Everybody in the village leaves the village in the summer and goes to their subsistence camp. So it's a ghost town.	35M
Supporting cultural modeling		

Organizations support via job creation	We received a grant to have a reindeer farm and a slaughter house, which created a ton of work locally. People can work as Muskox hunting guides, it's heavily regulatred but they make good living during the hunting season	33M
	We adapt - we'd have like positions that were two weeks on two weeks off to allow for subsistence activities and other other things. This meant that they didn't make as much, or maybe the benefits are worse because they were part time. But that's kind of how some of those some of that was accommodated.	22T
Community support with financial help	People's parents kind of finding paid work here and there to make it work. But making ends meet and putting food on the table, it just looks really different if you're a native family. Your housing is usually sort of, you can take for granted that you will have a place to live. The community or the family will find a way to house you. You don't have to think I need to save up for a down payment on a house, I'm going to need at least $50,000 You know, that never crossed any of my students' minds. If they think about wanting their own home that they want to build someday, they're thinking about, like "man I'm gonna have to get a boat so that I can go like cut some trees down and drag them up the river." it's just a very different, much less cash based way of thinking about making ends meet.	17T
Failures to balance		
Missing subsistence leads to cultural loss	participating in subsistence makes one healthy and proud of their culture. if you've grown up with a certain food, your body's just not satisfied with other things. when you're deprived of that, it has a negative impact on your mental state, and to some degree your spiritual state, I've kind of seen that over the years, it's a big problem	22T
	I went to summer youth program to pick berry for elders and put away their fish. Now they still do the program, but it's more job-oriented, a student worker will help the library and learn jobs in the office.	29M
	you don't want to lose your identity. Because when you do that, then you are susceptible to turning to other bad things like alcohol or drugs or going down the wrong road. But when you are your firm in your and who you are in, and you're as a people, holding on to our what, what colonizers couldn't take away, that helps us heal not only from past generations. there's a divide now where if you're too poor to afford to go out, you're stuck. You have to be able to afford to go drive somewhere to get the buckets, the bags, the chest freezer, like it's almost like a dividing of where you know, the less fortunate who aren't able to go do that. That's where community comes in and people give to them but the action of going out and getting food yourselve has has a big part of the goodness that you just feel when you you've done it	30T

Missing wage work lead to financial precarity	A couple times in our lives, we had food stamps. And my mother was telling me my father was livid. There was just shame level to it, because it was like you're gonna have to go find a job somewhere, we got to move.	36T
	Some people don't even work full time. They just harvest and then they just take care of their western needs thing via public assistance	18M

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Thanks so much for taking your time to do this! I'm doing these interviews as I believe the experience of employees working in small and rural communities in Alaska should have their stories told, and that managers and organizations can learn from your experiences at work. I'm especially interested in what constitutes "making a living" for you and ways that this may be unique from how we think of work in the lower 48 states/urban settings. There are no right or wrong answers and you never have to answer if you don't want to. My goal is to have an open and transparent conversation in which I can learn from you.

1. What counts as work?
    a. Can you tell me a little about yourself? how long have you been living in your current village/Alaska so far?
    b. Do you identify as Alaskan native?
    c. What do you do now to make a living and provide for yourself and the family?

(This can include a paid full-time job, subsistence activities, a second job, seasonal contract work, your own business, etc)

2. Work-Subsistence
    a. How old were you when you started doing subsistence activities? (how long have you been doing it?)
    b. Why did you start doing it? What make you keep doing it every year?
    c. What month/season is the busiest/brings you most food when it comes to subsistence in your area?
    d. Can you estimate what portion of your total food source result from subsistence?

e. how much time off do you take off in total every year from your wage job for subsistence needs?

f. Do you categorize subsistence more as work/job, or more as a recreation/something you do for fun or other reasons? (do you find it meaningful?)

g. What's the role like when you and your family go subsistence? Is it based on gender? Age? Whether local or not?

h. How do subsistence considerations impact your full-time job?

i. Are there problems balancing job and subsistence? How long do they last?

(Can you give me an example where there is a conflict between your job and subsistence activity?)

ii. How does doing subsistence activities make you feel?

iii. What do you do to deal with the conflicts?

iv. Does your boss and coworker get mad at you when you take time off for subsistence?

v. How does your community or family members help you when you run short on subsistence because of your job?

vi. If possible, what help do you wish you had?

vii. Overall, how do you think subsistence impact your wage/western job? Does it help or hurt it? (Do you rely on wages from wage job to buy fuel and materials to fish/hunt better?)

viii. How does your wage work impact subsistence? Help or hurt? (Does only hunting/fishing on weekends limit your outcome? Are places overcrowded or give you less fish?)

ix. If you had to only choose either subsistence or wage job, how would you choose? And why?

x. How do others influence/handle that conflict? At work (coworker/boss)?

3. Season

   a. How does season impact your day to day work?

      i. Is there a seasonal nature in your office job? Tell me what your work is like in the winter/summer

      ii. Time of the year that work take a back seat/you really focus on work

      iii. Time of day – do you do your hunting in the morning? What do you do for the rest

      iv. Is there a difference between a success hunt or not? What's a moose hunting day like, step by step.

      v. Tell me your average day the shortest time of year? Best part of the day? Worst part of the day? Hot mosquitos?

      vi. How does the season impact you as a person? Mood wise, and energy wise?

      vii. Is the impact mainly a result of day length, temperature, amount of sun? or something else

   b. How does season impact your non work life? Such as family responsibilities, social, leisure, etc?

4. Open

   a. Is there anything else you'd like to share?

      Is there anything that you've wanted to share today and haven't had a chance to?

      Is there anything you wish I would've asked or think I should ask about in the future?

   b. Any one you'd recommend me to talk to?

Appendix B: Schedules and Images of Participant Observation (Site A)

Blue font: wage work activities; Green font: subsistence activities; Purple font: other family and community events; Black font: general description; Orange font: My activity outside the core informant family, with other villagers

Day	Key events	Selected Images
Day 2, Thursday	Landed at 1 pm	
	The Family took the day off from work for the funeral	
	Family funeral: 1 pm to 4 pm	
	Post-funeral community burial and potluck: 5 pm	
	Checking crab pot: 5 pm to 7 pm	
	Driving dirt road to check willow plant for harvest (Wild willow "Sera"): 8:30 pm to 11 pm	
Day 3, Friday	Father working: 8 am to 4 pm	
	Harvesting willow plant ("Sera") by driving up a dirt road: 11 am to 2 pm	
	Processing seal oil: 3 pm to 4 pm	
	Processing beaver fur to dry: 4 pm to 6 pm	
	Dinner at community member's house: 6 pm – 8 pm	
	Evening boat ride upriver to hunt Eskimo potatoes ("Masu"): 9 pm to 11:30 pm	

Day 4, Saturday	Cleaning and sorting willow leaf: 11 am - 12 pm Saturday market and grocery store: 1 pm - 2 pm Getting boat, buckets, and gear ready for herring egg collection: 5 pm - 7 pm Boating 2 hours one way to collect herring eggs: 8 pm - 4:30 am the next day	
Day 5, Sunday	Morning church session: 9 am - 11 am Cleaning boat from last night's use: 12 pm - 1 pm Sorting and vacuum sealing herring eggs: 1 pm - 4 pm Driving around the village to give away sealed herring eggs to 40 households of elders, widows, etc.: 4 pm - 6 pm Harvesting Eskimo potato: 8: 30 pm - 11 pm I couldn't sleep as my body adjust to an all-nighter schedule: 11 pm - 3 am	

Day 6, Monday	The father works from 8 am to 4 pm, and the daughter's internship starts at 9 am and lasts until 5 pm. Both work in person in physical offices. Their work followed this schedule for the remainder of the ethnography. Mother took the day off due to her brother's death Mother processing brother's death certificates, documents, etc Cleaning Eskimo potato harvested yesterday: 11 am Mother sharing family photos and stories on subsistence: 2 pm - 3 pm Boating up river 1 hour each way to look for wild rhubarb: 7 pm - 9:30 pm	
Day 7, Tuesday	The mother starts her regular half-day working schedule from 8 am to 2 pm. She works fully at home. Her work followed this schedule for the remainder of the ethnography Walking around the village to the post office, gas pump, and grocery store: 10 am - 12 pm Processing Eskimo potato and wild rhubarb: 2 pm - 3 pm Hanging and drying bearded seal to make black meat ("Ugruk/Eskimo chips"): 8 pm to 11: 30 pm	

Day 8, Wednesday	Visiting another informant's house in the village, going on a 6-wheeler ATV ride around the village with her and her 2 yr old daughter: 12 pm - 3 pm Going to mother's past brother's house to clean out his food and share/deliver it to others in the village: 7 pm - 9 pm Digging out and transplanting wild rhubarb and wild onions to their home garden 9 pm - 10 pm	
Day 9, Thursday	Ethnographic interviews with family members: 9 am - 11 am Ethnographic interviews with other villagers: 2 pm - 5 pm Checking crab pot and processing king crabs: 7 pm to 9 pm	

Day 10, Friday	Community-level trash clean-up day around the village: 12 pm - 3 pm De-shelling and vacuum seal crab meat: 4 pm Driving up to community bible camp to donate family plant and replant it in the community potato garden: 8 pm - 12: 30 am	
Day 11, Saturday	Planting and preparing garden for planting vegetables 12 pm - 2 pm I replaced the dad (who felt sick that day) to drive youth from around the region from the town center to their bible campsite De-weeding the garden: 7 pm Picking beach greens and thin tree barks for fire starters: 8 pm - 11:30 pm	

Day 12, Sunday	Feeling sick due to new diet in the village (high protein and fat, no fiber) Planting the garden: 12 pm - 3 pm Boating upriver for a family picnic, pick wild cotton to make traditional seal lamps and tundra tea	
Day 13, Monday	The electricity for the entire village is out. This will last four whole days. A technician was sent from Anchorage to fix it because there's no technician in town. The city arranged 3-4 emergency generators to send to households with elders Ethnographic interviews with villagers: 2 pm - 5 pm Family hike after dinner: 8 pm	

Day 14, Tuesday	Family evening walk while everyone is anxious about day 2 of the power outage. Those with generators are all running them full time to make sure their freezer, which is full of subsistence food ready for winter, stays cold. The only store and gas pump was closed due to the power outage Preparing the salmon net for setting: 2 pm - 3 pm Boating to set the salmon net: 7 pm - 9 pm	
Day 15, Wednesday	The power came back on for a few hours and went out again. Villagers lined up in front of the only gas pump to load up on gas to fill their generator. Checking fish net and cleaning fish: 8: 30 am - 11 am Ethnographic interview with elders: 1 pm - 4 pm