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For Immediate Release

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Alaska Native Rural Village Faces Budget Cuts with a Vengeance

YAKUTAT, Alaska -- Yak-Tat Kwaan, Inc. held the first of a series of listening sessions in Yakutat on August 25, 2015, at the Alaska Native Brotherhood Hall.

The Community of Yakutat has been here for generations, and we will not quietly stand by and watch our way of life disappear during these tough economic times. We are one of many rural and poverty stricken Alaska communities facing devastating cutbacks from federal, state and local governments. We may not like the decision or agree with the cutbacks, but we cannot idly stand by and watch our families starve, our children grow up with poor education and our family structures be torn apart.

With a vengeance and swift decision making, the governments, organizations and businesses gathered at the Kwaan listening session to share common grounds that focused on jobs, housing, education, cost of living and diversifying economic investments so we may have a place to call home for today and generations to come. This is not the first, as the City and Tribe have also shared common gatherings.

"We are not alone in our fight, as many of our Alaska villages are facing crippling economic impacts. Yakutat's social and economic well-being is affected by national, state and local budget cut-backs," said Yak-Tat Kwaan, Inc. Chair Debra Lekanof. "The Corporation recognizes the social and economic hardship of these cut-backs which affect our shareholders and residents of Yakutat and we will do what we can to support one another."

"As part of the Corporation's strategic planning, it is the intent of Yak-Tat Kwaan, Inc. to hear first-hand from the City & Borough of Yakutat, Yakutat Tlingit Tribe, businesses, residents and shareholders on how we can work together to address the impacts of these budget cutbacks affecting Yakutat," said Yak-Tat Kwaan, Inc. Secretary/Treasurer Donald Bremner.

Yakutat faces critical economic impacts from a poor fish return, cutbacks in fish prices, cuts in education, as well as the continued rise of gas, heating fuel and grocery prices. This is a town where gas is over \$6 a gallon, heating fuel is almost \$10 a gallon and a 60 count box of diapers can be up to \$65 dollars. This is the reality of the community. It is with these challenges that the community governments,

organizations and businesses are persevering to provide a common economic plan that will help bring jobs and diversity in economic investments.

Where we face economic impacts there is a silent crisis that is adding to the weight of community members, and that is the crippling budget cuts throughout rural Alaska Village's school systems. Since 2005 the Yakutat School has gone from 140 K-12 students to 89, with a cut of \$216,408 in 2015 FY.

"We cannot to be ripping families apart," shares Bert Adams Jr., General Manager of Yakutat Tlingit Tribe. "As of today, we are seeing family structures falling apart. Many families are having to send their children out of town to boarding or public schools, or another situation is one parent is taking their children out of town for school, and one parent remains in Yakutat to work, or even entire families are leaving their lives behind and moving for a better education system. We have reached the brink of a crisis for our community, and the decision makers must make choices and work together, as it cannot be just a government, tribe, or corporation who saves our community. It will take us all. "

The immediate impact is the loss of quality education for the students and the broader impact is the loss of income to the community through the loss of residents and the financial impacts for the city and the businesses.

With a vengeance, the Community of Yakutat will do what it has always done, and that is to adapt and work together to find opportunity among the challenges we are all facing in Alaska. The Corporation stands by our fellow rural Alaska villages and we seek to find partnerships and ways to work together for today and for the future of our way of life in rural Alaska.

Yak-Tat Kwaan, Inc. is a for-profit ANCSA corporation dedicated to providing meaningful and sustainable benefits to shareholders and our community by developing a portfolio of profitable, diverse business investments while being responsible stewards of our resources, in a manner consistent with our Native values.

Yak-Tat Kwaan Listening Session Report: <http://yak-tatkwaan.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Kwaan-Listening-Session-Report-9-1-15-3.pdf>