GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR FUNERALS IN VILLAGES

Guiding Principle
To maintain our tradition of honoring, respecting and taking care of our people and our beliefs, we will practice Ch’eghwtsen’ to adapt to the challenges and ever changing world we live in, and ensure our people continue to thrive.

As directed by the State of Alaska, all gatherings are restricted to no more than 10 people, even when meeting outdoors.

Communicating with the family
- Call the family - Elders suggested using telephones, walkie talkie or radio
- Avoid in person contact
- No hugs or handshakes

Food Sharing
- Avoid sharing food
- Schedule the potlach at a later date

Handling the deceased
- Use full PPE if handling the deceased, including washing and dressing the deceased.
- Deceased can be buried or cremated - The National Funeral Directors Association and the CDC state that burials do not pose a higher risk of virus exposure than cremation.
- The State recommends using a body bag liner and body bag, or two body bags. Wipe the outside of the body bag with CaviWipes or an EPA approved cleaner for COVID-19.
- When grave digging, limit the number of people, wear masks, and maintain 6 feet of distance.
- When casket building, limit the number of people, wear masks, and maintain 6 feet of distance.
- Pallbearers should wear masks and gloves at all times.*

Visitation
- Limit to immediate family.
- Limit to two at a time and try to maintain 6 feet of distance, whether inside or outside.
- Avoid physical contact with the deceased as much as possible.
- Use gloves and a mask.*
- If outside, utilize a canopy to protect the body from the elements as necessary.

Funeral
- Hold a larger service or memorial, after COVID-19 clears.
- Do not travel from village to village.
- Hold the funeral outside.
- Provide hand washing and hand sanitization station.
- Maintain 6 feet of distance.
- Transport coffin on a sled whenever possible.
- Attendees and pallbearers wear masks and gloves.*
- Provide individual copies of hymns to gravesite singers and musicians and ensure 10 feet of distance as required by the State.
- After returning home, attendees should follow mask and glove removal procedure and wash clothes thoroughly.

* Mask and glove removal procedure: Remove gloves and wash hands, then remove mask and wash hands again.
** Recommendations compiled from Elders, the State of Alaska, the National Funeral Directors Association and the President’s Coronavirus Guidelines for America – 30 days to slow the spread.