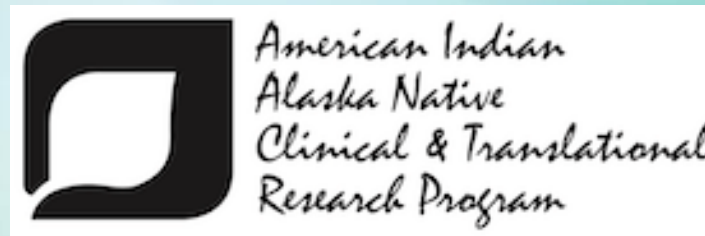


Youth perspectives on cultural strengths and resilience in two research projects using photovoice and digital storytelling in rural Alaska Native communities

Part 2: Intergenerational Dialogue Exchange and Action Program

Donald Charlie, Jessica Black, Inna Rivkin, and Janessa Newman



Purpose

The Intergenerational Storytelling Program integrates:

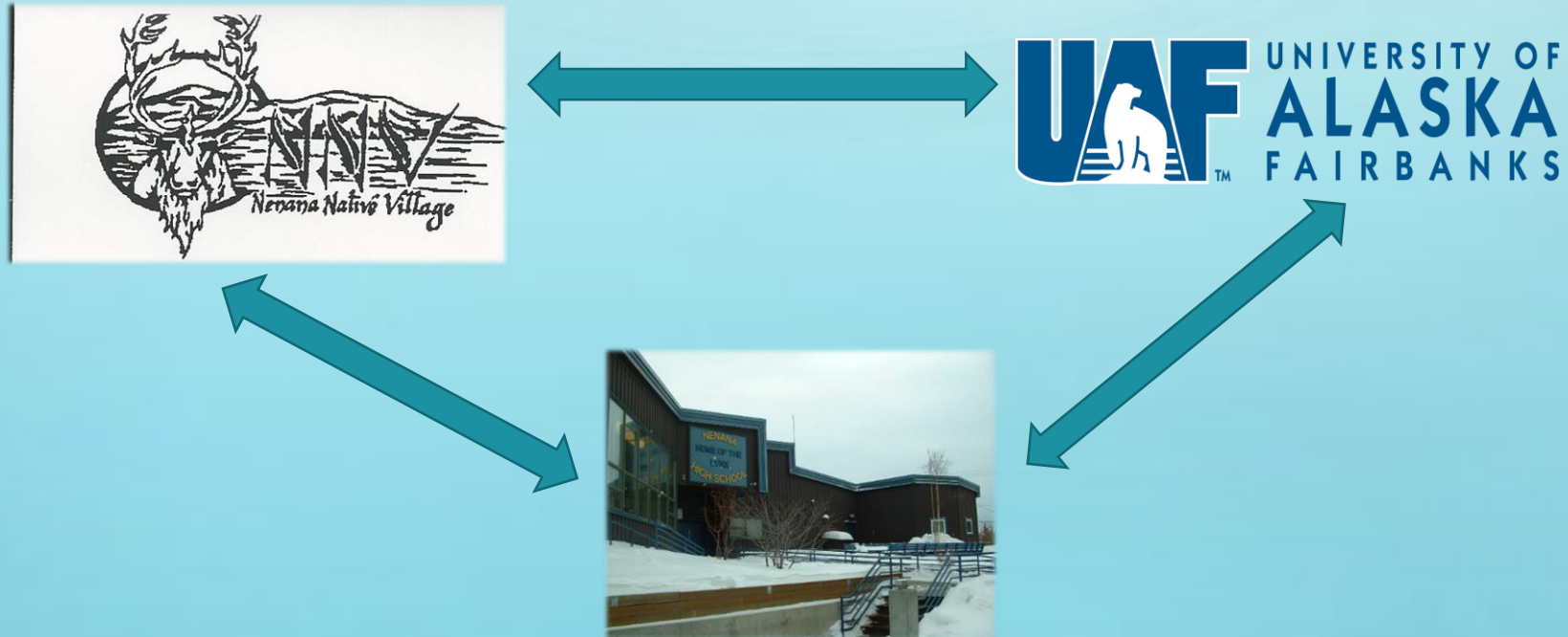
- Elder and adult mentorship for youth
- Reflection on sources of strength and resilience
- Digital storytelling

Purpose: To enhance personal & cultural resources of young people, and promote healthy narratives toward wellness

Partnership

IDEA was facilitated within a community-academic partnership between UAF, Nenana School, Nenana Native Association, & Railbelt Mental Health & Addictions

- integrates the expertise of diverse interdisciplinary university, school, tribal, and community members.
- Guided by Nenana Community Steering Committee (CSC)



Implementation of Program Activities

Intergenerational Sessions

Three sessions facilitated by research team, CSC, adult/Elder role models

- 85 youth viewed films and listened to role model stories
- Youth and adults/Elders engaged in talking-circles and interactive activities to reflect on strengths

Digital Story Development

Youth participated in digital storytelling workshops in which they:

- Developed scripts and storyboards
- Gathered images, videos, and music
- Recorded what they wanted to say
- Put together their digital stories in WeVideo

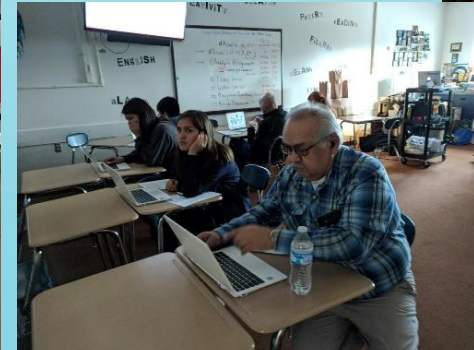
Digital Story Sharing

Youth were able to share digital stories with

- Classmates, teachers, researchers
- Friends, family, others

Via:

- Classroom & public showings, exhibition of learning, tribal gatherings, social media



Donald's Digital Story

YouTube

Search



Donald Charlie
Nenana Native Association
IDEA Steering Committee
Program Coordinator

2:53 / 8:48

CC HD

Intergenerational Dialogue Exchange and Action with Alaska Native Youth

Jovena's first digital story



Analyses

- Analyses conducted by multidisciplinary team including Psychology, Public Health, Alaska Native Studies & Rural Development, Elder and local community experiences.
 - Viewed & discussed transcripts, stories, & responses to identify themes, develop, and refine team-based codebooks
 - Uploaded transcripts, stories, and open-ended survey responses with themes to Atlas-ti for further analysis
 - Examined co-occurrences between themes in participants' stories
 - Used ORA-Scenes to examine networks of relationships between themes, and visualize clusters of themes.

Struggles and strengths in the digital stories

Themes Emerging from Digital Stories

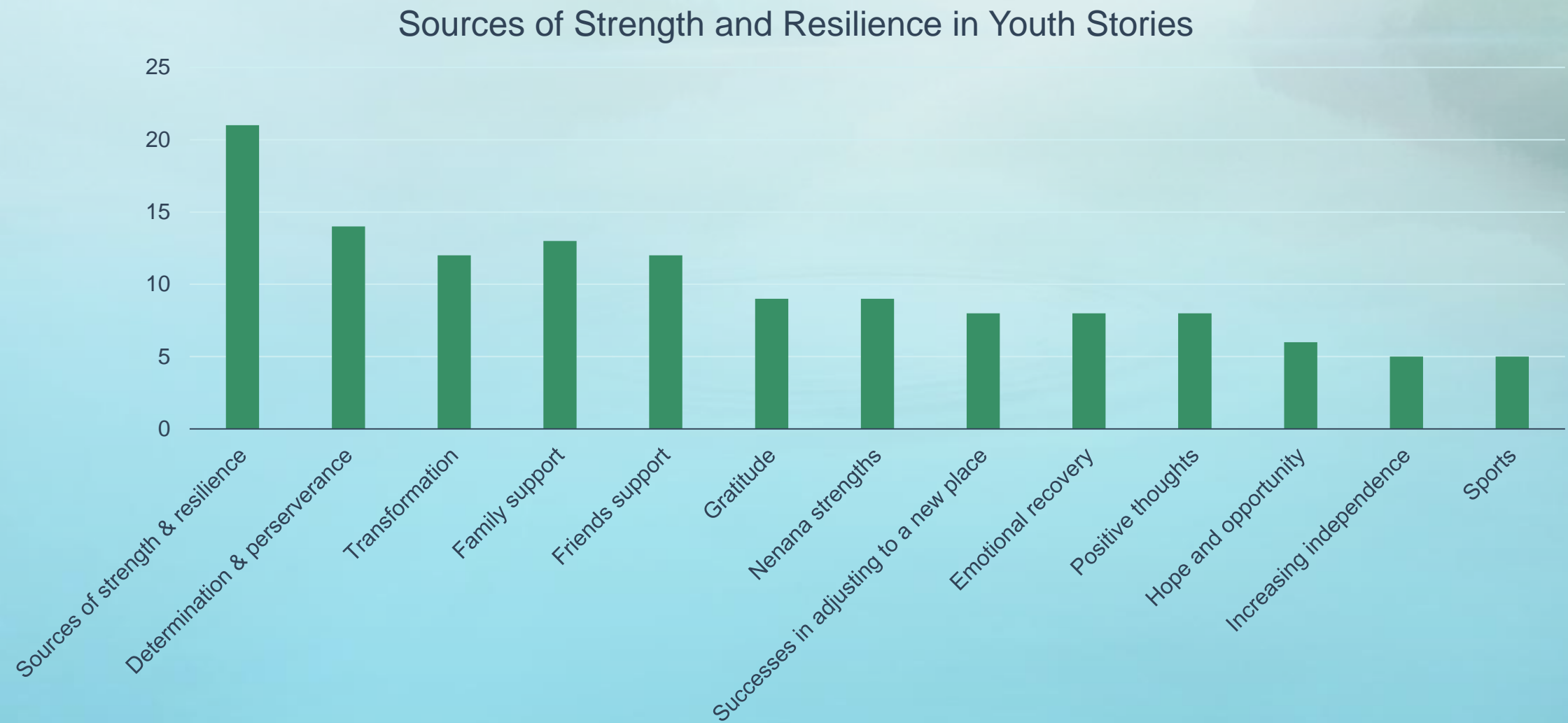
Struggles and hardships

- Homesickness
- Difficulties adjusting to a new place
- Feeling alone
- Family conflict
- Loss of loved ones

Sources of strength and resilience

- Determination and perseverance
- Transformation
- Support from family and friends
- Gratitude
- Emotional recovery
- Positive thoughts and thinking
- Hope and opportunity

Digital Story Themes

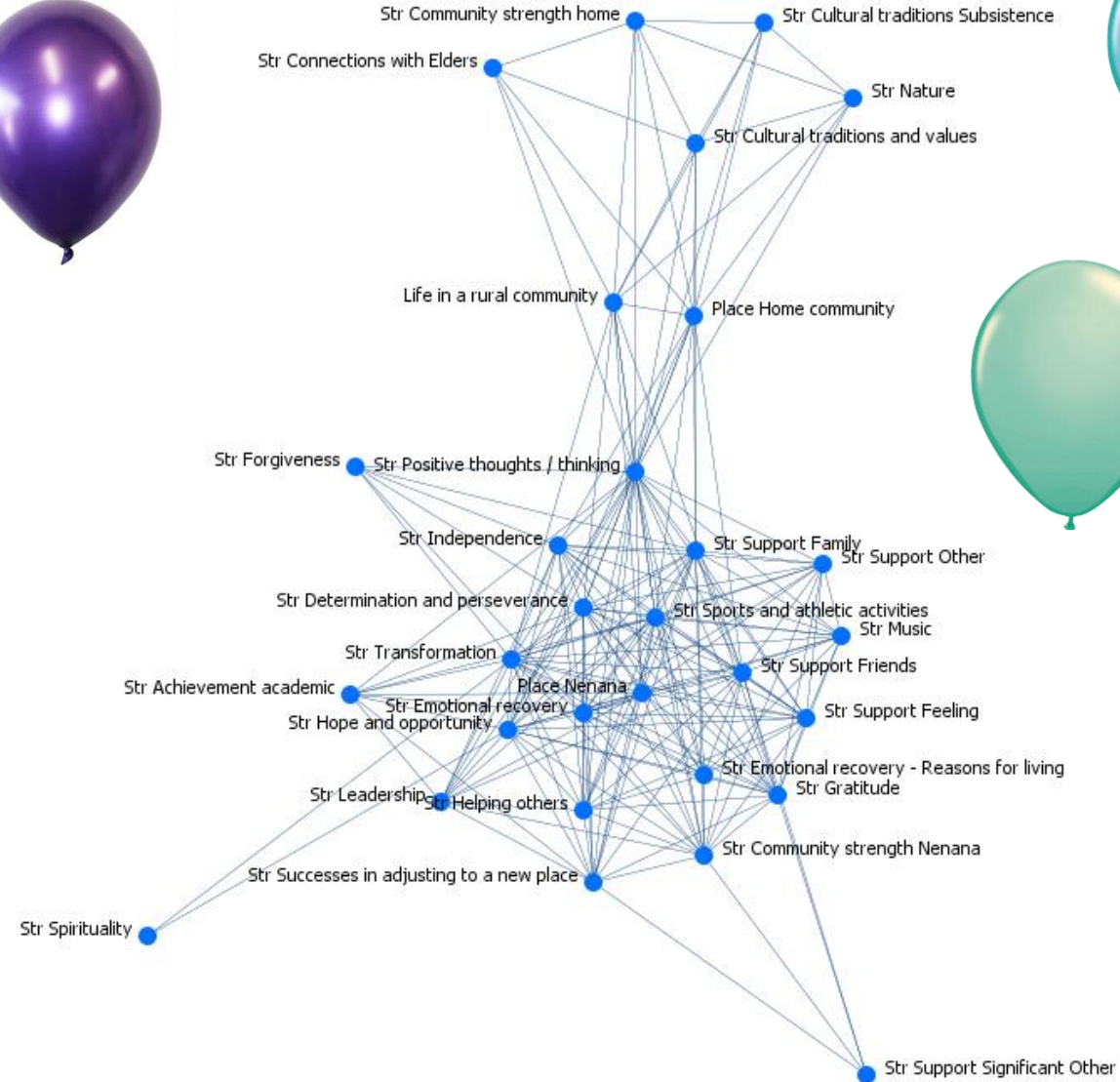


Network of strengths



Most central strengths in overall network:

- Transformation
- Determination & perseverance
- Positive thoughts and thinking
- Gratitude

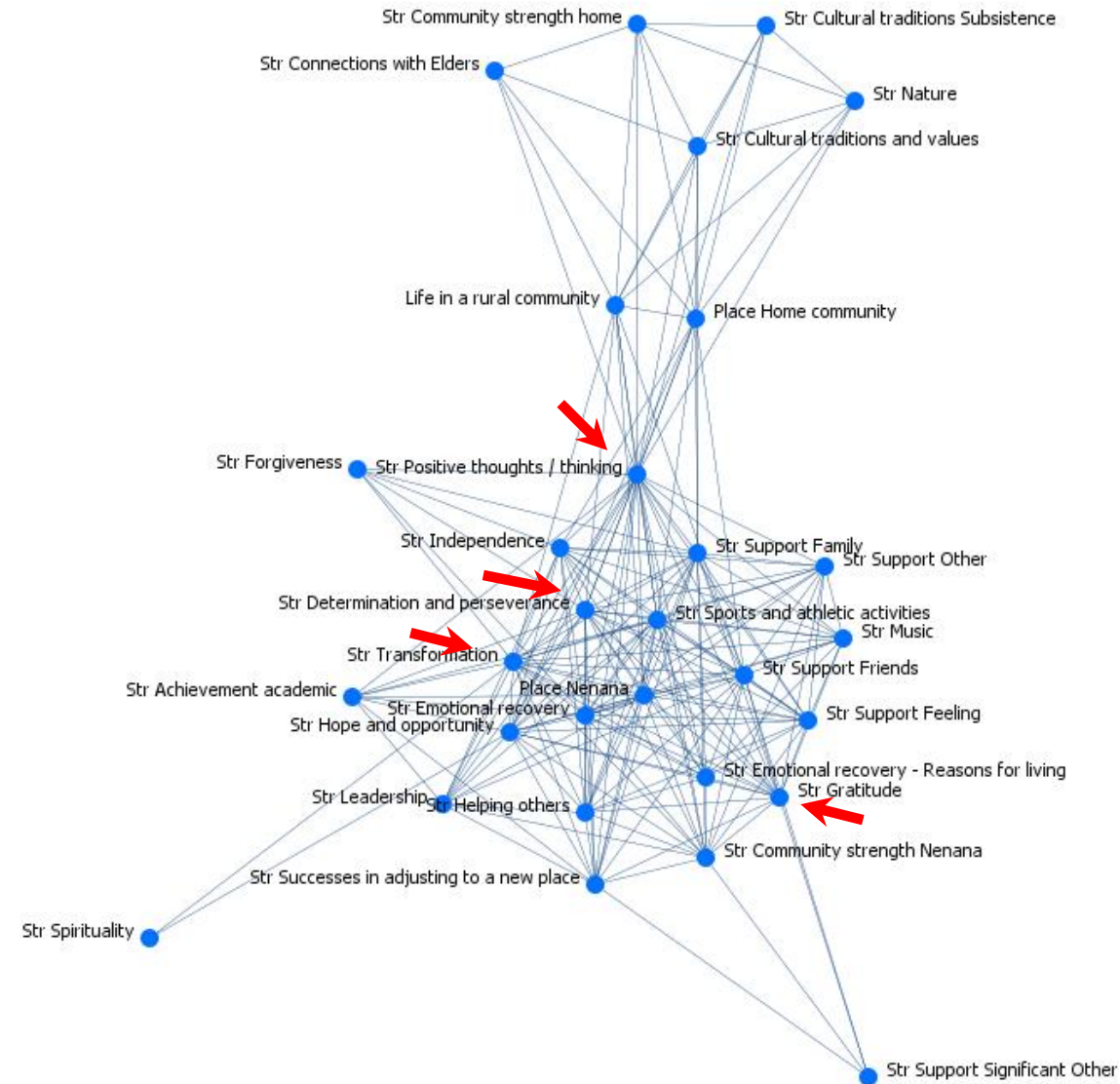


Network of strengths



Most central strengths in overall network:

- Transformation
- Determination & perseverance
- Positive thoughts and thinking
- Gratitude

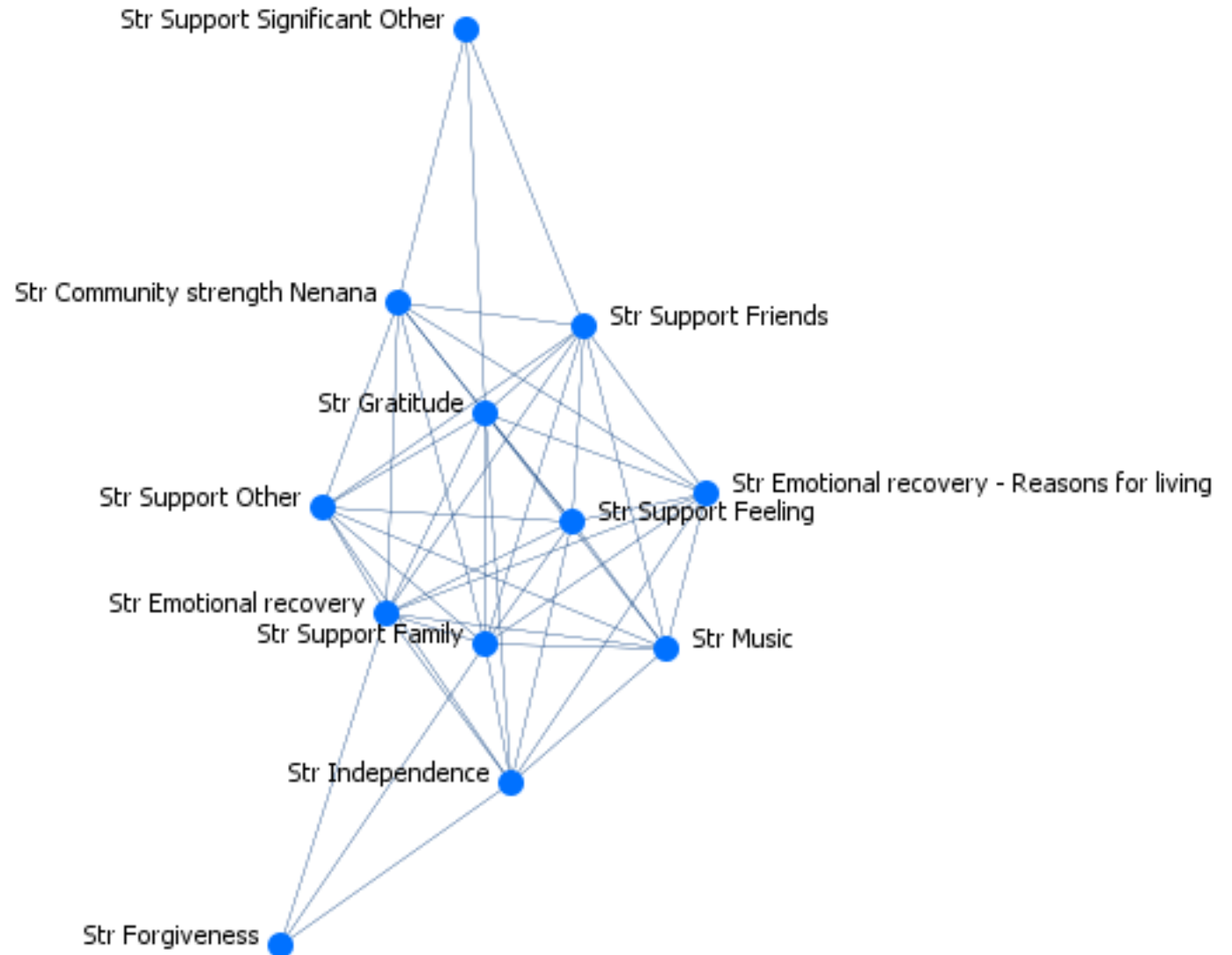


Clusters of strengths

Supportive environment

Most central themes in this cluster:

- Gratitude
- Emotional recovery
- Family support
- Community strengths Nenana

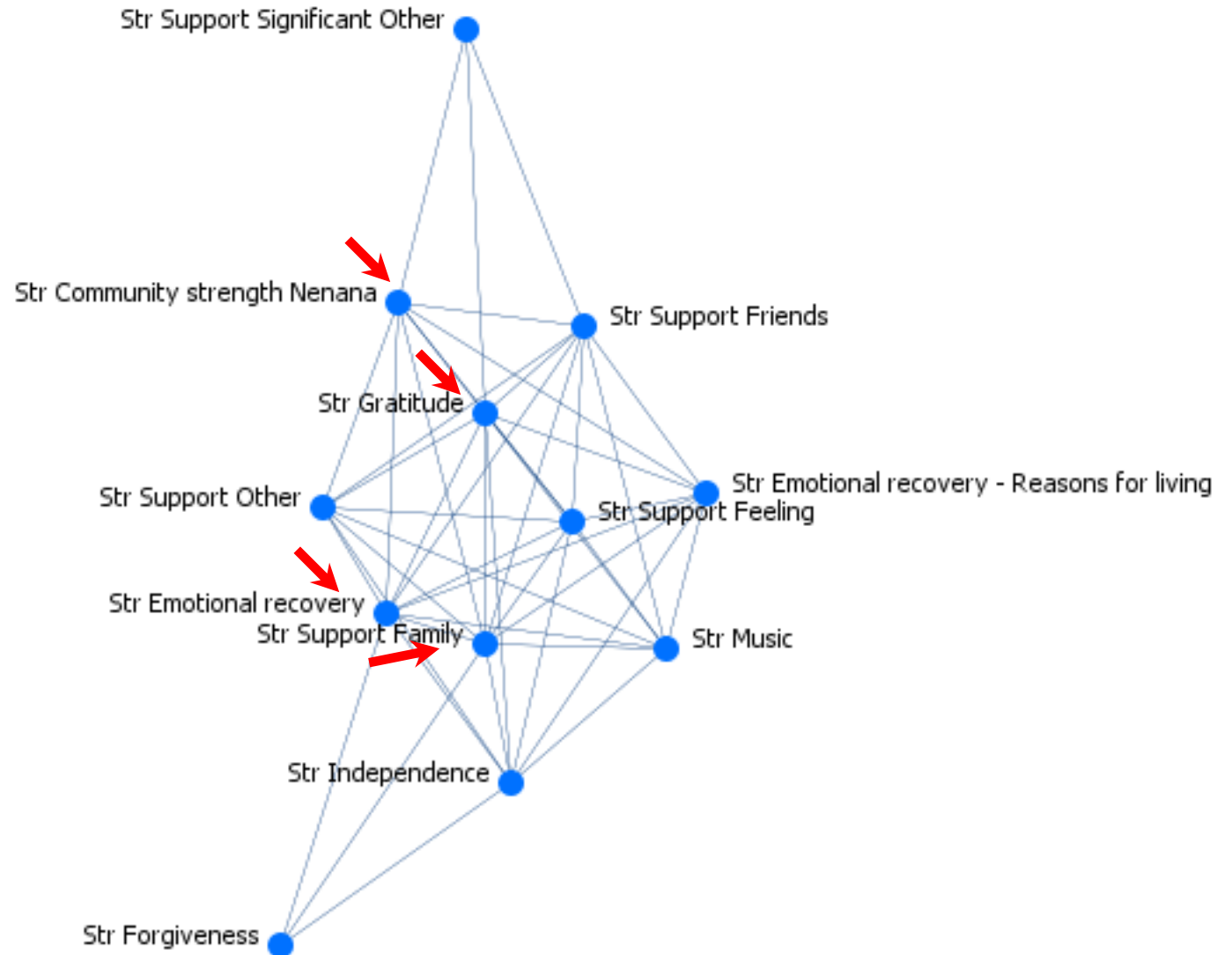


Clusters of strengths

Supportive environment

Most central themes in this cluster:

- Gratitude
- Emotional recovery
- Family support
- Community strengths Nenana



Sources of Strength and Resilience:

Supportive environment

- **Family support / Gratitude**

“My grandpa would’ve wanted me to be walking on and off that stage with my diploma, so it pushed me to work harder and catch up in my school work and I did so, so thankful for that. All the other family support I have they also pushed me during my hardest time. They were there for me helping me through it.”

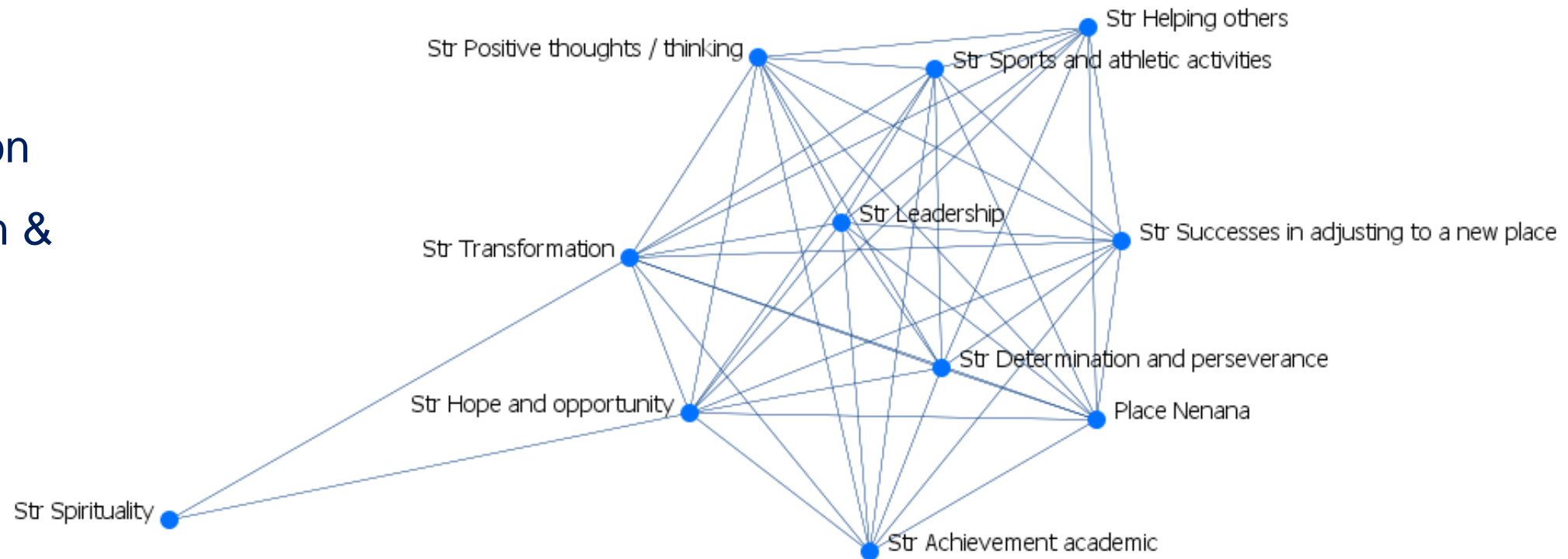
“My family is my biggest strength and my personality is now my biggest strength. I have bits and pieces from each of them. I took bits and pieces of their personalities and shaped it to something of my own, creating a very strong and unique personality. My family are my best friends and I know that I’ll always be able to rely on them. Without my family, I would not be the person I am today.”

Clusters of strengths

Growth in a new place

Most central themes in this cluster:

- Transformation
- Determination & perseverance
- Positive thoughts / thinking
- Hope & opportunity



Clusters of strengths

Growth in a new place

Most central themes in this cluster:

- Transformation
- Determination & perseverance
- Positive thoughts / thinking
- Hope & opportunity



Sources of Strength and Resilience:

Growth in a new place

- **Determination and perseverance / Transformation / Hope / Successes in adjusting to a new place**

“My strength is my determination. I have a mindset to achieve more and more every day.”

“I wanted to go back to my village, but within time I finally realized my calling in life. I started to throw away my bad habits, change my whole future and especially the way I thought. I wanted to better myself for my future and my siblings. I started to open up and express myself more. I’m glad I wanted to change myself for the better”

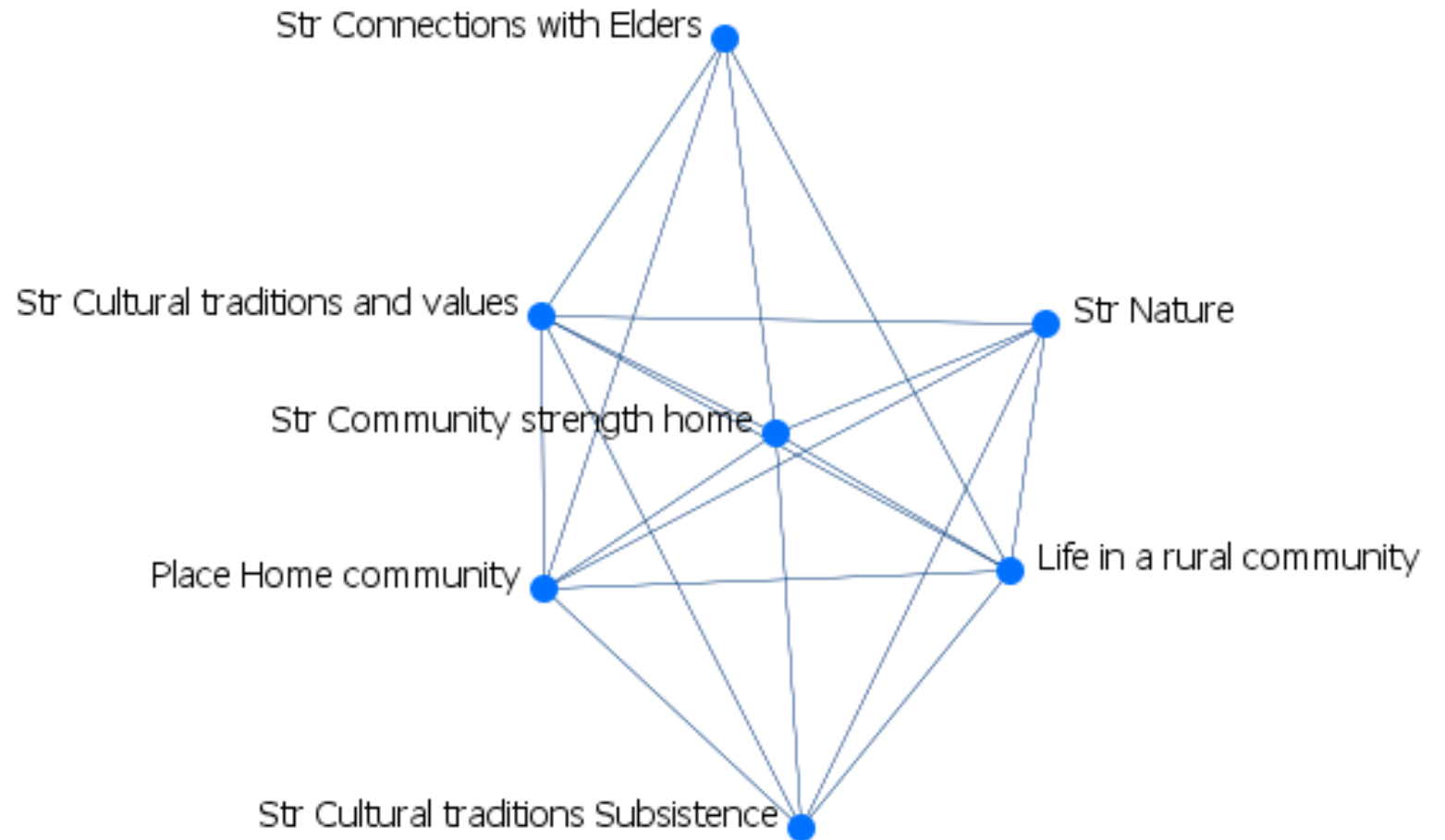
“Then more into the year I realized all the people here were just like me. They too were from small villages.”

Clusters of strengths

Connection to culture

Most central themes this cluster:

- Life in a rural community
- Place – home community
- Cultural traditions – subsistence
- Nature

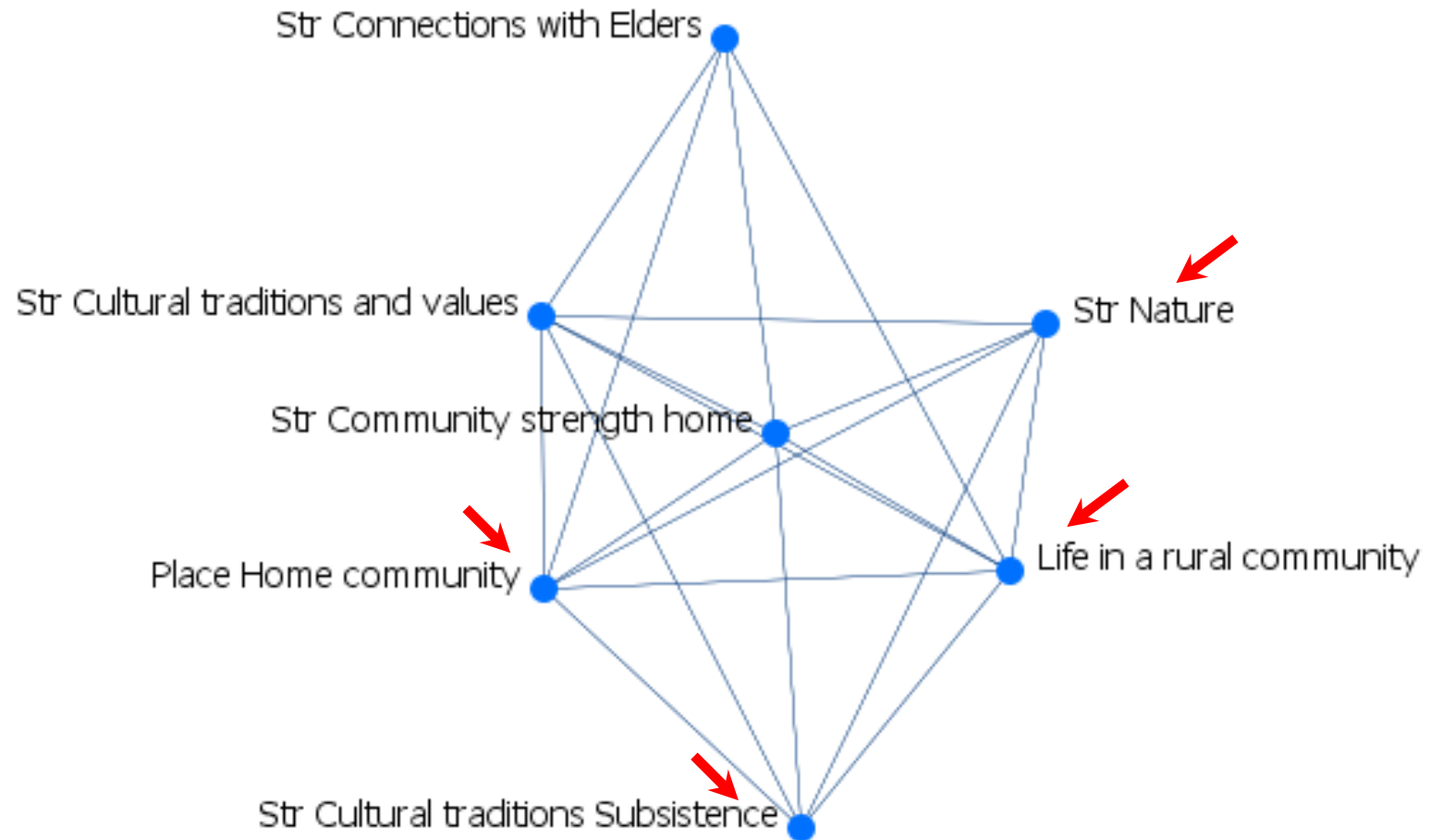


Clusters of strengths

Connection to culture

Most central themes this cluster:

- Life in a rural community
- Place – home community
- Cultural traditions – subsistence
- Nature



Sources of Strength and Resilience:

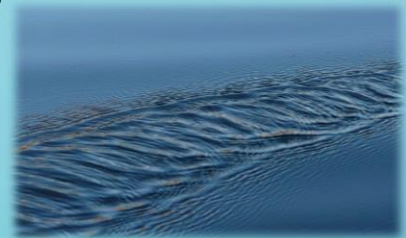
Connection to culture

- **Cultural traditions / Subsistence / Nature / Strengths in home community**

“The river brings joy to people, it provides very good transportation, it provides for our hunger, it’s very unique because you’ll never see anything like it around the world, besides the surrounding villages. It’s beautiful when the sun is shining on the water and when the tundra is bright.”

“Most of the time we learn by just watch and listen. Once you learn these you will enjoy the significance of Kotlik. Every now and then the Elders get with children and talk about life.... Our lifestyle is mainly about our culture. We hunt and gather for our food, the other half of our food comes from the local commercial store... And this is my personal strength.”

“I really like fishing. Fishing is one of my favorite things to do when I feel down. I grab my fishing box, fishing pole, food and drinks and go fishing at the river, or lake.”



In sum

The IDEA program helped:

- Youth connect with stories of resilience, and empowered them to recognize and express their own strengths through storytelling

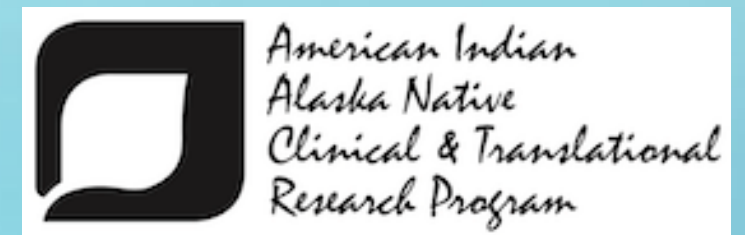
Implementing IDEA in Nenana resulted in:

- Stronger intergeneration and school-community connections
- Strategies to inform an intergenerational approach for wellness that's being adapted and extended to other Alaska Native communities

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank:

- School and community partners:
 - Nenana school, teachers, students
 - Nenana Native Association
 - Railbelt Mental Health & Addictions
 - Nenana Community Steering Committee
 - Maniilaq
 - Northwest Arctic Borough School District
- Research team
- Mentor (Lisa Wexler)
- Nenana pilot funded by the Alaska INBRE pilot research grant
 - an Institutional Development Award (IDeA) from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences of the National Institutes of Health, *grant number P20GM103395*.
- Kotzebue expansion funded by AI/AN CTRP pilot research grant
 - *supported by the National Institute of General Medical Sciences of the National Institutes of Health under Award Number U54GM115371.*
 - <http://www.montana.edu/aian/about-us/index.html>



Commonalities between the projects

- Integrate Indigenous methods of storytelling and intergenerational learning with newer methods of digital storytelling and photovoice
 - Helps youth open up and share their stories
- Integrates Indigenous viewpoints and Western social science research
 - Alaska Native cultural values
 - Traditional cultural practices (Elders teaching youth)
 - Social and cultural capital
 - Research on importance of mentorship, intergenerational connections, cultural identity, and narrative development for youth well-being

Commonalities between the projects

- Illustrate importance of
 - Intergenerational sharing of stories and cultural strengths
 - Culture as a source of resilience for youth
 - Sense of place, and connection to place
 - Community driven process
 - Flexibility



Q & A

- What questions do you have about the projects?
- What are some of the strengths that stood out for you in the stories and presentations?
- What do these stories tell us about resilience?
- How can we build on what has been learned?
- How can we build towards sustainability?
 - continue to build intergenerational connections despite challenges posed by COVID-19
 - Integrate programs into existing community structures
 - Build on cultural and community strengths