

## CEP Magazine – January 2021

### Meet Renée Wardlaw: Enhancing processes is just the tip of the iceberg

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Renée Wardlaw, Senior Director of Corporate Compliance and Associate General Counsel for Bristol Bay Native Corporation in Anchorage, Alaska, USA.

Renée Wardlaw ([rwardlaw@bbnc.net](mailto:rwardlaw@bbnc.net)) was interviewed by Adam Turteltaub ([adam.turteltaub@corporatecompliance.org](mailto:adam.turteltaub@corporatecompliance.org)), Chief Engagement & Strategy Officer at SCCE & HCCA.

**AT:** First, it would be good if you could give an overview of the Bristol Bay Native Corporation’s purpose and structure. It’s unique.

**RW:** Unique is an understatement. Bristol Bay Native Corporation (BBNC) was established by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 with the mission of “Enriching Our Native Way of Life.” Headquartered in Anchorage, Alaska, BBNC works to protect the land in Bristol Bay, celebrate the legacy of its people, and enhance the lives of its shareholders—the Native people of Southwest Alaska’s Bristol Bay region. BBNC has five separate and distinct business lines, which include industrial services, government services, construction, tourism, and seafood. Our businesses are diversified with successful operations that house subject matter expertise in specific industries. While we are a for-profit corporation, we are unique in that our shareholders receive dividends derived from business profits. We are proud to work in partnership with our subsidiaries to ensure that all employees are operating with integrity and fulfilling BBNC’s mission to enrich the lives of our shareholders.

**AT:** Like many other native organizations, you are also a government contractor. What kind of complexity does that add to the compliance program?

**RW:** It is a bit complex, but I’ll try to explain it simply. Alaska Native corporations are eligible to participate in the Small Business Administration (SBA) 8(a) Business Development Program and, by federal statute, are deemed socially and economically disadvantaged. BBNC has been involved in government contracting since early 2000 and has been fortunate to have minimal turnover in key leadership. Those key leaders have in-depth technical and management experience to navigate the regulations and complexities pertaining to government contracting. Applicable laws are routinely updated and strictly enforced with severe penalties for offenses. It is critical to have a compliance program that meets mandatory requirements: qualified personnel, processes and policies, mandated training, internal controls, and reporting obligations. Our code of ethics provides an overarching resource to all employees and includes a specific section on the importance of business ethics and integrity in government contracting. Additionally, we have a network of employees enterprise-wide who have expertise in specialized areas of government contracting in the SBA 8(a) program.

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