

First Alaskans Institute

**2011 ELDERS & YOUTH CONFERENCE REPORT
OCTOBER 17-19, 2011
DENA'INA CIVIC & CONVENTION CENTER
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA**

Overview

First Alaskans Institute hosted the 28th Annual Elders & Youth Conference in Anchorage, Alaska at the Dena'ina Civic & Convention Center on October 17-19, 2011. This final conference report includes planning activities, the participation of the conference planning project team as well as the Elders and Youth Council, registration information, an overview of the conference agenda and highlights, the regional caucus reports, communications, development, the Opportunities Expo, conference evaluation and a link to photos.

Conference Theme

Honoring the Past, Celebrating the Present, Preparing for the Future

Through the wisdom of our Elders we honor the past. By celebrating the present we acknowledge how far we have come and we rejoice in our resiliency, and with our youth we prepare for the future.

Conference Planning Project Team

First Alaskans Institute recognizes the Conference planning team: Shirley Tuzroyluke (Tlingit), Amber Thomas (Iñupiaq), Dewey Hoffman (Koyukon Athabascan), Krista Lamp (Tlingit), Elizabeth Rexford (Iñupiaq), and Nelson Carpluk (Yup'ik).

The planning committee contributed greatly to guiding the structure of the overall three-day event, and organizing the agenda through identifying speakers, presenters, and dance groups.

Elders and Youth Council

The 2011 Elder and Youth Council members were elected during the 2010 Elders & Youth Conference. Council members identified the conference theme, and meaningful ways in which Elders and youth would interact and how each participant would benefit from his or her activities. The following representatives were active in conference planning and communications:

- Lucille Lincoln, Glennallen – Ahtna Region Elder Representative
- George Olemaun, Barrow – ASRC Region Elder Representative
- Josiah Patkotak, Barrow – ASRC Region Youth Representative
- Nivi Brandt, Nome – BSNC Region Youth Representative
- Bob Aloysius, Kalskag – Calista Region Elder Representative
- Gloria Wik, Kenai – CIRI Region Elder Representative
- Kate Schadle, Kenai – CIRI Region Youth Representative
- Shyla Krukoff, Cordova – Chugach Region Youth Representative
- Margaret Roberts, Kodiak – Koniag Region Elder Representative
- Tamara Swenson, Old Harbor – Koniag Region Youth Representative
- Brett Kirk, Noatak – NANA Region Youth Representative
- Marlene Johnson, Juneau – Sealaska Region Elder Representative

Conference Staffing

Each FAI staff member was involved in planning, preparing, attending and following up on the conference. Staff included Stephen Blanchett, Lena Jacobs, Tammy Keith, Kristel Komakhuk, Liz Medicine Crow, Denise Morris, Jorie Paoli, Andrea Sanders and Leann Sommer. Leandra Ross with Tsilten Management Group was hired as a consultant to assist in preparing for the conference.

The FAI Board of Trustees also participated in the planning and execution of the conference. Members include Valerie Davidson, Sven Haakanson, Jr., Willie Hensley, Sam Kito, Albert Kookesh, Sylvia Lange, Oliver Leavitt, Georgianna Lincoln, and Byron Mallott.

Registration

In 2011 there were 520 youth registrants, 437 Elder registrants, and 257 chaperones registered. The total number of registrants was 1,214.

There were also several conference participants who did not register, and it is believed that there were at least 1,400 who attended the conference.

Call for Presentations and Agenda Development

In August a call for presentations was issued to the public, soliciting conference presenters, panels, and workshop topics. Preference was given to Alaska Native presenters. Nearly 60 proposals were received, and were reviewed by the planning committee for:

- Clarity of proposal
- Emphasis on interaction between Elders and Youth
- Relevance to the conference theme
- Connections to the conference purpose and outcomes
- Engagement and interaction with participants during the presentation
- Appeal to the Elders and youth audience
- Usefulness to participants

The Committee sought to create a balanced agenda which included a number of issues that remain important to Alaska Native Elders and youth. These issues included culture, language, identity, climate change, subsistence, traditional foods, energy, ANCSA history, Alaska history, storytelling, dance instruction, education, health and wellness, spirituality, community building, successful models of youth and elder programs. The final agenda can be downloaded from the First Alaskans Institute website at www.firstalaskans.org.

Keynote Speakers

Three keynote speakers were chosen to represent the three different parts of the theme: *Honoring the Past, Celebrating the Present, Preparing for the Future*.

Honoring the Past : Adele Argaitchiaq Solski

Adele's Inupiaq name is Argaitchiaq and she was named after her aaka, Mary Kanayurak, from Barrow. She is currently a senior at Lathrop High School in Fairbanks. Adele has grown up in Fairbanks with her parents, Shelby Solski from Fairbanks, and Robert Coates from Barrow. She just recently met her birth mom Martha Ahkivgak from Barrow. Adele is Inupiaq Eskimo and has been eagerly learning about Alaska Native cultures, especially her original one. The obstacles of being away from the land where her culture thrives the most has pushed her to learn more. Her high school years have been an amazing journey and opportunity to continue this learning. There are many people that have helped Adele, taught her, and inspired her to do more and she thanks them from the bottom of her heart and spirit. She is very excited to participate and speak at the Elders & Youth Conference. In regards to the conference, Adele wrote "It is important to participate in the Elders & Youth Conference because it helps us re-create the connection between us. It is important for the Elders to teach us and share with us because that is how our people learn."

Celebrating the Present : John Quniaq Baker

Born in Kotzebue, John is the son of Marge Baker and the late Bob Baker; the original Team Baker who started an air taxi together. Raised in the family business where everyone worked, including the Baker children, John learned the value of hard work and collaborating with others – especially his siblings. Throughout his life, John loved being outdoors and sought opportunities to learn everything he could about traditional ways of living in the Arctic and became fascinated with sled dogs. After his first Iditarod in 1996, John believed that he and his dogs could win the race and in 2011 Team Baker won the Iditarod, breaking the record by four hours! John's story is that of one who has faced a variety of challenges while staying focused. "Dream, Try, Win" is John's motto and he emphasizes the importance of having a dream; setting goals to pursue what is desired; and taking action to make the dream a reality.

Preparing for the Future: Elaine Chooshaa Abraham

Elaine was born in Yakutat, of the Raven moiety, the clan of Copper River, from the Shaman's Owl House and is the daughter of the Brown Bear. Mt. St. Elias is her clan crest. Her mother was Susie Bremmer, whose grandfather was John James Bremmer from Scotland, the guide for Lt. Allen who explored the Copper River area. Elaine's father was a Tlingit Chief from Yakutat from the Brown Bear Moiety. Elaine went to boarding school at Sheldon Jackson High School. After graduating, she went to nursing school in Ganado, Arizona, graduated and returned to Alaska as the first Tlingit registered nurse. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Human Resources Development from APU; a Masters of Arts in Teaching from Alaska Pacific University (APU); and is currently pursuing a PhD in natural health. Currently, Elaine is building bridges between Alaska Natives and scientists, promoting cutting edge approaches to understanding climate change around the globe as the Chair of the Alaska Native Science Commission.

Plenary Speakers

The plenary sessions included several different panels.

Strength of our Men: This panel was hosted by Haven Harris and Lee Ryan who led a discussion with several men on the panel regarding the topic of Alaska Native men today. A discussion followed the panel in which conference participants responded to the prompt “What do we appreciate most about our Native men?”

Tribute to our Elders: Prior to the conference, an invitation was issued to the public to submit photos of Elders. All the photos were compiled into a video slideshow that was presented to the entire audience. Following the video, conference participants were invited to share what they appreciate about our Elders on an open mic.

Our Empowered Voices: Knowing Our Structures and Our Roles: This discussion was moderated by Liz Hensley and included Natasha Singh and Ralph Wolfe who talked about ANCSA and roles of tribes and corporations.

Power of our Women: This panel was hosted by Andrea Sanders and Jorie Paoli who led a discussion with several women on the panel regarding the topic of Alaska Native women today. A discussion followed the panel in which conference participants responded to the prompt “What do we appreciate most about our Native women?”

Special Agenda Features

Language Circle: This year marked the third year that the language circle breakout was incorporated into the conference agenda. Participants were invited to break out into the language of their choice, and spent the afternoon discussing and learning Alaska Native languages.

Women’s House and Men’s House: This year a new feature was added to the agenda. Men and women were invited to separate and attend a women’s house and a men’s house, to discuss women’s and men’s issues for a full afternoon on the third day of the conference.

Allison Warden, Aku-Matu, helped host the conference as MC and rapper, while inviting a group of young MCs to join her on the stage to MC the conference. This was the second year audience volunteers were invited to MC to practice their public speaking skills and develop their leadership abilities.

The Alaska Native Heritage Center youth group organized several “Bust a Move” activities throughout the conference to get participants up and moving.

Southcentral Foundation and the cast/staff of The Winter Bear made free tickets available for conference participants to watch the play during the conference.

Round tables were set up in the main conference room, rather than theater style seating. This enabled small group discussion and interaction throughout the conference.

A Native Youth Olympics competition was also set up on the main floor of the convention center for youth to participate in throughout the conference.

The Opportunities Expo hosted a BINGO game for participants to win prizes for visiting booths.

Several special events were hosted during the lunch hour of the gathering. Downtown Rotary hosted a lunch for Elders with transportation provided by the Alaska Native Heritage Center. The Covenant House also hosted a lunch for conference participants. A special film premiere of *Camp Pigaaq* and lunch was also available during the lunch break on day one of the conference.

Workshops

The call for presentations identified relevant workshops in which conference participants could meet and share creative ideas, opinions, solutions, and stories. Workshops were built around the conference theme and were facilitated by a number of community organizations from throughout Alaska. The following 23 workshops were available to participants during two separate back-to-back sessions:

- Indigenizing Education: Creating Space & Place for Alaska Native Students
 - Maria Williams, Beth Leonard
- Bush Physics for the 21st Century
 - Daniel Solie
- Mental Decolonization in Greenland and Alaska: Comparing Issues
 - Aviaja Egede Lynge
- Resiliency and the Impacts of Colonization
 - Vicki Hykes Steere, Cynthia Bolivar
- Teens Acting Against Violence
 - Elizabeth Stegeman, Yvonne Aloralrea, Kisha Lee, KC D’Onfro, Alfred Michael
- Natural Helpers: Helpers of Today, Leaders of Tomorrow
 - Elias Kelly, Reynold Okitkun
- Troth Yeddha' Nutrition Project
 - Sarah McConnell, Flora Deacon, Dorothy Savage
- Creating Our Future By Sharing Our Past and Honoring Today
 - Flossie Spencer
- The Circle of Life, Connecting Elders and Youth
 - Pearl Brower, Gloria Lomuscio, April Phillip, Janelle Everett
- Dialogue with Elders & Youth, AK Congressional Delegation
 - Kristi Williams, Tiffany Zulkosky, Mary Hiratsuka
- Finances and Credit: What You Need to Know
 - Wells Fargo
- Access to Higher Education
 - Holly Stebing, Olga Skinner
- Building Native Communities: Financially Fit Teens
 - Jon Panamaroff, Jaci Ree
- Climate Change Impacts on Rural Alaska's Natural Resource Harvesting Practices
 - Larissa Sommer
- Speaking Out in Our Own Language: Traditional Languages of Alaska and the Law
 - Thomas Stenson

- My Native Identity: A Race-y Issue
 - Margaret David, Warren Jones, Liz Hensley
- Connecting Alaskans to Prevent Suicide-Social Media Tools and Opportunities
 - Kate Burkhart, Thomas Chard, Teressa Baldwin
- Learning From the Past, Planning for the Future: Strategies for Youth Violence, Bullying, and Suicide Prevention
 - Theresa Devlin, Scott Haigley, Denise Middlebrook
- Developing a Lesson Plan Using a Story About "Seaweed Picking Time"
 - Della Cheney
- The Success of the Elder Mentor Program in Rural Alaska-Who Are Our Heroes?
 - Jenny Bell
- Know Your Rights
 - Imari Rene Anthony Rouzan
- Let's Talk Subsistence!
 - Alannah Hurley, Verner Wilson III, Frank Woods, Stacey Rolf, Violet Wilson
- Village Relocation Efforts: Mapping, Policy & Creative Solutions
 - Victoria Hykes Steere, Michael Loso Michelle

Dance Groups

The dance presentations were a highlight of the three-day conference. Thanks go to members of the following groups: Acilquq Singers and Dancers, Yurapik Dancers, Alaska Native Heritage Center Dancers, Te Vaka, Nuvurakmiut Dancers, Yakutat Dancers, and Naa Luudisk Gwaii Yátx'í. A grand dance finale was organized at part of the closing ceremonies on the last day of the conference in which multiple dance groups shared the stage during multiple rounds of singing and dancing.

Regional Breakout Sessions

During Regional breakout sessions participants elected their new Elder and youth representatives. The following are the results from the regional caucuses:

Ahtna	
	Elder Representative: Lucille Lincoln
	Youth Representative: Cassela John
Aleut	
	Elder Representative: Carol Melovidov
	Youth Representative: John Wayne Melovidov
ASRC	
	Elder Representative: Molly Pederson
	Youth Representative: Angel Burris
BSNC	
	Elder Representative: Irene Mosquito
	Youth Representative: Esau Sinnok
BBNC	
	Elder Representative: Joe Chythlook
	Youth Representative: William Lind

Calista	
	Elder Representative: Mary Hill
	Youth Representative: Chelsea McKindy
Chugach	
	Elder Representative: David Totemoff, Sr.
	Youth Representative: Agnes Nichols
CIRI	
	Elder Representative: Nicholas Pestrikoff, Jr.
	Youth Representative: Vivian Pomeroy
Doyon	
	Elder Representative: Pearl Chanar
	Youth Representative: Gerald Patsy
Koniag	
	Elder Representative: Margaret Roberts
	Youth Representative: Peter Squartsoff
NANA	
	Elder Representative: Alice Burge
	Youth Representative: Anne Marie Walker
Sealaska	
	Elder Representative: Cindy Wagner
	Youth Representative: Marty Lopez

Communications

Print mail:

Over 2,400 Save the Date cards were mailed to schools, tribes, corporations, government offices, regional and local non-profits, supporting organizations, and individuals in May. Three letters soliciting sponsorships and one letter soliciting door prizes were also mailed.

Electronic mail:

E-mail updates were sent out as opportunities and updates became available.

Social Media:

A Facebook page "FAI Elders and Youth Conference" was created for the conference where conference updates were posted. Before the page was created, updates were posted to the First Alaskans Institute page. Twitter feeds were also frequently made regarding the conference, and were linked to the FAI webpage and Facebook pages.

Radio:

KNBA and KWHL began airing four PSAs two weeks prior to the conference. Two people from the Alaska Native Heritage Center, Allison Warden and Stephen Blanchett recorded the PSAs.

TV:

TV coverage of the conference was available to every village and city in the state through GCI Cable, ARCS, and 360 North. 360 North rebroadcasted the conference in November.

Website:

Blueberry Productions provided conference web casting. Through web casting viewers were able to log onto the internet, watch conference proceedings, and leave comments. Over the course of the three-day conference there were 61,000 viewing minutes, 6,000 streams, and 521 distinct viewers and the chat room was very active. Updates were made frequently to the Elders and Youth link on the website as they became available.

Media credential applications were received by Alaska Business Monthly, Alaska Dispatch, Alaska Public Radio Network, Anchorage Daily News, Associated Press, KACN, KFQD, KNOM, Koahnic Broadcast Corporation, KNBA, KTUU, KTVA, Marissa Krupa Adventures, Weber Shandwick, Your Alaska Link KTBY/KYUR.

A special thanks to Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau for hosting the media table.

Development Efforts

First Alaskans recognizes the sponsors who support Alaska Native Elders, youth and healthy communities. The total amount raised through development efforts for 2011 was \$127,250.00.

The following Leader Level sponsors contributed \$10,000: Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, NANA Regional Corporation and Wells Fargo.

The following Mentor Level sponsors contributed between \$5,000 and \$9,999: Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, BP, ConocoPhillips, Donlin Gold, GCI, Rasmuson Foundation, Shell Exploration and Teck.

The following Teacher Level sponsors contributed between \$2,500 and \$4,999: Association of Alaska School Boards, Chugach Alaska Corporation, Doyon Limited, Ilisagvik College, Kennecott Exploration Company, Pioneer Natural Resources Inc., and Stalolil Gulf Services LLC.

The following Youth Level sponsors contributed \$1,000 and below: Afognak Native Corporation, Alaska Democratic Party, Alaska Permanent Capital Management, The Aleut Corporation, CIRI, Cook Inlet Housing Authority, Eyak Corporation, Linford of Alaska, Municipal Light & Power, Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation, Princess Cruises, Scott McAdams, and The Tatitlek Corporation.

The following sponsors contributed door prizes: ACVB, Aassanaaq Kairaiuak, Alaska Dispatch, Alaska Native Heritage Center, Alaska Pacific University, Alaska Wild Berry Products, Aleut Corporation, Allure, Andrea Sanders, Anna Hoover, ANPA, AVTEC, Bosco's, Calista, Club Paris, Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Costco Wholesale, Della Cheney, Dino's Donuts, Don Rearden, Donlin Gold, Drew Michael, Everts Air Cargo, Institute of Social and Economic Research, KNBA, Koahnic Broadcast Corporation, Liz & Cloud Medicine Crow, Melody Lee Gleichman, Moose's Tooth, NICWA, Once In A Blue Moose, Pamyua, Rasmuson Foundation, Red Robin, Sacks Café and Restaurant, Snow City Café, Southcentral Foundation and Westmark Hotels.

The Alaska Native Arts Foundation donated gifts for the conference keynote speakers.

Opportunities Expo Vendors

First Alaskans Institute collaborated with Alaska Native Professionals Association to host the Opportunities Expo. Bridget McCleskey was contracted to coordinate the expo. Sixty organizations exhibited at the expo. Expo vendors included:

- Alaska Brain Injury Network
- Alaska Christian College
- Alaska Division of Fire and Life Safety
- Alaska Energy Authority
- Alaska Federal Health Care Partnership
- Alaska Job Corps
- Alaska Native Heritage Center
- Alaska Native Professional Association
- Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program
- Alaska Pacific University
- Alaska Summer Research Academy
- Alaska VA Healthcare System
- Alyeska Pipeline Service Company
- American Association of Retired People
- Arctic Slope Regional Corporation
- AVTEC-Alaska's Institute of Technology
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Alaska
- Bristol Bay Native Corporation
- Calista Corporation
- Central Intelligence Agency
- CH2M HILL
- Chugach Regional Resources Commission
- College Horizons
- Cook Inlet Tribal Council
- DARE Alaska-Alaska State Troopers
- Donlin Gold
- Federal Aviation Administration
- First Alaskans Institute
- Future Educators of Alaska
- Holland American Princess-Alaska | Yukon
- State of Alaska, Statewide Suicide Prevention Council
- State of Alaska, Village Public Safety Officer Program
- Ilisagvik College
- Kenai Peninsula College
- Lewis and Clark Law School
- Local 367 Plumbers and Steamfitters
- Mt. Edgecumbe High School
- NANA Development Corporation
- NANA Management Services
- National Park Service
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Nunamta Aulukestai
- Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Inc.
- Sealaska Corporation
- Southcentral Foundation
- Alaska Commission on Post Secondary Education
- State of Alaska, DHSS, DPA, Field Services
- State of Alaska, Regulatory Commission
- Tanana Chiefs Conference
- Tyonek Native Corporation
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- UAA-Native Student Services
- UAF-College of Rural & Community Development
- UAF-College of Rural & Community Development
- UAF-Rural Alaska Honors Institute
- UAF-Rural Student Services
- UAF-School of Management/Northern Leadership Center/Business Week
- UAF-UAA Joint PhD in Clinical-Community Psychology Program
- United Way of Anchorage
- University of Alaska Southeast
- Wipro Technologies

Volunteers

Approximately 90 volunteers committed their time to supporting the Elders & Youth Conference. Volunteers included bag stuffers, registrars, greeters, runners, facilitators, young MCs and recorders for regional breakout sessions. A special thanks to all those who donated their time!

Conference Evaluation

Conference participants were given an evaluation each day of the conference. The evaluation questions were targeted at evaluating the goals of the conference from an indigenous perspective. Some of the fields included:

- Please check all that apply in regards to YOUR experience at the Conference today:
 - I was inspired
 - I was mentored
 - I learned something new about myself
 - I learned at least one word in my language
 - Someone listened to me today
 - I am proud of my Native identity

- I heard something that motivated me to make a change in my (circle all that apply):
 - Personal Life
 - Family
 - Community

- I 'Indigenized It!' today by (circle all that apply):
 - Using a Native Value
 - Using my Native Language
 - Sharing my Cultural Knowledge

- I developed my leadership skills by (circle all that apply):
 - Sharing ideas
 - Listening
 - Participating
 - Encouraging others

- I connected with a (circle all that apply):
 - Elder
 - Youth
 - Adult

- I learned about (circle all that apply):
 - My culture
 - Another Native Culture
 - Other Culture

The most frequent words used to respond to the question “*What was great about the Conference today?*” were:

Conference participants were encouraged and challenged by keynote speakers and workshop hosts to take their learning from the conference home with them and to implement new ways of being and thinking into their daily lives. John Baker encouraged participants to set goals and follow through with resilience and determination, sharing his experience of racing the Iditarod 16 times before finally winning and not giving up to achieve that goal. Elaine Abraham challenged participants to return to their communities and learn about traditional ceremonies, such as Native naming ceremonies, and if the knowledge is no longer available, then to create new ceremonies. Aviaja Lynge, during her workshop on decolonization, challenged participants to find ways to decolonize our culture, our people, and ourselves and take back our indigenous ways. Creating these learning and wisdom sharing opportunities between generations is the foundation of the conference and is essential to the wellness of Alaska Native peoples.

More Information & Photos

More information about the conference is available on the First Alaskans Institute website: www.firstalaskans.org. A slideshow of photos taken by Oscar Edwin Avellaneda is available at: <http://2011eldersyouthconference.shutterfly.com>.