

First Alaskans Institute



Progress for the Next 10,000 Years



2006 Accomplishments

Being a catalyst for positive change within the Alaska Native community continues to drive First Alaskans Institute in 2007. Janie Leask, former chair of First Alaskan Institute's Board of Trustees, stepped into the organization's president position last spring following the retirement of Bryon I. Mallott. The organization has remained committed to researching, analyzing, and reporting on Native issues and trends, convening Alaska Natives for vital discussions and facilitating leadership and knowledge growth.

First Alaskans Institute continues to help develop the next generation of Native leadership through internships and fellowships, hosting the annual AFN Elders & Youth Conference, organizing gatherings to discuss education, reading in schools, as well as providing targeted funding towards efforts that foster leadership development. Specifically, in 2006:

- A total of 827 Alaska Native Elders and youth, representing 130 Alaska cities and villages convened in Anchorage in October to attend the 2006 AFN Elders & Youth Conference.
- 31 Alaska Native graduate and post-graduate students between the ages of 20 and 54, from rural and urban Alaska, participated in the First Alaskans Institute Summer Internship Program. Twenty-six diverse businesses and organizations mentored these interns from June through August and provided valuable work experience while First Alaskans Institute conducted weekly group learning sessions on a variety of topics.
- The Alaska Native Leadership Network continued to promote opportunities for Alaska Natives, including internships, scholarships, fellowships, seminars, and Native leadership offerings.
- First Alaskans Institute staff and volunteers spent time each school morning reading with elementary students as part of the Tyson Elementary Breakfast Club literacy program.
- First Alaskans Institute hosted 150 students, parents, Elders, and community leaders during the "Native Voices on the Potential of Education in Alaska" discussion to identify current education priorities in Alaska. A second discussion was held

continued on page 2

Elders & Youth Conference Engages Attendees

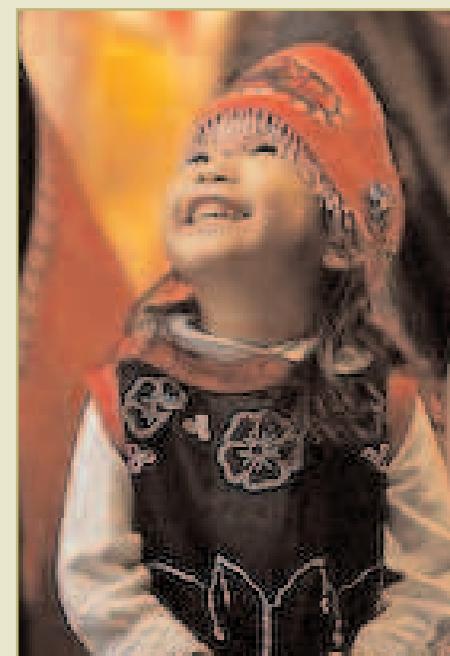
More than 820 Elders and youth representing 130 cities and villages throughout Alaska attended the 2006 AFN/First Alaskans Institute Elders & Youth Conference, held Oct. 23rd and 24th in Anchorage. Following the theme Respect for Native Life: Restoring Balance & a Sense of Belonging, much of the conference emphasized what it means to be Alaska Native—the richness of Alaska Native language and history, the significance of community and family, and the importance of knowing who we are and where we come from.

Mayor Edward Itta, of the North Slope Borough, elaborated further on the conference theme during the opening keynote address. From an Elder perspective he remarked, "I believe there is no more important link for Native people than the link between the past and the future. It is a spiritual connection between the timeless truths of our ancestors and the energetic, hopeful vision of our young people."

Mayor Itta also commented that there is nothing more durable than joining together the strength of age with the flexibility of youth—what he calls cultural concrete. He also talked about the need for finding balance and how healthy communities are important to maintaining Native strength. Our families and communities provide comfort, renewal, and a safe haven.

Debra Dommek, an Inupiaq student studying at the University of Alaska Anchorage, continued the keynote address by talking about the responsibility of youth. She highlighted the importance of learning, especially of the rich Alaska Native cultures, and pointed out the tradition of storytelling for passing on knowledge and teachings.

"I was very pleased with the way our Alaska Native Elders and youth committed to this two-day conference. We were able to discuss important issues, such as education, drop out rates, Elder care, and drug and alcohol use; but we also celebrated our culture and identity and discussed solutions to these issues. Through Native games, dancing, storytelling, and through speaking our Native languages—we know we have a lot going for us, and these things help build healthy communities," said 2006 conference coordinator Sarah Sherry.



Inside this edition

Message from the President	2
2007 Summer Intern Program	3
Education Discussion	4
Staff Transitions	5
Mission and Values	6

in November at the annual meeting of the Association of Alaska School Boards.

The **Alaska Native Policy Center** remains focused on initiating the review and development of public policy while fostering Native advancement through policy analysis and research to produce accurate information for Native leaders to utilize in facilitating healthy, thriving communities.

Accomplishments in 2006 include:

- Receiving designation by the Census Bureau as a Census Information Center to be an official source of demographic, economic and social statistics produced by the Census Bureau. The first phase of this new program entails developing web site access for the Census information and an office library of information.
- Presenting to the Alaska State Advisory Committee of U.S. Commissions on Civil Rights in their effort to learn about the financial parity of education funding between rural and urban Alaska.
- Development of the Rural Development Performance Measures Project to design and test a system of measures that links economic growth to poverty reduction. A series of discussions with rural residents garnered their opinions of what poverty, well-being, and economic growth entails.
- The completion of the “Alaska Native K-12 Education Indicators Report” for 2004-2005. Other research areas were getting behind the numbers on dropouts and a Native Student Vitality report, and other special projects focused on a directory of research on energy costs in Alaska and healthy communities.
- Conducting literature reviews on emerging trends in measuring and addressing the high school dropout issue and on understanding the concept of healthy communities.
- Hosting of First Alaskans Institute’s ongoing Discussion Series focused on Alaska Native student success during an Aug. 25th gathering. The Alaska Native Policy Center presented on the “Alaska Native Student Vitality Report: Community Perspectives on Supporting Student Success,” which summarizes the components of Native student success by answering four important questions: How do community leaders and schools define Alaska Native student success, who is responsible for sharing knowledge with Alaska Native students, what are useful student outcomes and measures of success, and what are the characteristics of effective schools for Native students.

Ongoing projects anticipated to be completed in 2007 include:

- The rollout of a newly designed web site to better serve online users searching for valuable information, resources, and data pertaining to Alaska Native policy and issues, Census information, leadership development and the knowledge network.
- Introduction of an online portal where Alaska Native and other in- and out-of-state community members will be able to communicate, network, seek, ask, and share views and aspirations in the hopes of keeping Alaska Native people informed and connected.
- Building relationships with state and national organizations and institutions to access information for policy makers, community leaders, and students.



Janie Leask, President & CEO

Message from the President

First Alaskans Institute finished the 2006 year celebrating several accomplishments, which you will read about in this newsletter. Just to highlight, the Alaska Native Policy Center continues to focus on research and policy projects extremely important to the Alaska Native community. And we are pleased to have been appointed a Census Information Center, which will provide us an opportunity to further disseminate important data and information.

Thanks to those of you who participated in the events we hosted during the week of the AFN Convention. The Elders & Youth Conference set an attendance record and had some wonderful speakers and workshops. A special thanks goes to Sarah Sherry and Raina Thiele, who with the Elders & Youth Council and their project team, delivered a fantastic two-day conference!

Our October 25th Education discussion was attended by more than 150 participants of all ages who talked about what they consider “a perfect education” system for Alaska and what they – individually and collectively – could do to make it happen. This message was also delivered to attendees of the Association of Alaska School Boards meeting. Mayor Edward Itta and the leadership of the North Slope are really driving home the fact that it’s up to “us” – you and me – to make a lasting change we want to see – in our homes, schools and communities.

It’s an important, empowering message and one that hopefully will provide the foundation for future activities. It’s certainly one that we at First Alaskans fully embrace.

The First Alaskans team has spent the past several months diligently working on the strategic direction of the organization over the next several years. We are enthused about our revised vision, mission, and values and feel that the three major initiatives of this organization—the Alaska Native Policy Center, Leadership Development, Community Investment Awards (which we’ll report on in future newsletters) — will further our vision for Alaska Natives to be informed and engaged in leading the decisions that shape the future. And as an organization, we will continue to engage Alaska Native thoughts and voices for the advancement of our people and communities.

I’m proud to be a part of this organization and look forward to what 2007 brings! The work done by the staff and the Board of Trustees is thoughtful and proactively geared toward engaging Alaska Native thoughts and voices to ensure our collective voice is

continued on page 3

heard at all levels of government and in public policy discussions. Our collaboration with other Alaska Native organizations makes sense in helping to make the most of our limited resources.

In closing, I'd like to thank Julie Kitka and Roy Huhndorf for their years of service on the First Alaskans' Board of Trustees. Both Julie and Roy are Founding Members of the Institute and were instrumental in the formation of First Alaskans in our early years. Their voices will be greatly missed.



Janie Leask, President & CEO

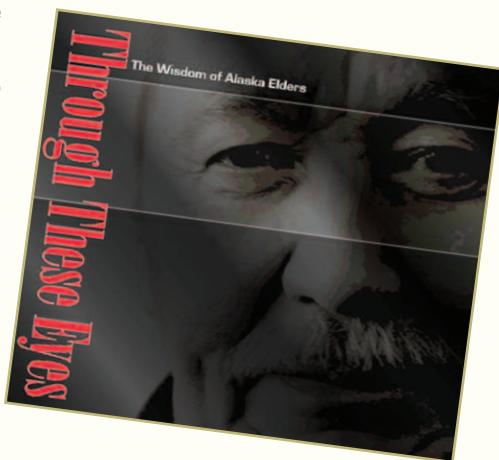


“Through These Eyes: The Wisdom of Alaska Elders” Book

Byron I. Mallott, former president and CEO of First Alaskans Institute and currently a Senior Fellow of the Alaska Native Policy Center, is teaming up with Alaska Native artist and businessman Perry Eaton and First Alaskans Institute to publish a book titled “Through These Eyes: The Wisdom of Alaska Elders.” Mallott describes this book of photography and text as a tribute to Alaska’s distinguished Native Elders who have provided the foundation for Alaska’s Native people. Using portraits photographed by Eaton and interviews with Elders from throughout Alaska, the book focuses on the central role that these culture-bearers play in the Alaskan community.

“Many young Alaska Natives find themselves walking in two worlds: one made up of close-knit villages, ancient languages, and the teachings of Elders—and the other composed of college degrees, Internet technology, and an evolving world economy. The current and coming generations of our peoples must find a balance of these worlds that offers them a sense of identity and self-worth. And it is our Elders who provide the key to that,” says Mallott.

To learn more about the book, assist in underwriting the project, or to pre-order a copy, contact First Alaskans Institute by calling (907) 677-1700 or e-mailing info@firstalaskans.org.



2007 Summer Internship Program Currently Recruiting Participants & Employers

First Alaskans Institute plans to place 30 or more Alaska Native undergraduate and graduate students with businesses and organizations in Alaska through its 2007 Summer Internship Program. Funded primarily through a grant from the Denali Commission, the Summer Internship Program provides real-world leadership development experiences.

While schedules can be adjusted based on student academic schedules, interns are expected to complete the entire 10-week session—beginning in early June and continuing through mid-August. The paid internships require participants to work onsite at their designated location as well as unite for concentrated leadership development sessions throughout the summer. Web casting and web conferencing are provided for interns placed outside of Anchorage.

The deadline for receiving applications is Friday, March 9, and all interns will be selected by March 30. For more information about the Summer Internship Program qualifications and application process, visit www.firstalaskans.org.

The Summer Internship Program places interns with a variety of businesses and organizations throughout the state. Participating employers provide a meaningful managerial/policy level internship position in a variety of industries and disciplines, such as: oil and gas, education, health, public policy, organizational management, rural development, economic development, human resources management, and research. More information about becoming a partnering employer is also found on the First Alaskans Institute web site.

Q&A: Census information Center

Q: What is a CIC? The Census Information Center outreach program was created in 1988 to improve access to census data by minority groups and economically disadvantaged segments of the population who, traditionally, have been undercounted in censuses and surveys. As a CIC, First Alaskans Institute will disseminate census data through presentations, reports, information sheets, workshops, meetings

and an online web site.

Who can use CIC information? Information through the First Alaskans Institute CIC is available to the general public.

What's the best way to access CIC information? Users can access the information online at www.firstalaskans.org.

First Alaskans Institute Spearheads Education Discussion

Successful Alaska Native students are those who can set and achieve goals because they know their own worth and value, understand their responsibility to their community, and are prepared to pursue whatever life path they choose, according to the “Alaska Native Student Vitality: Community Perspectives on Supporting Student Success” report.

Some 160 students, parents, teachers, Elders, and community leaders convened in Anchorage on Oct. 25th during AFN week to share their thoughts on how to achieve education priorities in Alaska. The Native Voices on the Potential of Education in Alaska interactive discussion not only focused on educational priorities but what it will take to meet the priorities.

Participants worked to define how different parts of society—educators, students, parents, business, and community—can contribute to the betterment of the educational system statewide.

Forty-three percent of the attendees shared their feedback about the education discussion. The majority of the respondents was pleased with the discussion format and enjoyed the interaction with other participants. One participant liked hearing ideas about how other Alaska communities are addressing parent involvement relating to student attendance, while another liked learning about the differing points of view among the various cultural groups. Other comments requested keeping the dialogue going as well as hearing more about what is working, where, and why.

A second Potential of Education discussion was held in November at the annual meeting of the Association of Alaska School Boards.

Information gathered during the Native Voices on the Potential of Education in Alaska discussion series will be used to inform policy makers, legislators and the administration of education priorities for the 2007 legislative session.

If you are interested in learning more about this discussion and possibly hosting one in your community, contact info@firstalaskans.org.



Thank you to the 2006 AFN/First Alaskans Elders and Youth Conference sponsors that support our Alaska Native Elders, youth, and communities with their generous contributions.

Platinum Level

Providence Health System • Shell Exploration and Production Company • Wells Fargo

Gold Level

Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority • Alyeska Pipeline Service Company • BP • Bering Straits Native Corporation
ConocoPhillips • FEX L.P. • Fraternal Order of Alaska State Troopers
NANA Regional Corporation • Northwest Strategies • Rasmuson Foundation

Silver Level

Alaska McDonald's • Bristol Bay Native Association • Doyon, Limited

Bronze Level

Alaska Growth Capital • Alaska Permanent Capital Management • Denali Commission • KPMG LLP
Kodiak Area Native Association • McDowell Group • Northrim Bank • RIM First People • The Aleut Corporation

Other Contributors

Association of Village Council Presidents, Inc. • Maniilaq Association • Wallace Insurance Inc.

Improving Dropout Rates a Must for Alaska Native K-12 Students

The third in a series of reports analyzing Alaska Native academic performance among overall statewide K-12 education has been released. The third “Alaska Native K-12 Education Indicators Report,” found online at www.firstalaskans.org, produces findings from academic year 2004-2005. Highlights of the report indicate that the Alaska Native student dropout rate has not changed dramatically. Additional research by the Institute’s Alaska Native Policy Center, which further examines the dropout rate among Alaska Native students and how it is best measured, also highlights what is happening around Alaska to address this important

issue. Based on the latest “K-12 Education Indicators Report” and further study of the dropout issue, First Alaskans Institute held a workshop in Anchorage during the AFN Elders & Youth Conference to raise the awareness level of this issue and how to continue addressing the problem and implementing solutions.

First Alaskans Institute is interested in your feedback and perspectives on the Alaska Native dropout rate. Send your comments, questions, concerns, and suggested solutions to info@firstalaskans.org.

Work of Alaska Native Policy Center Highlighted at NIEA Conference

Greta Goto, director of the Alaska Native Policy Center, and Memry Dahl, director of leadership development, teamed up with former Policy Center Senior Intern Malia Villegas to present a workshop focused on conducting research and the dissemination of research studies and their findings to attendees of the National Indian Education Association annual conference held in Anchorage in October.

Their workshop highlighted the research principles and methods used, and the feedback the Alaska Native Policy Center has experienced. Villegas shared the “Alaska Native Student Vitality Report,” as an example of research study and data analysis.

The workshop also opened dialogue about building the capacity of Native people to produce usable and meaningful research throughout various communities and to solicit feedback from other educators, researchers, and policymakers about improving and collaborating on this effort.



Staff Transitions

Tracy L. Craig, an Ahtna/Gwich'in Athabascan and Yup'ik recently joined the First Alaskans Institute staff as Finance Director. She most recently worked at Cook Inlet Tribal Council and has nine years experience in finance and accounting. Tracy returned to Alaska in 2002 after spending 14 years in Olympia, Wash., where she attended college and worked for the Washington State House of Representatives Trade and Economic Development Committee and Financial and Insurance Institutions Committee.

Memry Dahl, who previously served as the finance director, is now directing First Alaskans Institute's leadership development initiative, which includes the Summer Internship program as well as the Elders & Youth Conference. She is an Aleut originally from Sand Point, Alaska.

Tammy Keith, Tlingit, has served as the organization's office manager since September. She has worked for businesses such as Alyeska Pipeline Service Company as a contract employee as well as Tanana Chiefs Conference in Fairbanks.

Rick Mueller, a Tlingit originally from Ketchikan, joined the staff recently as the intern coordinator to assist with the Summer Internship Program and other leadership development initiatives. He has a degree in health education from Northern Arizona University and most recently worked for Cook Inlet Tribal Council and their youth services program.

Adrienne Fleek is joining the organization as research projects manager for the Alaska Native Policy Center to work

with the Census Information Center and manage other Policy Center projects. She is a Tlingit from Yakutat and holds a master's degree in public administration.

Tanya Reamey, who most recently worked for the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, is the new receptionist for First Alaskans Institute. She is Tlingit and Aleut from Klukwan.

Nancy Wesson, Sarah Sherry, George Irvin, and Paneen Petersen recently left First Alaskans Institute for new endeavors. Nancy, a Dena'ina Athabascan from the village of Tyonek, served as executive assistant since 2000. She retired in December and plans to continue her volunteer work, spend more time with her three daughters and six grandchildren, and pursue new opportunities.

Sarah also left in December to prepare for an April departure to the Pacific Islands where she will lend her experience and knowledge to improving health education in Vanuatu as a Peace Corps volunteer. Sarah promises to return to Alaska following her two-year volunteer commitment.

In February, George moved over to the Alaska Federation of Natives to assist with governmental and legislative affairs. He will be focusing on issues such as subsistence, affordable rural energy, education, and state tribal relations.

Paneen, who served as development director, also left the organization in February to pursue a change in her career.

Meet Our Team

Janie Leask (*Haida-Tsimshian*)
President
janie@firstalaskans.org

Sarah Scanlan (*Inupiaq*)
Deputy Director
sarah@firstalaskans.org

Greta L. Goto (*Yup'ik*)
Director, Alaska Native Policy Center
greta@firstalaskans.org

Memry Dahl (*Aleut*)
Director, Leadership Development
memry@firstalaskans.org

Tracy L. Craig (*Yup'ik/Ahtna & Gwich'in Athabascan*)
Director, Finance
tracycraig@firstalaskans.org

Tammy Keith (*Tlingit*)
Office Manager
tammykeith@firstalaskans.org

Adrienne Fleek (*Tlingit*)
Research Projects Manager
adriennefleek@firstalaskans.org

Rick Mueller (*Tlingit*)
Intern Coordinator
rickmueller@firstalaskans.org

Tanya Reamey (*Tlingit and Aleut*)
Receptionist
tanyareamey@firstalaskans.org

Allison Knox (*Athabascan*)
Communications Contractor
allisonknox@firstalaskans.org

Vision

Progress for the next ten thousand years

True to Heritage and Values, Alaska Natives are informed and engaged in leading the decisions that shape the future.

Mission

Advance Native Peoples and communities by engaging Alaska Native thoughts and voices.

Values

Integrity
Collaboration
Knowledge
Responsibility
Excellence

Meet Our Board of Trustees

Willie Hensley, Chairman (*Inupiaq*)
Alyeska Pipeline Service Company

Sam Kito, Jr., Vice Chair (*Tlingit*)
Kito, Inc.

Oliver Leavitt (*Inupiaq*)
Arctic Slope Regional Corporation

Albert Kookesh (*Tlingit*)
Alaska State Senator and
Co-Chair, Alaska Federation of Natives

Byron I. Mallott (*Tlingit*)
Senior Fellow, Alaska Native Policy Center

In Memoriam:
Morris Thompson (*Tanana Athabascan*)
Our Friend and Colleague

V i s i t U s a t w w w . f i r s t a l a s k a n s . o r g

First Alaskans Institute

606 E Street • Suite 200
Anchorage • Alaska 99501
T 907.677.1700
F 907.677.1780
info@firstalaskans.org
www.firstalaskans.org

PRESRT STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
ANCHORAGE, AK
PERMIT #630

We invite you to tell us what you think of the work we are doing and the content of this newsletter. We value your feedback and advice. If you have comments, please contact allisonknox@firstalaskans.org.

If you would like to receive an electronic copy of the newsletter, please contact info@firstalaskans.org.