



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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KEYNOTES ANNOUNCED FOR FIRST ALASKANS INSTITUTE ELDER'S & YOUTH CONFERENCE *September 22, 2015*

ANCHORAGE, Alaska – The First Alaskans Institute Elders & Youth Conference is a dynamic convening that brings our Elders and Youth together to strengthen cultural continuity through intergenerational relationships that deepen their abilities to be leaders across the state. This year marks the 32nd annual convening and First Alaskans continues to be honored to steward this gathering of our most precious community members. The conference will be held on Monday through Wednesday, October 12-14, 2015, at the Dena'ina Civic and Convention Center in downtown Anchorage, Alaska.

Our conference theme "Not in Our Smokehouse!" was created by village youth, and represents the protection and love we feel for our peoples and our Alaska Native Ways of Life. Our 'smokehouse' is the place where we thrive and feel most strong in our identities, reclaiming what is good for us while rejecting what isn't. Through opportunities to learn, share, and strengthen our cultural knowledge, be solution focused and action-oriented, the Elders & Youth Conference theme embraces our Ancestor's strength to be real about our challenges and enact good ways to live, lead, and support healthy, vibrant Native communities. Our keynote speakers exemplify this spirit of 'community doing' and we thank them so much for accepting our invitation to be part of this year's conference:

Elder Keynote: Mr. Gregory Fratis (Unângax), Elder from St. Paul Island, has worked for years teaching his peoples' language, Unangam Tunuu, and working with younger generations to instill healthy ways of being through cultural values and traditions. His dedication to youth and the perpetuation of his culture is an incredible testament to the importance of our Elders. We are honored he has accepted our invitation to inspire our attendees and look forward to learning from his story.

Youth Keynote: Ms. Lacayah Engebretson (Ahtna Athabascan/Tlingit/Yup'ik) from Chistochina, Tazlina, and Kake, is a college freshman working towards an education degree with the intention, "to give Alaska Native students a teacher that looks like them, learns like them, and understands what they're going through, not just from an education perspective, but from a personal one as well." She is an active young leader dedicated to lifting up our Native peoples in all she does. We are excited to hear her reflect about how protecting our ways of life is a responsibility she cherishes and promotes.

Pre-registration to attend the conference is available online through October 10th, in person at the Dena'ina Center on Sunday October 11th from 3-5 p.m., and onsite at the Conference at 7:30 a.m. on Monday morning, October 12th. Those not able to attend in person can watch the live broadcast on GCI channel 1, 360North and webcast.

You can find out more about the conference and how to sponsor it at www.FirstAlaskans.org.
Follow the conference on social media through the hashtags #EY2015 and #NotInOurSmokehouse

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