

First Alaskans Institute

News Release

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For Immediate Release

August 31, 2017

FIRST NATIONS FUTURES FELLOWSHIP – ALASKA SELECTS 2017 FELLOWS

Anchorage, Alaska – First Alaskans Institute (FAI) is pleased to announce the selection of our 7th annual First Nations Futures Program (FNFP) Fellows cohort: **Barbara 'Wáahlaal Gidáak Blake** (Haida/Tlingit/Ahtna), **Marleah Makpiaq Labelle** (Sugpiaq/Iñupiaq), **Alissa Nadine Rogers** (Yup'ik), **Rigel Kutx.ayanahá Joseph Shaw** (Tlingit/ Iñupiaq), **Lance X'unei Twitchell** (Tlingit/Haida/Yup'ik/Sami) and **Kimberly Williams** (Yup'ik).

FNFP is a unique leadership partnership between the indigenous peoples of Alaska, Aotearoa (New Zealand) and Hawai'i. It was created to cultivate and challenge indigenous leadership within the context of our collective paradigm in order to have a fivefold impact on- our Fellows and families, our cultures and communities, the other participating cohorts, our homelands and animal relatives, and the world. The host organizations are [First Alaskans Institute](#), [Ho'okele Strategies](#), [Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu](#) (a Māori Iwi on the southern island of Aotearoa), and [Stanford University](#) with support from Sealaska, Kamehameha Schools, First Alaskans, Ngai Tahu, Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment, and the University of Canterbury.

This transformative fellowship features a two-week, on-site certificate program and the gathering of the three cohorts at Stanford. Fellows have the opportunity to strengthen their leadership while envisioning ways to enact our ancestral imperative to steward and care for our peoples, lands and cultures. They will participate in a diverse offering of learning sessions and gatherings, that include but are not limited to meeting with the local tribe- the Muwekma Ohlone peoples, visiting Google X and Monterey Bay, as well as hear from internationally known cultural, thought, and entrepreneurial leaders. They will engage in deep discussions about indigenous law and policy issues, cultural paradigms and advancements, and land, animal, and resource stewardship. They will build relationships with one another, indigenous leaders from all three cohorts, and special guests from Stanford, Silicon Valley, amongst others. A keystone of the Fellowship is the values propositions each Fellow develops during the gathering that crystalizes their ideas for being in service to their peoples, lands and cultures in ways that resonate with their work, their passions, and the needs of their communities.

Cohort members are already active leaders who are generally mid-cultural, community, and/or career leadership or are at a pivotal stage in their journey where an extra boost or challenge will help them clarify how to best utilize their abilities to advance our indigenous peoples. The Fellowship seeks to exemplify and honor this commitment by bringing together Fellows who put this collective and cultural community spirit into action.

On behalf of the FAI Board of Trustees and staff, we extend our congratulations to the 2017 Fellows and gratitude to their communities and families for supporting their involvement and leadership:

Barbara 'Wáahlaal Gidáak Blake belongs to the Káat nay-st/Yahkw 'Láanaas (Shark House/Middle Town People) Clan. She is the mother of an inspiring young man, Nathaniel Blake. 'Wáahlaal Gidáak currently serves as Senior Advisor to the Governor and Lt. Governor of the State of Alaska. She earned a master's in Rural Development focusing her thesis on Fisheries Development in Rural Alaska, a B.A. in Rural Economic Development, and an A.A. in Tribal Management from University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), and holds a certificate in Tribal Governmental Business Law from Seattle University. She previously served as Government Affairs Liaison for the Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, Assistant Professor for the Department of Alaska Native Studies and Rural Development at UAF, Technical Assistant Specialist for Intertribal Agriculture Council, and Program Assistant in the Office of the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Office of Tribal Relations.



Marleah Makpiaq LaBelle is a proud tribal member of the Native Village of Port Graham, with family ties in Port Graham and Kotzebue. Makpiaq and her husband have two beautiful daughters, and they aspire to teach them Native values by leading by example. She serves as the project manager for the National Tribal Water Center at the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. Makpiaq assists with program development and provides technical assistance for Tribes in Alaska and the Lower 48. She has a passion for connecting with Tribes and ensuring they have a voice in project planning and development. Makpiaq earned a master's in Rural Development with a concentration in community development from UAF, and earned a B.A. in business administration from Alaska Pacific University. Since then, Makpiaq has spent most of her career serving Alaska Native peoples and organizations. She is looking forward to learning how other indigenous leaders incorporate culture and indigenous ways of knowing to empower and elevate their communities.



Lance X'unei Twitchell carries the Tlingit names X'unei and Du Aaní Kawdinook, and the Haida name K'eijáakw. He lives in Juneau with his wife and their bilingual children, and is from the Tlingit, Haida, Yup'ik, and Sami nations. X'unei speaks and studies the Tlingit language, and advocates for indigenous language revitalization. He is a Northwest Coast Artist and instructor of formline design. X'unei is an Assistant Professor of Alaska Native Languages at the University of Alaska Southeast, a doctorate student at Ka Haka 'Ula o Ke'elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language at

the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, and is a published author, poet, filmmaker, and musician. X'unei hosts and populates an incredible Tlingit language website, providing free access to learners across the world, www.tlingitlanguage.com.

Alissa Nadine Anguksuar Qiuran Joseph Rogers is from the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Region, raised in Bethel. She is the granddaughter of the late John and Alice Hanson of Alakanuk and Old Hamilton and the late Qiuran Fred and Ala Bridget Joseph of Hooper Bay and Toksook Bay. Anguksuar Qiuran is the daughter of Allen and Marita Hanson Joseph of Bethel. She was brought up throughout the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region, where she learned traditional and modern Yup'ik cultural values and beliefs, living off the land through hunting, fishing, gathering and harvesting. Anguksuar Qiuran attends UAF and is working toward a master's in Environmental Engineering and Indigenous Law. She holds a B.S. in Civil Engineering and Biology, an A.S. in Natural Resources and an A.A.S. in Business Management from UAF. Over the past 10 years, she has worked at Orutsarmiut Native Council as Brownfields Coordinator, Native American Lands Environmental Mitigation Program Manager, Fisheries Technician, State and Federal Laws & Regulatory Specialist, and Natural Resources Administration. During her past 20 years of experience in laws and regulatory processes, she has served on various councils and committees to advocate on the behalf of her region and her people.



Kimberly Williams was born and raised in Dillingham, where she and her family have been fishing for generations. She is a Curyung Tribal Council Member Chief and the Tribes mission is to serve tribal members, to preserve its cultural values, to protect its sovereign and inherent rights, and to promote its social, economic, and political progress. Kim also serves as a board member of Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation, formed by a consortium of Bristol Bay tribes (Yup'ik, Dena'ina, and Supiak/Alutiiq - the original inhabitants of the region) in 1973 to provide comprehensive health care services across the region. She is a board member of Bristol Bay Native Corporation, one of 12 regional corporations formed by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Kim holds a master's in Public Administration from the University of Alaska Anchorage and a B.S. in Biological Sciences from UAF. She is the former Executive Director of Nunamta Aulukestai.



Rigel Kutx.ayanahá Joseph Shaw is Tlingit from Seattle and Sitka. He earned a bachelor's in Business Marketing and Business Administration from Saint Martin's University, and has worked at Sealaska for over 10 years. Kutx.ayanahá's family always went fishing, boating, and camping because of their appreciation for nature and their respect for its beauty and resources. He learned that within a large society and community, there is even more importance to accepting responsibility for influencing the decisions and steps our community and society will take in the future. Kutx.ayanahá wants to learn more about other cultures, as well as his own cultural and traditional ways of life, so he can demonstrate and encourage others on how to embody and preserve those important values instilled among indigenous communities.

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About First Alaskans Institute

At First Alaskans Institute, we know we are responsible for carrying more than 10,000 years of ancestral knowledge into the future with rigor, humor, resilience, vigilance, and love.

To learn more about us and what we do, please visit our website at www.firstalaskans.org, contact us at 907-677-1700 or via email at info@firstalaskans.org.