

First Alaskans Institute

News Release

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Na Ganiyaatgm, Na Lagm **2018 First Alaskans Institute Elders & Youth Conference Keynote Speakers** **celebrate our connection to our Ancestors and our homelands**

Anchorage, Alaska – Our strength and connection to the land is fueled by our Ancestors. Our 2018 First Alaskans Institute (FAI) Elders & Youth Conference theme “Na Ganiyaatgm, Na Lagm” (Our Ancestors, Our Fire), speaks to the flame within each of us that keeps us connected to our Ancestors, our homelands, and to what makes us uniquely distinct as Native peoples of this land. The keynote speakers for the 35th Annual FAI Elders & Youth Conference are connected to their Ancestors who came before them and their homelands they currently live on.



Ugiaqtaq Wesley Aiken. Photo by Bill Hess (at left) and photo courtesy of family (at right).

Elder Keynote

Iñupiaq Elder Ugiaqtaq Wesley Aiken was born in Utqiagvik, Alaska on January 25, 1926. His parents were Aviugana Johnny Aiken and Pamiilaq Lucy Aiken. Ugiaqtaq herded reindeer to provide for his family as a teenager, and continued providing for his family by hunting and trapping throughout his life. In 1947, he married the late Anna Kayutak Aiken, and began working for Arctic Contractors. Ugiaqtaq is a World War II veteran, proudly serving in the Alaska Territorial Guard from 1944 to 1959, and remained involved with the National Guard until 1973.

Ugiaqtaq was active in political movements strengthening the basic rights of Alaska Native peoples. In the 1960's, he participated in the Barrow Duck-In, and helped in the formation of the Alaska Federation of Natives. In the 1970's, Ugiaqtaq helped form the North Slope Borough (NSB), Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC) and Inuit Circumpolar Conference. In the 1980's, he worked with the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission in pursuit of a just quota for whales taken. Ugiaqtaq worked tirelessly beside Eben Hopson. He retired from ASRC in 1992 after years of service as their Land Chief. Ugiaqtaq is a strong believer in God and is called upon to give blessings during the whaling Nalukataq festivals, church and NSB villages. He has always been a strong believer of education, as our youth are the future leaders. Ugiaqtaq encourages young people to learn their language and keep their culture alive.



Tristan Yaadoh Jovan Madros. Photo courtesy of family and Doyon, Limited.

Youth Keynote

Koyukon Athabascan youth Tristan Yaadoh Jovan Madros is 20 years old from Kaltag, Alaska. He was raised by his grandparents, Franklin Madros, Jr. and Cora Madros, who traditionally adopted him. Yaadoh grew up in the traditional way of life and learned his language. He learned how to make sleds from birch, sew moose-hide boots, and make a fish wheel. He deeply values Native traditions and is a culture and language bearer and teacher, hunter, fisherman and gatherer.

Yaadoh strongly believes in working hard for his people and community to make change. He continually gives back to his community and region by serving on the Kaltag Village Council as the 2nd Chief, Kaltag dance group, Denakkanaaga board, Tanana Chiefs Conference Youth Advisory Emerging Leader's Council, and Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission board. In 2017, Doyon, Limited recognized Yaadoh as a Shareholder of the Year recipient for their Chief Andrew Isaac Leadership Award.

Additional Conference Highlights

The annual Elders & Youth Conference is a unique convening designed to lift up the faces of our peoples while connecting youth to our Elders. We engage in critical dialogues on issues to amplify the voice of our Elders and our youth. Through presentations, discussions and hands-on activities, we encourage positive change and cultural action within our Alaska Native community. We focus on building relationships, sharing and strengthening our knowledge, and celebrating who we are as culturally distinct, diverse and beautiful Alaska Native peoples.

The 35th annual Elders & Youth Conference starts with a special Warming of the Hands pre-conference session on Sunday, October 14 at the Dena'ina Center. That evening, the Tyonek peoples will be hosting a welcome potlatch at Alaska Pacific University Mosely Sports Center where all Elders & Youth participants and the community is invited to attend. The next three days, October 15-17 are filled with interactive, hands-on cultural workshops to celebrate who we are as Native peoples and utilize that knowledge to enhance our engagement in all other offerings of the conference. Our Living & Loving Our Cultures workshops, many directly available through our unique partnership with The CIRI Foundation, promote and strengthen our ways of life through transference of knowledge between Elders and youth, including activities such as weaving, beading, sewing, storytelling, and carving. Our Community Engagement workshops are comprised of relevant community issues-based and content-themed sessions covering Advancing Self Determination, Advancing Our Ways of Life, Knowing, Living & Loving Who We Are, Shaping the Knowledge that Informs Alaskans, and Being Good Relatives. Specific topics to be covered include culture, values, language, leadership, education, health, wellness, safety, land, law and policy. Men's, Women's and Two-Spirit Houses honor our peoples' ways of sharing through dialogue, creating healing spaces, and utilizing rites of passage knowledge.

Throughout the conference, there are cultural performances, as well as an opportunity to showcase the talents of our participants, during the 7th Annual Chin'an: A Night of Cultural Celebration taking place on Monday, October 15 from 7 to 10 pm at the Dena'ina Center. Tickets will be sold at registration and at the door for \$5.00 per ticket. Tickets are waived for Elders. Chin'an is a public event and will feature performances by Cody, a

Cup'ik comedian from Chevak, Iḡsıḡán, Aḡ Ḳwáan (I Love You My People) from Juneau, the Yup'ik Rainbow Dance Group from Anchorage, and other special performances from Elders & Youth attendees. On Tuesday, October 16, a dance will be held for our registered participants.

We could not put on the conference without the love and support of our community, volunteers, and sponsors. We thank everyone for working with us in partnership to help bring the most important people in our community together – our Elders and our youth! If you would like to volunteer for Elders & Youth please sign up at our online [link](#).

Broadcast and Webcast

Those not able to attend in person are invited to watch the conference live on GCI channel 1, 360 North and via our [website](#).

Registration

Registration is available online until October 15 at www.firstalaskans.org and onsite registration will begin 1 to 5 pm on Sunday, October 14 and at 7:30 am on Monday, October 15 at the Dena'ina Center. The registration fee is \$55.00 for youth, chaperones, and other adult participants, while the fee is waived for Elders.

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About First Alaskans Institute (FAI):

At FAI 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 visit our website at www.firstalaskans.org, contact us at 907-677-1700 or email info@firstalaskans.org.