

# First Alaskans Institute



Community Engagement Update  
*Week of May 20, 2020*

**As a statewide Native nonprofit, our FAI team is very connected to our home communities, regions, and our statewide Native family. During one of our weekly virtual team meetings, we share community engagement updates on various happenings in our communities to help guide our work. In an effort to share our knowledge harvest - recognizing this is not a comprehensive overview of all current Alaska Native news - here are some of the updates that were shared about what our communities are experiencing:**

## **Community Updates - 5/20/2020:**

**\*Many of our communities still have restrictions in place\***

Gwichyaa Zhee Gwich'in Tribal Government notified Fort Yukon residents - Travel to and from Fort Yukon, for Fort Yukon residents only, will open starting Wednesday, May 20 for two weeks, ending on Wednesday, June 3. Travel for Fort Yukon residents, including air and river travel, will stop on June 4. Travel into Fort Yukon by non-residents is not permitted at this time. Learn more at:

<https://www.facebook.com/165019316984839/photos/a.165025756984195/1546783988808358/?type=3&theater>

Association of Village Council Presidents provides a list of COVID-19 precautionary measures by Tribes in the region: <https://www.avcp.org/covid-19-precautionary-measures-listed-by-tribe/?fbclid=IwAR3zRgBDLgsg65t-9rnfcV0hxdnBAIQRoferZILswDJTpAqsNHs2s3H24w>

**\*Our Native Ways life as we know it continues – always has, always will – our peoples harvest from the lands and waters\***

Some western Alaska villages are getting ready to pick lake greens and go egg hunting. Some are going snow geese hunting and spring seal hunting.

Residents noticed and increase level of Alaska Department of Fish & Game enforcement officers presence in Angoon and Kake. They closed the king salmon fishing only between our villages. During this pandemic, why is Fish & Game enforcement coming every other day?

Residents in southeast Alaska are harvesting seaweed and various plants. .

If you have any questions, updates or suggestions, please send them to [info@firstalaskans.org](mailto:info@firstalaskans.org). Quyanapqak!

The smelt began passing Bethel, traveling up the Kuskokwim River this week. Families headed to the seawall with long nets, dragging them through the water and lifting out the smelts' narrow, silver bodies: [https://www.kyuk.org/post/smelts-arrive-bethel-beginning-summer-fishing-season?fbclid=IwAR3sTv9m3-jx4fcOmEvpfocXwum6Tz1a\\_2tw-ycHQCCTt2duD\\_HEjGH9-ql](https://www.kyuk.org/post/smelts-arrive-bethel-beginning-summer-fishing-season?fbclid=IwAR3sTv9m3-jx4fcOmEvpfocXwum6Tz1a_2tw-ycHQCCTt2duD_HEjGH9-ql)

It appears the weir counts of sockeye on Copper River are really low right now. Local residents are worried they may not get enough fish if there is no reduction for dipnetters and commercial fisherman. Copper River sockeye salmon was closed recently due to this low count for commercial fisheries.

**\*Spring breakup is steadily moving North\***

The village of Huslia has high water on the Koyukuk River. The bank has been eroding, and is nearing some homes, structures and power lines:  
<https://www.facebook.com/eleanor.yatlin/posts/1567866496709240>

The Chena River has high water and Fairbanks residents were urged to stay out of it until the water lowers: <https://www.facebook.com/fairbanksalaska.us/posts/3054402574618517>

**\*Our communities are coming together to uplift Graduates and our Youth\***

Bethel Regional High School organized a parade for graduates:  
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=3733360066738849>

Klawock High School hosted a virtual graduation:  
<https://www.facebook.com/klawockchieftains/videos/2934062846685768/>

Metlaktla High School hosted a socially distant graduation and streamed it online:  
<https://youtu.be/EfS7GI3SWBQ>

Western Alaska Celebrates Its Seniors With Parades To Cap Off COVID-19 Semester:  
[https://www.knom.org/wp/blog/2020/05/20/western-alaska-celebrates-its-seniors-with-parades-to-cap-off-covid-19-semester/?utm\\_source=twitter&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_content=tw-link&utm\\_campaign=daily-news-feed](https://www.knom.org/wp/blog/2020/05/20/western-alaska-celebrates-its-seniors-with-parades-to-cap-off-covid-19-semester/?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_content=tw-link&utm_campaign=daily-news-feed)

Distance Strains Education In Rural Alaska: <https://www.kyuk.org/post/distance-strains-education-rural-alaska>

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**\*Many of our regions have come up with creative ways to keep us connected through the physical distancing necessary to keep our people and communities safe\***

North Slope Wide Jamboree is still going strong with challenges. They just finished up a duct tape contest and are starting a puuktaluu contest:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/263480371720930/>

**\*Our people and organizations all over the state are making virtual space for cultural sharing, storytelling, connectedness and learning\***

Denakkanaaga First Chief Luke Titus and Second Chief Rev. Dr. Anna Frank share their thoughts and offer words of encouragement in this time of pandemic:

<https://www.facebook.com/220745701462282/videos/588286055114954/>

**\*Other Community Happenings\***

World Eskimo Indian Olympics announced the cancelation of WEIO, and are exploring ways to host an online celebration in place of our normal competitive event:

[https://www.facebook.com/weioak/posts/10156962201641927?\\_tn=-R](https://www.facebook.com/weioak/posts/10156962201641927?_tn=-R)

Southwest Alaska village of Nunapitchuk grapples with flooding and coronavirus:

<https://www.alaskapublic.org/2020/05/20/southwest-alaska-village-of-nunapitchuk-grapples-with-flooding-and-coronavirus/>

Kotzebue had its first positive case of COVID-19:

<https://www.alaskapublic.org/2020/05/19/first-positive-coronavirus-case-reported-in-kotzebue/>

Samuel Simmons Memorial Hospital is providing COVID-19 testing at the Will Rogers Memorial Airport in Utqiagvik:

<https://www.facebook.com/222631427812027/posts/3844864988921968/>

Arctic Slope Native Association provides a weekly COVID-19 update:

<https://www.facebook.com/ArcticSlope/photos/a.546399918768508/3841023239306143/?type=3&theater>

Study: Domestic violence hotline calls rise 52% in Alaska:

[https://www.theeagle.com/news/national/govt-and-politics/study-domestic-violence-hotline-calls-rise-52-in-alaska/article\\_da0c85b6-64af-5d6f-967f-254b88d665e8.html?fbclid=IwAR3uk4jSe3kcLJVZzuOHAMTLqvdQDweda9oMqADGFgKpP6dbut-lxFnOPUs](https://www.theeagle.com/news/national/govt-and-politics/study-domestic-violence-hotline-calls-rise-52-in-alaska/article_da0c85b6-64af-5d6f-967f-254b88d665e8.html?fbclid=IwAR3uk4jSe3kcLJVZzuOHAMTLqvdQDweda9oMqADGFgKpP6dbut-lxFnOPUs)

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- Find information and resources on the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault website: <https://dps.alaska.gov/CDVSA/Home>

Faculty Fulbright scholar, UAA Alaska Native Studies Professor Maria Williams, will travel to Canada to study Yukon indigenization:

[https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/news/archive/2020/05/fulbright-scholar-will-travel-to-canada.cshtml?utm\\_source=seawolfweekly&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=SW\\_20200520&utm\\_campaign=Green+and+Gold+News](https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/news/archive/2020/05/fulbright-scholar-will-travel-to-canada.cshtml?utm_source=seawolfweekly&utm_medium=email&utm_content=SW_20200520&utm_campaign=Green+and+Gold+News)