

# First Alaskans Institute



Community Engagement Update

*Week of May 13, 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 - 5/13/2020:**

**\*A GIANT HAS WALKED INTO THE FOREST: FIRST ALASKANS INSTITUTE MOURNS LOSS OF BYRON I. MALLOTT\*** First Alaskans Institute (FAI) Board of Trustees and Staff were shocked and deeply saddened by the untimely passing of our Trustee and Senior Fellow, Byron Dux da neik, K'oo del ta' Mallott, who walked into the forest on May 8. "Even now it is difficult for me to talk about myself as 'I.' When I say 'I,' I think of all who have gone before of us. When I use the word 'I,' I think of everyone who has ever influenced my life, with the knowledge that none of what I have been able to accomplish has been possible through my own effort. It becomes a 'collective I' - the totality of my life - that I use." – Byron speaking at 2014 FAI Elders & Youth Conference <https://firstalaskans.org/newsroom/a-giant-has-walked-into-the-forest-first-alaskans-institute-mourns-loss-of-byron-i-mallott/>

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

Workers are beginning to travel into Prince of Wales communities for fisheries and logging. Klawock is making sure people have their masks on. With a 14-day quarantine restriction in Hydaburg, fishermen are choosing to stay on their boats and community members are delivering food to Elders in Hydaburg, Craig and Klawock.

The community of Arctic Village has extended its travel ban to the end of May.

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

Despite COVID19, the harvesting seasons are upon us and Native peoples are out enjoying our ways of life, as the seasons wait for no one.

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

There's anxiety around commercial fishing season starting up amidst the pandemic.

People are duck hunting in some regions and villages. Some people have started fishing for grayling and are enjoying being outside.

In Southeast, Springtime is a time of our lands waking up. Herring, seaweed, and other plants are already out or coming out. People are excited to collect seaweed. People get grouse in early spring and put up foods for Elders and family. King salmon may be running soon, but there seems to be less herring eggs than usual this year. The land has woken up, including bears and deer. People are talking about getting smokehouses opened up and canning food from their freezers to make room for this year's stuff. The sea asparagus should be popping out soon too.

Whaling crews on the North Slope are continuing to land whales, it's a time of abundance.

Some communities, like Kotlik, are preparing to go egg hunting and picking greens soon.

People have been picking, eating and canning fiddleheads. Sewskimo Gertz shared her process for preserving: <https://sewskimogertz.com/2020/05/12/alaskan-fiddleheads-3/>

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

The communities of Napaimute and Nunapitchuk are dealing with the aftermath of spring flooding. Some homes were damaged heavily – especially the floors. There was flooding on the Johnson River (Kuskokwim tributary). Water dropped but is starting to rise again in Nunapitchuk.

The sun won't set in Utqiagvik until August: <https://www.ktuu.com/content/news/The-sun-wont-set-on-Utqiagvik-for-81-days-570361281.html>

Many communities are getting ready for spring clean-up. Some are hosting clean yard contests and offering incentives for recycling cans.

Southeast Alaska is experiencing hot weather which brings worries about fire danger.

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

The community of Metlakatla is moving forward with graduation plans. They divided seniors into groups where seniors and families will celebrate in an outside graduation. Families can view the trifolds of graduates' journey through school and seniors will pick up their diplomas. A graduation ceremony will also be held via live broadcast for the community to watch virtually. An outdoor graduation is also being planned for Kake, and only one family member is allowed out of the car during the graduation.

A truck procession around the village of Shageluk was held for the graduates. Community members made signs in celebration of the graduates. Unalakleet celebrated both virtually

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(<https://www.facebook.com/UNKWolfpack/videos/1086601435030870/>) with a parade through town (<https://www.facebook.com/UNKWolfpack/videos/2744946019124954/>) and continuing with rose ceremonies on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

A family member to our very own, Karla Gatgyedm Hana'ax Booth, has become a doctor - Alexis Brendible (Ts'msyen). She graduated from Washington State University and will start her residency at Swedish Medical Center soon. Karla, Indigenous Leadership Continuum Director at FAI, is proud of her niece being the first in the Booth family to become a doctor. Congratulations, Dr. Brendible!

Our very own, Ayyu Qassataq, earned a Master of Arts in Rural Development from the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Congratulations, Ayyu! Her research project was called, When Ujalaqtiq Danced: Stories of Strength, Suppression & Hope. She says, "This research will help to grow shared understanding of how this history continues to shape our lived experience as modern-day Native peoples and help lay the foundation to promote healing and strength as Native communities through the revival of ancestral traditions that kept us healthy and strong for thousands of years.":

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=3425185397497349&set=a.374536669228919&type=3&theater>

May school districts are featuring their high school graduates on social media, like the Yukon-Koyukuk School District:

<https://www.facebook.com/yukonkoyukukschooldistrict/photos/a.1195925083757515/3472085779474756/?type=3&theater>

### **\*Calls for support and stories\***

Steve Ginnis, executive director of Fairbanks Native Association (FNA), shared about damage to graves within the Alaska Native section of the Birch Hill Cemetery in Fairbanks. Vandals caused damage to at least eight graves, and nine others were damaged by snow melt runoff. The Fairbanks Police Department only noted two graves as vandalized, while FNA's count is eight. If anyone has information about grave vandalism they are urged to call Officer Phil James at 907-450-6481, or FPD's main number, 907-450-6500, about FPD Case# 20-1502.

[https://www.facebook.com/Fairbanks.Native/posts/3234465426593374?\\_tn\\_ =K-R](https://www.facebook.com/Fairbanks.Native/posts/3234465426593374?_tn_ =K-R)

### **\*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\***

The community of Arctic Village is gathering logs to build a cabin for a place to quarantine.

Women in Arctic Village are making jam to give out to Elders with their own time and supplies. They are ordering dried goods – filling up the community hall – for emergency kits to prepare for the next wave of the virus.

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Kyle Khaayák'w Worl shared a Native Games 'pass the brush' challenge video. He says, "Our traditional games unite us together from Alaska to Greenland!":

<https://www.facebook.com/kyle.worl/videos/10157608383239563/>

The community of Huslia hosted socially-distance bingo via VHF radio:

<https://www.facebook.com/586083218185529/videos/2618674375086778/>

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

The community of Kotlik had yuraq (dancing) outside on Mother's Day to celebrate mothers.

The Aciqluq and Kisaǵvigmiut traditional dance groups have been practicing in and around parks in Anchorage.

### **\*Other Community Happenings\***

Dr. Anne Zink traveled to Stebbins and Nome and flew over Shishmaref with Dr. Robert Onders, medical director of Community and Health Systems Improvement with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC), Megan Alvanna Stimpfle, the self-governance liaison for the Norton Sound Health Corp. (NSHC), Dr. Alexander Eastman, the senior medical officer at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and Jeff Birks, his chief of staff. Information was shared about the region and they saw first hand how critical clean water is to fight COVID-19 and other diseases: <https://www.facebook.com/alaska.dhss/posts/10158188412459929>

JBER has scheduled flyovers around the state this week to honor frontline COVID-19 responders and essential workers. Aircraft involved are the F-22 Raptor, C-17 Globemaster III, KC-135 Stratotanker, HC-130J Combat King II, and HH-60 Pave Hawk:

[https://www.facebook.com/JBERAK/posts/2904257732961144?\\_tn=-R](https://www.facebook.com/JBERAK/posts/2904257732961144?_tn=-R)

Norton Sound Health Corporation (NSHC) has been publishing a daily situation report. So far, 1,206 have been tested in the region, 1,030 returned negative, one returned positive, and 175 are pending. There are zero active cases, one recovered case:

<https://myemail.constantcontact.com/NSHC-Situation-Report-Update-May-13.html?soid=1123965954037&aid=Ay-dajgkE>

NSHC hosts a daily COVID-19 Tribal Leaders Call-in. They give a briefing about the COVID-19 pandemic preparation for communities and make space for questions:

<https://www.facebook.com/NortonSoundHealthCorporation/posts/902084396906638>

Gladys Jung Elementary Principal Christopher Carmichael was arrested by the FBI's Child Exploitation Task Force and later charged with possession of child pornography, attempted coercion of a child and sexual abuse of a minor. KYUK and Anchorage Daily News article:

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<https://www.kyuk.org/post/lksd-said-it-was-blindsided-principals-arrest-except-he-d-been-investigated-twice>

Association of Village Council Presidents' Tribal Justice Department will host a Tribal Court Master Series Training in a four-part series. Part One, scheduled for May 18 – 20, 2020 starting at 1pm on those dates, will encompass topics from all four parts of the AVCP Tribal Justice 2019 Training Schedule, and will be held and recorded telephonically via Skype:

<https://www.avcp.org/event/2020-tribal-court-master-series-training-part-one-tribal-court-boot-camp/>