

First Alaskans Institute

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A GIANT HAS WALKED INTO THE FOREST: FIRST ALASKANS INSTITUTE MOURNS LOSS OF BYRON I. MALLOTT

Anchorage, Alaska – First Alaskans Institute (FAI), a statewide Alaska Native nonprofit focused on advancing Alaska Natives for the *next* 10,000 years, Board of Trustees and Staff are shocked and deeply saddened by the untimely passing of our Trustee and Senior Fellow, Byron carried the Tlingit name *Dux da neik, K’oo del ta’ Mallott* (Tlingit), who walked into the forest this morning.

His name translated into English means “a person who would lead us into the future.” And for all who knew him, this name was indeed who he was.

In addition to many important leadership roles Byron took on throughout his extraordinary life, he served as our first President/CEO, and his visionary leadership helped to set us on the path we walk in service to our community today. We send our love and prayers of comfort to Toni, his children and grandchildren, the *Kwaashk’i Kwáan* – the Raven Humpback Salmon people who he was the clan leader of, the whole community of *Yakutat*, all of his friends, relatives, loved ones, and our greater community for this tremendous loss.

Byron cared deeply for his communities and had a unique way of uplifting the faces of all Alaska Native peoples with his oratory. "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," he said, speaking at 2014 FAI Elders & Youth Conference.

“We are heartbroken. We wrap our love around his family at this time, to comfort them. We stand beside his family, his clan, and his community as we collectively prepare to honor his life. May our cultural values and practices continue to give us all strength so we can do right by his legacy as he journeys to the Ancestors,” said *La quen náay Liz Medicine Crow* (Haida/Tlingit), President/CEO of First Alaskans.



Byron speaking at FAI’s Annual Elders & Youth Conference Photo by FAI Trustee Sven Haakanson, Jr. (Alutiiq/Sugpiat).

Byron's lasting impact includes fingerprints in the formation and growth of many organizations, businesses and governments, including First Alaskans Institute. As Lieutenant Governor he oversaw the Alaska Division of Elections, was the Governor's Fisheries Advisor as well as the Administration's lead on critical issues such as stewardship of transboundary waters and climate change. He co-chaired the federal Denali Commission, and served on numerous other boards including the Governor's Opioid Task force. As chair of Alaska's Historical Commission, he spearheaded the 150th Anniversary of the Treaty of Cession of the State of Alaska, which included events in Washington, D.C. as well as statewide. There was literally no stone of public policy unturned by Byron in his pursuit of a better Alaska and future our Alaska Native peoples deserved.

Byron entered public life as mayor of Yakutat at age 22 and has since held many positions of responsibility in the public, private and non-profit sectors. He has served every Alaska Governor since statehood. He was president of the Alaska Federation of Natives; trustee, chair and executive director of the Alaska Permanent Fund Corporation; and chair of the Nature Conservancy of Alaska. Byron also served on the Polynesian Voyaging Society's Board of Directors.

In the private sector, he served as chair, president and CEO of Sealaska Corporation; served on the board of Alaska Air Group; Bank of America subsidiary boards in Washington and Alaska; and, as a director of the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank in San Francisco. Byron was also a small business owner and commercial fisherman.

Mallot attended Western State College and had an honorary doctorate in humanities from the University of Alaska.

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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.*