

First Alaskans Institute

Community Engagement Update
Week of June 3, 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 - 6/03/2020:

Many of our communities still have restrictions in place and updates on cases

The community of Huslia updated their travel restrictions, requiring testing prior to travel: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/167999230013457/permalink/2099797963500231/>

Second Test Makes YKHC 'Highly Confident' Quinhagak Child Received False Positive COVID-19 Result: <https://www.kyuk.org/post/second-test-makes-ykhc-highly-confident-quinhagak-child-received-false-positive-covid-19-result>

The Department of Health and Social Services is reporting 18 new cases in Alaska. A look at the numbers show there are now 505 total cases of COVID-19 with 373 recovered cases and 11 people hospitalized: <https://www.ktuu.com/content/news/18-new-COVID-19-cases-announced-by-DHSS-570990121.html>

Samuel Simmons Memorial Hospital gave an update of 1,678 total test performed, with 1,584 negative and 93 pending: <https://www.facebook.com/ArcticSlope/posts/3897207460354387>

Prince of Wales communities are relieved Ketchikan hasn't received any new COVID-19 cases in the last month, because it lessens the chance of cases reaching them.

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

Alaskans are getting their family prepared for summer harvesting. They are canning frozen salmon from last year and making space in their freezers for fishing this summer.

If you have any questions, updates or suggestions, please send them to info@firstalaskans.org. Quyanapqak!

Garden and Gather Alaska put a call out for Alaska Native gardening and gathering stories:
<https://www.facebook.com/aknativemedia/photos/rpp.1496218824013547/2336722639963157/?type=3&theater>

Many communities in interior Alaska observed Memorial Day on May 31. They cleaned graveyards, put up fences for those who passed over the winter. Many followed with a picnic or potluck. People sang songs with the drum at some gatherings.

Nalukataq is being planned in Utqiagvik in June:
<https://www.facebook.com/uvana.inupiaq/posts/3021425024617021>

Some Alaska Native communities are concerned about what military force may look like in rural Alaska if Marshall law is put in place. They recall what Elders have told them to prepare for the time when we have to live entirely off of our lands and waters again. The communities are preparing – as we always have done - by harvesting on the lands, fishing and hunting.

Recognizing the long history of disenfranchisement of Alaska Native voters, our communities are worried and preparing for what our country's unrest may mean for continued suppression of Native votes in the upcoming elections.

I Can't Breathe and Black Lives Matter peaceful rallies are being held around the state

First Alaskans Institute (FAI) stood in solidarity with the "I Can't Breathe" social distance rally held in Anchorage on May 30 in Anchorage, responding to organizers' calls to uplift Native peoples' shared experiences with unjust systems through brutalization of our Native men and the pervasive crisis of our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. This peaceful gathering was in response to the injustice of our Black and Indigenous peoples being targeted with police force and violence, including the death of George Floyd in Minnesota. In America, our Black and Indigenous men are disproportionately targeted by police brutality; we know the roots of these injustices are intertwined and continue to impact our communities today. This rally amplified the experiences of our Black and Native peoples in a safe, socially distant way, and reinforces the very need for us all to come together:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/868708773616015/permalink/871999999953559/>

- Desi Mar Montenegro shared a speech given by our very own Ayyu Qassataq, Vice President & Indigenous Operations Director:

<https://www.facebook.com/desi.mar.montenegro/videos/2573228462930983/>

Gloria Wolfe shared photos of the rally in Yakutat with the Mount Saint Elias Dancers present:
<https://www.facebook.com/gloria.wolfe.5/posts/10220631308805343>

Alaska Native youth turn out to Ketchikan protest against racial injustice:
<https://www.krbd.org/2020/06/03/alaska-native-youth-turn-out-to-ketchikan-protest-against-racial-injustice/?fbclid=IwAR15TwISLwaMp8Kg2f3W1BX4LtE96rlvxvJTn6Mev8LRIZY7gomzO6hJsZY>

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The community of Kake gathering in Indigenous Solidarity in support of Black Lives Matter. Our very own, Liz La quen náay Medicine Crow, President & CEO, shared a video of community speeches and singing and drumming:

<https://www.facebook.com/elizabeth.medicinecrow/videos/10220351123281645/>

Native Movement shared photos of rallies in Fairbanks and Anchorage:

https://www.facebook.com/nativemovementalaska/posts/10163636996345453?_tn_ =H-R

Communities join to call for justice:

http://www.thedutchharborfisherman.com/article/2023communities_join_to_call_for_justice

Bruce Nelson shared photos from the Black Lives Matter March in Kotzebue on June 2:

<https://www.facebook.com/bruce.nelson.9659/posts/10158583802687973>

On the evening of June 2, over 100 Bethel residents gathered to peacefully protest the death of George Floyd. The Black Lives Matter movement has resonated with Bethel residents, who are predominantly Alaska Native, another group familiar with inequities in law enforcement:

<https://www.kyuk.org/post/large-bethel-crowd-peacefully-protests-killing-george-floyd?fbclid=IwAR1xh3WBwv8LI0ajb8IffgW34NMjyFEnW9zqjsakkLbuxm47-Bsud3vQk80>

The Herring Rock Water Protectors shared a message of solidarity. “When we work towards Indigenous liberation, we are working to dismantle the systems of oppression, exploitation, and supremacy that we face here in Sheet’ka and Tlingít Aaní. We are defending our way of life. In doing so, our work is inextricably linked with Black liberation and condemning the systemic and blatant violence towards black and brown people since the founding of this nation and beyond. We stand in solidarity and assert that #blacklivesmatter. Gunalchéesh to all those who have stood and continue to stand against injustice.” Photo at Noow Tlein, Sheet’ká Kwaan, Reconciliation Ceremony 2019: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CA-0oeTj5Uc/>

A vigil was held in Sitka on June 1 with seven minutes of silence for George Floyd and a Peace Song was offered by the Kik s’adi Herring Ladies Louise Brady, Dionne Brady-Howard Izzy Jackson. Lakota Harden shared a video:

<https://www.facebook.com/TasinaLLB/videos/10163901334930405/>

Unalakleet high school student Olivia organized a peaceful Black Lives Matter solidarity walk through the village on June 3: <https://www.facebook.com/kewpi/posts/10222469101453293>

FUTURE MARCHES, RALLIES & VIGILS:

A Kodiak Black Lives Matter March is planned for June 4 at noon at the Kodiak High School. Kodiak would like to show solidarity with their Black friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers and disavow violence against people of color, especially in light of recent events:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/588796935084757/>

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A Ketchikan Stand in Solidarity with Black Lives Matter rally will be held on June 5 in Ketchikan at Jefferson & Tongass at 5 pm. People are encouraged to bring a drum:

<https://www.facebook.com/MrsKapralova/posts/10223959110353459>

A Justice for George Floyd rally will be held in Anchorage on June 5 at 6 pm at Delaney Park Strip: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1604104186409384/>

A Protest to End Police Violence and Brutality rally will be held in Anchorage on June 5 at 6 pm at Reeve Blvd. across from Taco Bell: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CA1jxtgFkoY/>

Tlingit & Haida to Hold Virtual Rally in Support of the Black Lives Matter Movement on June 6 at 11 am: https://www.facebook.com/ccthita/posts/1359220610938937?_tn=-R

A Black Lives Matter Peaceful Protest will be held in Soldotna on June 6 at 2 pm: <https://www.facebook.com/events/3017001641700040/>

A Peaceful Vigil for Victims of Targeted Police Racism will be held in Palmer on June 6 at 12 pm at the Palmer Pavilion in Downton Palmer:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/922362818238969/>

A Your Voice Matters/Justice for George Floyd rally will be held in Anchorage on June 6: <https://www.facebook.com/events/254010495832122/>

The Women's Power League of Alaska is hosting a virtual Courageous Conversations About Race on June 8 at 4:30 pm, including representation from First Alaskans Institute:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/594764267810423/>

Juneteenth Celebration, the commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States, will be held June 13 and 14 in Anchorage: <https://www.facebook.com/events/2643240832562708/>

- Juneteenth Anchorage website: <https://info8533.wixsite.com/juneteenthanchorage>

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

A community member in Arctic Village started a free store, where people can get free clothes, dishes, and other donated items.

Norton Sound Health Corporation will be sharing education on the health of traditional indigenous living from NSHC Tribal Healers. People of the Norton Sound region have thrived through wars, pandemics, and other tremendous hardships. Throughout it all, they have stayed rooted in traditional beliefs and eating subsistence foods:

<https://www.facebook.com/NortonSoundHealthCorporation/posts/943057066142704>

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

Kawerak Wellness, in partnership with Native Connections, is hosting a Youth Talking Circle for community members aged 14-24 on June 9 at 4 pm:

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1023075638088080&id=203159750079677

Other Community Happenings and News

The Alaska Native community has called for the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District to appoint a tribal representative onto their school board:

<https://www.k12northstar.org/Page/2660>

City of Palmer places chief of police on administrative leave due to “inappropriate social media postings”: <https://www.ktuu.com/content/news/City-of-Palmer-places-Chief-of-Police-on-administrative-leave-due-to-inappropriate-social-media-postings-570977241.html?fbclid=IwAR0wnyj6m5gtxAQtYgKPY2EwYQ1CiPMMgP8jDV58TRH7dYtA1AaD-GIH6Dk>

Airlines Say All Y-K Delta Villages Have Service. But It's Not The Same As Before The Pandemic: <https://www.kyuk.org/post/airlines-say-all-y-k-delta-villages-have-service-its-not-same-pandemic>