

# First Alaskans Institute

Community Engagement Update

*Week of June 10, 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 - 6/10/2020:**

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

Unalakleet re-upped their travel ban following the State of Alaska Health Mandate 018: Intrastate Travel for a Community off The Road System Or The Marine Highway System Is Prohibited, Except As Necessary For: 1) Critical Personal Needs, 2) Medical, and 3) Essential Services/Critical Infrastructure; and a quarantine for 14 days or negative test:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/241218712573141/permalink/3569933969701582/>

Kodiak got their first ferry in many months. By the time the ferry arrived in Unalaska, a Tustumena crewmember tested positive, causing communities concern about an COVID-19 outbreak. The ferry is back in Homer being sanitized with an anticipated June 27 relaunch date:

[https://kmxt.org/2020/06/tustumena-to-return-to-kodiak-june-27/?fbclid=IwAR2bTSaFVuY\\_IDTgFZN9SB--L3rSbSSnvoQTVd16LQxTOXxAe2dlvPeSfk4](https://kmxt.org/2020/06/tustumena-to-return-to-kodiak-june-27/?fbclid=IwAR2bTSaFVuY_IDTgFZN9SB--L3rSbSSnvoQTVd16LQxTOXxAe2dlvPeSfk4)

As mandates are quickly lifting and businesses and travel are opening up, our communities continue to be rightfully concerned about disproportionate potential impacts. The decrease in social distancing and mask-wearing has increased stress and worry within many of our communities.

On June 9, Bethel City Council voted to allow by-mail elections, passed a budget, and made plans to use the city's \$8.4 million of CARES Act Funding: <https://www.kyuk.org/post/bethel-paves-way-mail-election-announces-private-cab-rides-elders>

The community of Arctic Village is making COVID-19 preparations and getting ready for the winter ahead. They've started gardens for food and also started raising some chickens.

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

Huslia has a new COVID-19 Coordinator who will hand out masks to travelers coming to the village. Travelers must be tested prior to travel to the village and send the COVID-19 results to the coordinator. She will also monitor travelers and recommend a 7-day quarantine:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/167999230013457/permalink/2104780773001950/>

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

Wainwright's Nalukataq dates were announced in June:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2770117833268267&set=a.1385428071737257&type=3&theater>

An Intertribal Food Summit will be held on June 15-20. There is no-cost to register for tribal community members, producers, staff and partners: <https://intertribalfoodsummit.com>

- Register at <https://intertribalfoodsummit2020.eventbrite.com>

With fishing season ramping up, our communities are both busy and watchful on many fronts:

- Around the YK Delta, some Bethel Elders received salmon and sheefish from the test fishery and were grateful – many are smoking the salmon;
- Prince of Wales islanders are concerned about king fishing restrictions, also Southeast villages of Angoon and Kake, and the impact that will have on both food security and our ways of life;
- As fishermen from Kodiak head to Bristol Bay, folks are worried and watching what happens to people in this pandemic;
- The first salmon fishing season opened yesterday in Kotlik, and many community members are readying for fish camp.

Nasugraq Rainey Hopson (Iñupiaq) of Anaktuvuk Pass was recently featured on the Out Here Podcast. She shared about her Gardens in the Arctic project:

[https://www.outherepodcast.com/episodes/themixingzone?fbclid=IwAR3NiV1NA\\_ViDPILwkRxYcSri1Yrb08\\_jZolbyXSmiu\\_s8taA33qQ-1tBlk](https://www.outherepodcast.com/episodes/themixingzone?fbclid=IwAR3NiV1NA_ViDPILwkRxYcSri1Yrb08_jZolbyXSmiu_s8taA33qQ-1tBlk)

Community members in Shaktoolik are gathering wild rhubarb and climbing for murre eggs.

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

The community of Nome held a Black Lives Matter rally and Esther Pederson shared some photos: <https://www.facebook.com/esther.pederson/posts/10223972321084837>

The community of Unalakleet held a second Black Lives Matter rally on June 10, and raised funds for both the Equal Justice (<https://eji.org>) and Alaska Innocence Project (<https://www.alaskainnocence.org/index.html>):

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<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10163835713170473&set=a.10152076797370473&type=3&theater>

Dozens of community members across the Arctic made their voices heard during two marches last week — in Kotzebue and Utqiagvik: <https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/rural-alaska/2020/06/09/arctic-alaska-communities-turn-out-for-northernmost-police-brutality-protests/?fbclid=IwAR12V1teAs5yDIVnjjTSXf072QSABlJB2XzFOJ9MLMxrl8AHmNabqhvH2yA>

**\*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\***

Sealaska Heritage kicked off its first-ever virtual Celebration last week in an effort to bring people together after the COVID-19 caused the institute to postpone the in-person event. Virtual Celebration 2020 included dance performances from Celebration 2018 and new content, including submissions from people around the region and videos of associated events. The broadcast was recorded and can be found on SHI's YouTube page:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/sealaskaheritageinstitute>

- Sealaska Heritage will also unveil winners of the 2020 Juried Art Show and Competition: <https://sealaskaheritage.org/node/1232>

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

The community of Arctic Village is planning a Saturday Market type of event to be held later this summer. With travel restrictions in place and the Tanana Valley State Fair cancelled this year, they want to plan something fun for their community.

**\*Other Community Happenings and News\***

Elder Rev. Mary Ann Iqil'an Warden (Iñupiaq) was laid to rest in Kaktovik. Mary Ann was a beloved Elder who loved to sing and dance, especially with her, Allison Akootchook Warden. They often attended the First Alaskans Institute Elders & Youth Conferences together: <https://www.facebook.com/FirstAlaskansInstitute/photos/a.283430090227/310050810227/?type=3&theater>

Dr. Rev. Anna Frank was elected the first chief of Denakkanaaga, Inc.: <https://www.facebook.com/Fairbanks.Native/photos/a.518614481511829/3296030243770225/?type=3&theater>

The Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska announced the Tlingit & Haida Youth Commission: <https://www.facebook.com/ccthita/videos/678227119691750/>

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Justina Wilhelm of Utqiagvik has been selected for the position of Iñisagvik College President:  
<https://www.facebook.com/IñisagvikCollege/photos/a.282205761836936/3121925751198242/?type=3&theater>

Crystal Ciiacqu Leonetti (Yup'ik), the first Indigenous woman to ever serve as a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Native American liaison, was featured by USFWS:  
<https://www.facebook.com/USFWSAlaska/photos/a.151004358272411/3106120429427441/?type=3&theater>

The Fairbanks North Star Borough School District passed their budget. Community members are grateful arts and music were not cut.

June 7 was Walter Harper Day in recognition of the Koyukon Athabascan man who, on June 7, 1913, became the first person to stand atop Denali:  
<https://www.facebook.com/TananaChiefsConference/photos/a.235737939833988/3856506441090435/?type=3&theater>

With fire season beginning, the BLM Alaska Fire Service recently awarded three contracts for Type 2 hand crews in rural Alaska. They are mostly made up of firefighters from the Type 2 emergency firefighter crews in BLM AFS protection areas that cover the northern half of the state. However, unlike Type 2 EFF crews that are hired on an as-needed basis, contracted crews allow for work outside of fire suppression, such as fuels mitigation and other funded projects. The crews (Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments – CATG contract crew, Capstone Crew and SES Fire Crew) are the first of their kind for BLM nationally and they are mostly made up of people from interior Alaska villages:  
[https://www.facebook.com/BLMAFS/posts/3625866357439961?\\_tn\\_ =H-R](https://www.facebook.com/BLMAFS/posts/3625866357439961?_tn_ =H-R)

An accidental fire burned down three structures near the old village near Shaktoolik.

Dr. Jessica Black, board of directors president of Fairbanks Native Association, gave an update from FNA and discussed current events:  
[https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=186329662678249&ref=watch\\_permalink](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=186329662678249&ref=watch_permalink)

Bethel held a Meet & Greet with their new police chief from Texas. Community members want to be sure he'll integrate into the community and gain an understanding of our ways of life and rural Alaskan life: <https://www.kyuk.org/post/new-police-chief-visits-bethel-advocates-community-policing>

J. Michael Holloway, author of Dreaming Bears: A Gwich'in Indian Storyteller, a Southern Doctor, a Wild Corner of Alaska, has passed. He was an advocate for protecting the wilderness and Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Holloway wrote about late Johnny and Sarah Frank who lived outside of Venetie, and will be missed as a connection to those Elders:  
<https://obituaries.adn.com/adportal/listing/JordanMichaelMike-Holloway/W0016205.html>

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The House District 40 election includes a field of three Native candidates - other two candidates in the Democratic primary both hail from the Northwest Arctic — Elizabeth Niiqsik Ferguson, a former legislative aide for current Rep. John Lincoln, from Kotzebue, Ely Cyrus, City Administrator from Kiana, and just recently declared Josiah Patkotak of Utqiagvik.