

# First Alaskans Institute

Community Engagement Update

*Week of June 17, 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 - 6/17/2020:**

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

Communities are still concerned with the rising cases across the state and especially concerned about the rises in our villages. They are staying vigilant and working hard to keep our people healthy and safe from COVID-19. Prince of Wales Island and Juneau both reported new COVID-19 cases this week. Though many people in Juneau are wearing masks, not as many seem to be in Fairbanks. Soccer practice has restarted in Fairbanks, so social distancing is relaxing there.

There are three active COVID-19 cases in Ketchikan and no active cases in Metlakatla. The community continues to recommend social distancing and mask wearing, and is limiting gatherings of more than 20 people. Travel has opened back up with a 14-day quarantine: [https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=961020997675080&id=141055983004923](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=961020997675080&id=141055983004923)

This week, the Kodiak Area Emergency Services Organization announced the fifth known case of COVID-19 in Kodiak: <https://kmxt.org/2020/06/breaking-fifth-case-of-covid-19-in-kodiak/>

Napaskiak goes into lockdown and Quinhagak opens up following positive COVID-19 cases in their communities: <https://www.kyuk.org/post/napaskiak-locks-down-quinagak-opens-following-positive-coronavirus-cases>

Norton Sound Health Corporation has confirmed a sixth case of COVID-19 in the Bering Strait region. The patient who tested positive is based in Nome and is believed to have contracted the disease through travel-related transmission: <https://www.knom.org/wp/blog/2020/06/18/sixth-covid-19-case-in-the-region-was-travel-related-health-corporation-says/>

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

With less than 60% of passengers arriving into Bethel volunteering for COVID-19 testing, the City of Bethel hopes to incentivize testing up to 100% with their CARES Act funding: <https://www.kyuk.org/post/city-bethel-plans-incentivize-airport-testing-coronavirus>

The Nulato COVID-19 Task Force is enforcing quarantine rules by fining those not in compliance. Additionally, travelers must show proof of negative COVID-19 test and quarantine for seven days: <https://www.facebook.com/elaine.wright.5477/posts/10219304120131297>

Alaskan artists experiencing a dire financial emergency as a result of the pandemic are invited to apply for a \$1,500 Alaska Arts and Culture Emergency Relief Grant before June 30. Alaska State Council on the Arts, Alaska Arts & Culture Foundation, Atwood Foundation and Rasmuson Foundation partnered to create this new program: <https://artsalaska.submittable.com/submit>

Alaskans experiencing loss of income due to COVID-19 may qualify for up to \$1,200 of financial assistance to help with rent or mortgage payment. Applications will be accepted June 15 - June 26, 2020: <https://alaskahousingrelief.org/>

Alaska Tribes are putting CARES Act funding to work in their communities. Metlakatla Indian Community seeks a COVID-19 Check Point Tracker who will ensure entrants at the designated checkpoint is screened before entering the island: <https://www.facebook.com/141055983004923/photos/a.147779542332567/954089655034881/?type=3&theater>

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

Community members are starting to go to fish camp. Some communities are continuing to catch king salmon, and it is uplifting people's spirits, especially Elders.

Gardening is in full swing across the state with some communities doing a community garden for the first time in years. We are reminded that our people have always been tenders of gardens, from clam gardens to berries and beach greens – Alaska Native people will always be stewards of the land and waters.

With an uptick of mosquitos this year, a UAF entomologist is planning to conduct a citizen science mosquito-monitoring program: [http://www.newsminer.com/news/local\\_news/buzz-off-uaf-entomologist-plans-citizen-science-mosquito-monitoring-program/article\\_421eacc-adf0-11ea-a833-fba723d01c06.html](http://www.newsminer.com/news/local_news/buzz-off-uaf-entomologist-plans-citizen-science-mosquito-monitoring-program/article_421eacc-adf0-11ea-a833-fba723d01c06.html)

To keep their community's safe on the rivers, Melinda Takak of Shaktoolik organized the donation of lifejackets to hand out to youth in the community and life jackets and being donated for youth in Arctic Village.

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**\*Town Hall meetings and racial equity discussions are being held around the state\***

Following two Black Lives Matter protests in Bethel, KYUK held a community round table to share personal stories on understanding and discussing racial identity and equity. It was translated into Yugtun. Listen to the Bethel Community Round Table On Racial Equity: <https://www.kyuk.org/post/listen-bethel-community-round-table-racial-equity?fbclid=IwAR3Fg281f36rDVI8woSXoauB8U7pjajEbCl6Jt-7oQuto2ZivRgalOTr7YM>

In response to public outcry at the lack of public opportunity to weigh in on law enforcement reform, Anchorage Mayor Ethan Berkowitz, Anchorage Police Chief Justin Doll and Deputy Chief Kenneth McCoy hosted a virtual town hall in Anchorage this week: [https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=695338884373686&ref=watch\\_permalink](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=695338884373686&ref=watch_permalink)

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

With the continued risk of COVID-19 transmission, the community of Kake cancelled its original 4th of July plans but plans to host a fireworks show. Separately, some community members are hosting a duck race fundraiser for the Mackenzie Howard Memorial Scholarship Fund, while other small events are being considered, like socially-distanced games of corn hole.

Arctic Slope Native Association shared some tips on staying safe at Nalukataq this year: <https://www.facebook.com/ArcticSlope/posts/3950674098341056>

On May 30, Kaltag hosted a dedication ceremony for their new community hall, and looks forward to 100 years of settlement in their current location this August. Congratulations, Kaltag!

Copper River Native Association hosted an All Star Basketball Game with Kenny Dobbs: <https://www.facebook.com/437546236287898/posts/4201605243215293/?d=n>

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

People are thankful for the 2020 Virtual Celebration hosted by Sealaska Heritage Institute, which included a mix of live coverage, storytelling, interviews and performances from the 2018 Celebration. Watch #Cele2020 on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLGoKk-JZWo1M7I9ZrE0SoMZwzGjIMuxzC>

Native Peoples Action continues to host weekly Native Wellness Hour sessions at noon on Thursdays with a variety of guests. This week, their special guests were Cingarqaq Pavilla and Danielle Stickman who shared info and led a session on yoga:

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<https://www.facebook.com/events/500133017392748/>

Tanana Chiefs Conference continues to release their Legacy of Our Elders mini-documentaries each Friday. This week, they are featuring the story of Roy and Avis Sam of Northway:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/TananaChiefs>

Ahtna, Inc. observed Ahtna Day on June 15. Their board felt it was important for employees to celebrate the values and traditions of the Ahtna culture – an important opportunity to reflect on the many things that make the Ahtna people and region special:

<https://www.facebook.com/Ahtna.Inc/photos/a.224549580905220/3736444156382394/?type=3&theater>

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

On June 18, Lt. Governor Kevin Meyer hosted a Virtual Town Hall Meeting on how they are working to ensure the fall Elections will be a safe experience during the COVID-19 outbreak in Alaska. Guests asked questions on what to expect when you vote in person, via absentee ballot, or early in Alaska while following social distancing and other COVID-19 guidelines:

[https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=623999881796020&ref=watch\\_permalink](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=623999881796020&ref=watch_permalink)

At the Anchorage School Board meeting this week, ASD superintendent Deena Bishop was criticized for her district-wide email addressing nationwide scrutiny of policing in schools:

<https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/anchorage/2020/06/17/anchorage-school-district-superintendent-criticized-over-email-addressing-nationwide-scrutiny-of-police-in-schools/>

Critics of the only finalist for the University of Wisconsin System's top leadership position, University of Alaska President Jim Johnsen, say his credentials and vision for the future are lackluster. Concerns included his comments referring to ANSEP and the UA Scholars program as de facto affirmative action, and that he was a minority when he worked at Doyon, Inc.:

<https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/education/2020/06/11/underwhelmed-concerns-linger-over-alaska-choice-lead-uw-system/5322307002/>

Following his withdrawal for consideration of the UW President position and decision to remain in Alaska, the University of Alaska faculty union calls for Jim Johnsen's resignation as UA president: <https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/education/2020/06/15/university-of-alaska-faculty-union-calls-for-jim-johnsens-resignation-as-president/>

With two wildfires near Kotlik. Smokejumpers were deployed. The fire can be seen as far away as Nunam Iqua: <https://akfireinfo.com/2020/06/17/smokejumpers-aircraft-working-to-contain-news-fires-near-st-michael-kotlik/>

Ravn Air Group, which recently declared bankruptcy and disrupted the only air service for many rural communities, announced they will receive \$31.6 million in relief under the CARES Act:

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<https://www.ktuu.com/content/news/Ravn-Air-Group-to-receive-316-million-in-relief-under-the-CARES-Act-571319751.html>

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