

# First Alaskans Institute

Community Engagement Update

*Week of June 24, 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 - 6/24/2020:**

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

COVID-19 cases are ramping up around the state and some communities are putting travel bans and restrictions back in place. The community of Kotlik requires testing and a quarantine for 48 hours. The community of Huslia has put back in place a travel restriction until July 1:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/HusliaTribe/permalink/2010877509055674/>

The community of Arctic Village is making progress on cabins for folks who need to temporarily quarantine. They are getting logs upriver and floating them to the village.

A Bethel resident tested positive for COVID-19. Knowing that the individual traveled to a village within the region while they were infectious, YKHC has recommended that they implement mandatory use of masks in public and “shelter-in-place” through July 5:

<https://www.kyuk.org/post/ykhc-says-bethel-resident-traveled-village-while-infectious-covid-19>

The Orutsararmiut Native Council has received \$13.8 million in CARES Act funding to address COVID-19 impact in the community of Bethel. The Tribe is using some funds for health care, encouraging testing for travelers to the region, PPE, supporting childcare providers, possible fuel vouchers, and preparing for a second wave: <https://www.kyuk.org/post/onc-receives-over-138-million-cares-act-funding>

The Klawock Cooperative Association is providing COVID-19 relief through food gift cards to tribal members:

[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=2603457756638825&id=100009238795538](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=2603457756638825&id=100009238795538)

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

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

After three months of advocating on behalf of the Organized Village of Kake, the federal subsistence board approved a special hunting request for the Tribe to harvest deer or moose this summer. The tribal government has inherent sovereignty over these issues and accommodated the federal system by working in good faith for a special action request which took three months to have addressed. The Tribe also expressed concern about the well-being of Tribal Citizens and the need for our peoples to continue to eat our foods to keep us as healthy as possible during this current pandemic. There are also continued food quality and supply chain concerns, as well as the necessity to provide sustenance for Elders and all community members over the long-term. The Tribe will issue special permits for the hunt: <https://www.ktoo.org/2020/06/22/kake-granted-emergency-hunting-request-during-pandemic/>

People are out fishing on the lower Yukon, but kings haven't arrived in significant numbers yet. Chums are running, but at a lower rate than previous years. The Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game is closing subsistence fishing for kings on the Yukon, and no gillnets are allowed. People are relieved the reds are running since the other fish counts are low and being closed:

<https://www.kyuk.org/post/deepening-cuts-fishing-opportunities-yukon>

- The Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game posted an update on the closure: [http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dcfnewsrelease/1165986588.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2y7DT\\_BxrlIGwxV2eB-u9GRCPVY201w6lm4iqcy9osjDnfTa7yF3PtomY](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dcfnewsrelease/1165986588.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2y7DT_BxrlIGwxV2eB-u9GRCPVY201w6lm4iqcy9osjDnfTa7yF3PtomY)

Folks around Norton Sound have begun putting up fish. Tundra folks are looking forward to picking aqpit (salmonberries), while Southeast salmonberries are ripening - folks across Alaska are excited for the berry picking and gathering season ahead.

**\*Racial equity topics continue to be raised and Juneteenth celebrations are being held around the state\***

KYUK shared artist and poet Alice Maar'aq Crow's 2014 poem on Juneteenth:

<https://www.kyuk.org/post/poem-juneteenth?fbclid=IwAR2JKhBkgZmlUKHZbtH8JXdUeLSba1q0c0I3ZXF2kjaFAu5jGaXenPbR5tc>

DeWayne Ingram was accosted and racially harassed while running in a South Anchorage neighborhood over the weekend. He encourages community members to be prepared to act as an ally in an instance of discrimination, especially since some passerby's did not intervene:

<https://www.ktva.com/story/42276901/anchorage-man-says-he-was-harassed-while-running-because-he-is-black>

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The Fairbanks North Star Borough School District is soliciting applications from people interested in serving as a volunteer committee member on the Diversity Committee:

<https://www.k12northstar.org/Page/2691>

- The Diversity Committee meeting was held on June 10:  
<https://www.k12northstar.org/cms/lib/AK01901510/Centricity/Domain/1500/20-0610%20Diversity%20Committee%20Meeting%20-%20Audio%20Web.mp3>

The Fairbanks North Star Borough School District school board held a discussion focused on equity and inclusion in the community. The session was put on by Fairbanks Coalition Builders, an organization that provides diversity and inclusion training in the borough:

<https://www.webcenter11.com/content/news/Fairbanks-School-District-hosts-Zoom-discussion-of-race-and-equity-571476541.html>

- Tune into the full meeting that was held on June 22:  
<https://www.k12northstar.org/cms/lib/AK01901510/Centricity/Domain/1500/20-0623%20Open%20Circles%20Conversations%20Around%20Issues%20of%20Race%20and%20Equity%20-%20Web%20Version.mp4>

The Palmer police chief is back on the job after ‘inappropriate’ comments about Black Lives Matter, despite public protest: <https://www.alaskapublic.org/2020/06/22/palmer-police-chief-back-on-the-job-after-inappropriate-comments-about-black-lives-matter/>

- The Palmer City Council meeting on June 23 was recorded and includes testimony against the reinstatement of the police chief: <https://youtu.be/xrguLWcl8hw>

Two local activists, Mx. Magnetek and Dardis, held a protest on June 23 to call for policies that are anti-racist, anti-xenophobic, anti-sexist, anti-poverty, and anti-ableist :

<https://www.facebook.com/100012286652709/videos/983445642074982/>

Three Alaska Native women were appointed to the Anchorage Public Safety Commission. They include Native Movement Gender Justice Director Charlene Aqpiq Apok, Native Peoples Action Executive Director Kendra Kloster and Alaska Native Heritage Center Executive Director Emily Edenshaw: <https://www.knba.org/post/three-alaska-native-women-join-anchorage-public-safety-advisory-commission>

**\*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\***

While many July 4th celebrations are being cancelled or scaled back, many communities are still having fireworks shows. The Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Tribes of Alaska is selling fireworks in Juneau:

<https://www.facebook.com/ccthita/photos/a.208052386055771/1374083616119303/?type=3&theater>

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As many of our communities are losing loved ones young and old, navigating the grieving process in a time of physical distancing, mask wearing, quarantining and travel restrictions has been difficult. Many are finding new ways to uphold traditions and include loved ones from a distance like holding the funeral service via livestream.

- A service was held for Elder Adeline Jackson of Kake on June 16 and shared on Facebook: [https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=290682748971362&ref=watch\\_permalink](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=290682748971362&ref=watch_permalink)
- Elder Lorna Vent of Huslia passed this week, and the community is observing physical distancing by only having 20 people inside the gathering place at a time. Speakers were placed outside during the service so people could listen from outside: [https://www.legacy.com/amp/obituaries/newsminer/196383733?utm\\_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR1v17EJEIZ05kWT1P0UcBRJdLUBE5FGYAIIXVOjpcvmfsx-HR-qQoSwjM](https://www.legacy.com/amp/obituaries/newsminer/196383733?utm_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR1v17EJEIZ05kWT1P0UcBRJdLUBE5FGYAIIXVOjpcvmfsx-HR-qQoSwjM)
- Elder and fluent Sm'algyax speaker Goodm Nluułgm Xsgiik, Sarah Booth of Metlakatla passed this week: <https://www.facebook.com/SHInstitute/photos/a.134460003294572/3988121091261758/?type=3&theater>

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

Kyle Worl shared a video of NYO athletes doing their version of the pass the brush challenge: <https://www.ktva.com/story/42284110/alaska-athletes-give-social-media-challenge-an-indigenous-twist>

**\*Other community happenings and news\***

An oil tank in the Native Village of Shungnak has overflowed and spilled around 15,000 gallons of heating oil, creating potential risk to Shungnak's drinking water and the Kobuk River – both are being monitored by the DEC and EPA: <https://www.ktuu.com/content/news/15000-gallon-oil-spill-reported-near-Kobuk-River-571436521.html>

The University of Alaska President Jim Johnsen resigned amidst public pressure following comments he made about diversity and the PFD during the search process for the role of University of Wisconsin president: <https://www.alaskapublic.org/2020/06/22/university-of-alaska-president-will-resign-amid-blowback-from-wisconsin-job-search/>

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