

First Alaskans Institute

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WINNERS OF THE ALASKA YOUTH VOTER TURNOUT CHALLENGE

Dgheyey Kaq', Dena'inaq elnen'aq' qilán (Anchorage, Alaska, lands of the Dena'ina) – Four youth groups across Alaska rose to the challenge of working together to increase voter turnout in their communities and they exceeded all expectations! First Alaskans Institute (FAI), a statewide Alaska Native nonprofit focused on advancing Alaska Natives for the *next* 10,000 years, is pleased to announce the winners of our 2020 Alaska Youth Voter Turnout Challenge. This challenge created a civic engagement opportunity for youth, 17 and younger, to learn about the importance of voting and encourage the eligible voting age adults in their communities to get out and vote. The winners were determined by the increase in voter turnout in the 2020 general election compared to the turnout in the 2016 general election, tracked by percent increase. Please join us in recognizing their efforts!

Congratulations to the first-place winner Juneau Native Youth Olympics with an increase of 32.76% in voter turnout! They win a \$15,000 prize that the Juneau Native Youth Olympics team plans to use the funds to help support equipment purchasing, space rentals, hosting their regional NYO events, provide community workshops in the games, create language lessons in Tlingit for the games, and travel for NYO events.

Congratulations to our second-place winner Native Village of Eyak Tribal Youth Council with an increase of 26.95% in voter turnout! They win a \$10,000 prize that the Eyak Tribal Youth Council will use to help with the cost of going to a youth leadership conference after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Congratulations to our third-place winner Roses of Andreafski with an increase of 16.95% in voter turnout! They win a \$5,000 prize that the St. Mary's youth plan to use to purchase craft and sewing supplies for their club.

Congratulations to our bonus prize fourth-place winner Newhalen School with an increase of 6.2% in voter turnout! They win a \$2,500 prize that the Newhalen School youth will use to help build outdoor recreation equipment.

The youth groups used mostly virtual outreach efforts, like announcements through recordings and live broadcasts on Facebook and announcements on VHF radio. They made posters and shared photos of their messages on social media. Another group held a mock ballot for K-12 students and they received 'I voted' stickers and were encouraged to remind voters in their homes to vote. Another group painted rocks with messages about voting and hid them around town for people to participate in a scavenger hunt.

“Congratulations to these youth groups for taking up this challenge! As our community seeks to address the disenfranchisement of Native peoples and other peoples of color from voting in this country and Alaska, at a time when we see multiple voter suppression efforts including here in Alaska such as Senate Bill 39, its essential to celebrate the successes of our young people in turning that tide. These youth groups are leading us with their example, and we say Gunalchéesh, Háw’aa, Thank you,” said La quen náay Liz Medicine Crow (Haida/Tlingit), President/CEO, First Alaskans.

In order to participate, schools or youth groups had to apply, and in those applications, commit to a non-partisan get out the vote effort to increase voter turnout in Alaska. The incentive prizes may not be divided or distributed as cash to any individual, child, or youth, and instead must be used to purchase educational or recreational items that benefit the winning school or youth group. We thank the youth groups who participated, and again, congratulations to the youth of each community! We also give special thanks to Native Peoples Action for assisting us in the challenge.

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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.*