

First Alaskans Institute

Community Engagement Update

Week of July 22, 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 - 7/22/2020:

Our communities remain vigilant and are actively pursuing ways to prepare for and respond to COVID-19

Many Tribes across the state are processing CARES Act relief funding for their tribal citizens. The Metlakatla Indian Community is planning to distribute relief through utility, water and garbage stipends, food vouchers, and small business start-up funding. They are asking for patience as they processing a high volume of applications:

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=983674155409764&id=141055983004923&tn=-R

Alaska was put on a COVID-19 hot spot list of states in which travelers must quarantine:

<https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/07/21/893648360/n-y-n-j-connecticut-now-say-travelers-from-31-hotspot-states-must-quarantine>

An Alaska Native person in the Fairbanks area contracted COVID-19 and was having trouble breathing for about a week before finally being admitted to the hospital, despite frequent emergency calls. Supporters recommend checking on friends and relatives who may be suffering with symptoms and advocating for them if needed.

Hydaburg had its first positive COVID-19 case. This is the Princes of Wales Island's seventh cumulative case: <https://www.krbd.org/2020/07/23/prince-of-wales-island-records-one-new-coronavirus-case-in-unnamed-community/>

Metlakatla closed for travel this week after cases appeared in nearby communities.

The Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation announced the 27th case of COVID-19 related to the region, and says there are more cases in July than in all the preceding months They are taking

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more steps to prevent further spread including providing testing to the St. Mary's and Aniak airports: <https://www.kyuk.org/post/ykhc-announces-27th-covid-19-case>

Lines for COVID-19 testing in Anchorage have become very long compared to a few weeks ago. Five more testing sites were added around the city:

<https://www.alaskapublic.org/2020/07/29/anchorage-announces-new-covid-19-testing-sites/>

The City of Bethel received \$8.4 million in CARES Act Funding, and has allocated \$1 million of that for Bethel-based businesses. That \$1 million will be distributed through the newly announced Bethel Business Recovery Grant Program: <https://www.kyuk.org/post/coffeekyuk-july-27-bethel-business-recovery-grant-program>

Emmonak has been on lockdown. Although it has been quiet since their first case, they are still taking precautionary measures: <https://www.kyuk.org/post/emmonak-still-lockdown-over-positive-coronavirus-case>

High positive test rates and village outbreaks signal COVID-19 spread in Interior Alaska in small communities like Fort Yukon and Circle: <https://www.ktoo.org/2020/07/28/high-positive-test-rates-and-village-outbreaks-signal-covid-spread-in-interior-alaska/>

Travel was shut down in Arctic Village after a positive case of COVID-19. They are passing out masks and issuing fines for those who are not wearing a mask:

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=3197210750340899&id=1105669659495029&_tn_=-R

A resident of the North Slope Region tested positive for COVID-19, which brings the number of cases to eight in the Arctic Slope region:

https://www.facebook.com/ArcticSlope/posts/4111633935578404?_tn_=-R

Many of our communities are preparing for the 2020/2021 school year

During a Fairbanks North Star Borough School District board meeting, they read aloud emails received for purposes of public testimony on Facebook Live without notifying individuals ahead of time. The emails are considered public testimony, but people would have appreciated being notified. Advocates wonder if the way they were read will deter future testimony via email:

<https://www.k12northstar.org/cms/lib/AK01901510/Centricity/Domain/1500/20-0720%20BOE%20-%20Sp%20Mtg%20-%20Audio%20-%20Smart%20Start%20Update-Calendar%20Adjustment%20Web.mp3>

- With the school year fast approaching, many parents in the district are worried and unsure of what to expect.

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

Commercial fishermen around Kotlik are worried as the summer chum run kicks off at a slow pace this year. Individually, many people have caught some salmon for their winter to feed their families.

Kotlik was initially allowing residents of surrounding communities to harvest berries in their area. They have reconsidered and are not allowing it with positive COVID-19 cases in surrounding communities.

Our Native ways of life as we know it continues – always has, always will – as our peoples grieve loved ones

A beloved Elder, James Fields of Fort Yukon and Arctic Village, passed away. Family members recall days playing around his house in winters and summers. He had one of the only streetlights near his home in Arctic Village. He would allow kids to come inside and warm up. They took precautions during the service. The CATG and other community members also participated: https://www.facebook.com/kfieldsfyu/posts/10160209839532782?_tn_ =H-R

Ketchikan Indian community is saddened by the loss of beloved tribal member, Mary Elizabeth Jones (Tlingit/Tsimshian). Mary had a long career in the health field and was very involved in many organizations. She earned the status of Alaska Native Sisterhood Grand President Emeritus during the ANB/ANS Grand Camp Convention in Kake and was also Tlingit and Haida Tribal Hostess in 2008:

<https://www.facebook.com/KetchikanIndianCommunityKic/posts/3123067771109209>

Racial equity topics continue to be raised around the state

An ordinance that prohibits discrimination against LGBTQ individuals in Ketchikan city limits was passed on July 16. The local law was approved by the Ketchikan City Council over the objections of religious advocates: <https://www.krbd.org/2020/07/17/anti-lgbtq-discrimination-to-be-banned-in-ketchikan-following-unanimous-city-council-vote/>

After hours of impassioned public testimony Wednesday, the Anchorage Assembly voted unanimously to shelve a controversial proposal to allow homeless shelters in areas zoned for commercial uses throughout the municipality:

- The testimony is available on the Municipality of Anchorage website: <https://meetings.muni.org/AgendaOnline/Meetings/ViewMeeting?id=944&doctype=1>
- The Assembly also voted 11-0 to hold another meeting at 6 p.m. Monday to discuss a separate ordinance that would allow the city to purchase four properties, in Midtown and Spenard, for homeless services and drug and alcohol treatment. Two properties in

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particular, the Best Western Golden Lion Inn on East 36th Avenue and the former Alaska Club building on Tudor Road, have drawn intense opposition from neighbors who fear increased crime, lower property values and a deterioration in quality of life:

<https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/anchorage/2020/07/23/anchorage-assembly-postpones-action-on-zoning-ordinance-allowing-homeless-shelters/>

Vibrant Hawaii Island hosted a conversation on July 21 to discuss how to utilize the data justice principles of Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility and Ethics (CARE) to shift deficit narratives and systems that perpetuate inequity. Special guests included Abigail Echo-Hawk and our very own, Elizabeth La quen náay Medicine Crow (Haida/Tlingit). They shared why they champion this work, how they apply principles of data justice in their organizations, how this has shifted the narrative of their communities, challenges they have experienced, and how we promote ethical data practices to ensure justice for our community.

https://www.facebook.com/FirstAlaskansInstitute/posts/10163882584385228?_tn=-R

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

For the health and safety of their Elders, tribal members and residents, the Metlakatla Indian Community ceased plans for its Founders Day Celebration that was scheduled for August 7. However, they will host a fireworks display and luncheon:

<https://www.facebook.com/141055983004923/photos/a.147779542332567/987928424984337/?type=3&theater>

Arctic Village hosted John Fredson Day celebration. Activities included target shooting, foot races, relay races and other social distancing events for the kids and adults.

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

The popular PBS cartoon, Molly of Denali, has been airing for about a year now. Alaska Native parents appreciate the storytelling and sharing of Alaska Native values:

<https://pbskids.org/video/molly-of-denali/>

Other community happenings and news

A Fairbanks Sober Center employee was arrested for allegedly threatening coworkers:

<https://www.newsbreak.com/alaska/fairbanks/news/1604969850909/fairbanks-sobering-center-employee-arrested-for-allegedly-threatening-coworkers>

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There was a 7.8-magnitude earthquake in Alaska on July 21, and a tsunami warning was issued for coastal communities.

- Tsunami warning sirens rang out after a 7.8-magnitude quake in Alaska:
<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/video/2020/jul/22/tsunami-warning-sirens-ring-out-after-78-magnitude-earthquake-in-alaska-video>
- Residents on Kodiak quickly moved to higher ground. Thankfully, there wasn't a significant tsunami, and it was calm the next day:
<https://www.facebook.com/discoverkodiakisland/photos/a.341186433023/10158526162878024/?type=3&theater>

Three regional airlines in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta bought portions of Ravn Air Group's planes during an auction earlier this month. Grant Aviation bought Ravn planes and say they are preparing to expand services in the region once the pandemic ends:

<https://www.kyuk.org/post/grant-aviation-buys-ravn-planes-meet-yk-delta-demand-post-pandemic>

Southcentral Foundation fired three dentists for allegedly falsifying health records:

<https://www.ktva.com/story/42395882/southcentral-foundation-fires-3-dentists-for-falsifying-health-records>