

First Alaskans Institute

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FIRST ALASKANS INSTITUTE'S ELDERS & YOUTH CONFERENCE AND THE HOWARD ROCK & TED STEVENS SMOKEHOUSE GALA TO BE HELD IN PERSON

Dgheyey Kaq'; Dena'inaq etnen'aq' qilan (Anchorage, Alaska; lands of the Dena'ina) – After meeting virtually over the past two years, First Alaskans Institute (FAI) is thrilled to safely celebrate our ways of life with our community and friends by hosting our two largest fall time events in-person in Dgheyey Kaq' (Anchorage).

Native peoples are the living embodiment of our Ancestors' vigilance and fortitude. They sacrificed, endured, and overcame many obstacles for us to be here today; we honor that love and uphold our responsibility to it. Our communities have endured much during the pandemic, and we have greatly missed one another as we sheltered in place, working remotely to keep one another, especially our most vulnerable safe. While we are not fully in the clear from the pandemic, more and more people are feeling better about being able to safely gather with covid protocols and vaccinations in place. After all our peoples have been through these past few years, it's time to celebrate our lives and our cultural strength that has helped Alaska as a whole move through this historic time. To that end, we will finally gather in person, so long as the pandemic continues to recede, for our two largest and favorite statewide events.

39th Annual Statewide Elders & Youth Conference

Our 39th Annual Statewide Elders & Youth Conference (Elders & Youth) will be on October 16-19, 2022, and will be hosted in a reimagined culturally-enriched in-person environment with a hybrid component to continue to connect our peoples – think culture camp meets cultural festival meets Indigenous conference space! We will celebrate the modern-day warriors that served on the frontlines of the pandemic and uplift the transference of Indigenous knowledge between our Elders and youth. FAI invites our community to join us for inspiring speakers, instructional language practice, engaging cultural sessions and workshops, meaningful dialogues and regional breakouts, and cultural performances that draw us all into the drumbeats of our Ancestors. Connecting our Elders and youth is imperative to knowing who we are, and how to work in good relationship together. After almost three years apart we are ready to come together and CELEBRATE! Alaska Natives live amazing lives with our lands, waters, and animal relatives as stewards of this incredible place. The Conference is open to all Alaskans who want to learn and immerse in a gathering centering Elders and youth with Native wisdom, cultures, languages, and learnings. We invite Language Teachers, Artists, Culture Bearers and Providers, Elders, Community Organizations, Leaders, Dance Groups and Performers to engage and share at Elders & Youth by submitting a brief proposal of what you would like to share. Please find our [Call for Proposals](#) and [Dance Group Interest Form](#) here and on our website at www.firstalaskans.org.

11th Annual Howard Rock & Ted Stevens Smokehouse Gala

Our 11th Annual Howard Rock & Ted Stevens Smokehouse Gala will be on Saturday, November 19, 2022. The Smokehouse Gala has grown to become a highly anticipated celebration each Alaska Native Heritage Month where we commend the tremendous contributions of our Native leaders and friends that protect and advance our ways of life for the next 10,000 years. This year, we want to be incandescent in our celebration and commemoration of our peoples – we have been apart too long and want to embrace everyone in a festive, fun, and culturally celebratory event! We cannot wait to see the amazing regalia, jewelry, and accessories that two plus years in lockdown have created! In this vibrant space, we center and invite our community to celebrate the knowledge, wisdom, curiosity, beauty, innovation, and brilliance of our peoples. Additionally, we uplift the artistic talents of our culture bearers and artists who are key to advancing our ways of life, emboldening our

leaders to take action, and imperative to shaping the knowledge that informs Alaskans. We are excited to host the Smokehouse Gala this year in person while incorporating virtual components throughout the month in order to continue building connections across our great state. We look forward to seeing everyone and having the time of our lives celebrating this amazing place and the people who have made it magnificent for thousands of years! If you are interested in sponsoring the Gala or donating to the auctions, please contact us at FAIdevelopment@firstalaskans.org.

COVID-19 Safety Plan for these Events

We take the safety, health and wellness of our people seriously. As such, we will be implementing protocols to help mitigate the risk of contracting and spreading COVID during our gathering. We will require COVID vaccination for our events. We urge our attendees to wear masks during the events. We also strongly recommend that you take a COVID test before traveling and attending, if possible. We will continue to monitor the status of COVID-19 in our communities leading up to the gathering in the event we need to hold it virtually to be responsive to the situation on the ground.

Alaska is and always has been a Native place. We invite all Alaskans and the world to participate as relatives in these annual events that lift up our peoples. We are collectively responsible for carrying more than 10,000 years of ancestral knowledge into the future. With rigor, humor, resilience, healing, vigilance, and love, we seek to practice this in these community events and in the world around us. We are humbled and honored to press ahead as our Ancestors always have and to celebrate the knowing, living, and loving of who we are.

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To learn more, visit www.firstalaskans.org, contact us at 907-677-1700 or email info@firstalaskans.org.