

# First Alaskans Institute



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## FIRST ALASKANS INSTITUTE MOURNS LOSS OF AVEOGAN OLIVER LEAVITT

Dgheyey Kaq', Dena'inaq e'nen'aq' qilan (Anchorage, Alaska, lands of the Dena'ina) – First Alaskans Institute (FAI) Board of Trustees and Staff are deeply saddened by the loss of one of our founding Trustees, Dr. Aveogan Oliver Leavitt (Iñupiaq) of Utqiagvik, who passed peacefully last night while surrounded by his beloved family and friends. He was known for his commitment to the community as a Whaling Captain, renowned whaling boat builder and iconic statewide Alaska Native leader.



Dr. Aveogan Oliver Leavitt. Photo by Sylvia Lange

Aveogan proudly represented his beloved community of Utqiagvik, the Arctic Slope region and statewide Alaska Native community in many key leadership positions for over four decades. As a leader in the early ANCSA days, he fought tirelessly for the rights of his peoples locally, statewide and nationally.

“He was a wonderful human being, father, grandfather, whaler who came from an era where he had to hitch up his dogs to get wood to keep his house warm. He was a leader for his region and Alaska,” said Iḡḡiaḡruk Willie Hensley (Iñupiaq), Chairman of FAI and longtime dear friend.

Aveogan often invited FAI Trustees and staff to his beloved Utqiagvik community to celebrate, host gatherings, and experience the ways of life in the North Slope. He understood the importance of people making connections to the land and peoples, especially our younger generations. He was awarded the Howard Rock Alaska Native Leader Award at our most recent Smokehouse Gala in recognition of his quality of character and distinct caliber of leadership, including the many ways he regularly put his community and peoples before himself.

Our hearts are with Annie Hopson Leavitt, his two daughters Mary Lou Leavitt and Martina (Jamie) Hopson, daughter-in-law Doreen Leavitt, grandchildren, great grandchildren, his whaling crew, his ASRC family, all his relatives, friends, and community. Quyanaqpak to his family and region for sharing him with us all. He was dedicated to his Iñupiaq culture and language, and throughout his lifetime he never swayed from practicing and sharing Alaska Native ways of life. His care, love and advocacy for his community and region will be missed as he truly was a friend and protector. “We wrap his family and his community in a warm blanket of gratitude and love for his life and leadership,” said La quen náay Liz Medicine Crow (Haida/Lingít), President/CEO of FAI and one of the many younger people Aveogan took time to guide and advise.

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*At First Alaskans Institute, 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, please visit [www.firstalaskans.org](http://www.firstalaskans.org) or contact us at [info@firstalaskans.org](mailto:info@firstalaskans.org).*