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### **THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES ANNOUNCE AN EXCITING TRANSITION**

Dgheyey Kaq’; Dena’inaq etnen’aq’ qilan (Anchorage, Alaska; lands of the Dena’ina) – After 15 years of service with First Alaskans Institute for our Alaska Native community, the FAI Board of Trustees announces that La quen náay Liz Medicine Crow will be transitioning out of the President/CEO role by the end of 2023.

“When we first envisioned the potential of First Alaskans Institute, we always imagined an expansive body of work that could live up to our vision of *progress for the next 10,000 years*. Since our inception, we have helped to elevate almost 400 Summer Interns, nearly 100 Fellows, over 60,000 Alaskans in dialogues and gatherings, and have hosted the Statewide Elders & Youth Conference for 20 years – that’s an average of 2500 people every year for 20 years! We invest in our people, our communities, and our younger leaders in ways that make it possible to achieve that 10,000 year vision. And for the past 15 years – 11 as our President/CEO – La quen náay and the amazing staff of First Alaskans have advanced this vision by centering Native peoples, our knowledges, our truths, our love for who we are, and the critical connection between our Native peoples and our homelands. On behalf of our Board of Trustees, we wish her well on the next chapter of her service to our Native peoples,” said Willie Iggiaġruk Hensley (Inupiaq), Board Chair.

La quen náay first came to FAI in 2008 as the Alaska Native Policy Center Director, taking on the additional Vice President role in 2009. She then stepped into the Interim President/CEO position in the spring of 2012 and moved into the full role in October 2012. The focus of her work has been to shine a light on our Native peoples – to amplify their power, their voices, their priorities, and their leadership using FAI as a catalyst for meaningful transformation across systems, institutions, and society. FAI has become known for engaging our communities and decision-makers in meaningful dialogues and difficult discussions to advance policy initiatives led by and for our Native peoples. FAI works statewide, making sure that our villages and all our communities are leading the decisions that shape the future. Centering Indigenous values, knowledges, and methodologies has led to the critical engagement of tens of thousands of Alaskans in Alaska Native Conversations that Matter, Alaska Native Dialogues on Racial Equity, Alaska Native Governance and Protocols trainings, Protecting Our Ways of Life, Voting, Elections, and Civic Engagement, Indigenizing Philanthropy, Being Good Relatives dialogues, and the Truth Racial Healing and Transformation endeavor, bringing Alaska Native perspectives to the forefront of the issues facing our communities in all sectors. Her favorite time has always been in our villages, working alongside our communities on the issues they care about, spending time with Elders and youth at the Statewide Elders & Youth Conference that FAI has hosted for 20 years, being catalyzed and strengthened by our interns and fellows, and sharing space with bold and innovative leaders across the state and world who work so hard for justice, equity, sovereignty, self-governance, Indigenous economies, and for our cultures and languages to thrive so that our children can have the bright Indigenous futures they deserve.

“Working thru FAI for our Native peoples in all our beautiful complexity has been an incredible honor. Our people deserve the best. Any institution worth its salt should strive to live up to who we are as Native peoples. That is why I joined FAI and why I am leaving. Our Elders teach us to serve, step aside, and help the new leaders. It is a healthy sign of a thriving community to share leadership roles and to make room for younger leaders to step up. That is what the Trustees did for me when they offered me the role, and now it is my turn to do the same. FAI has incredible staff and an amazing statewide community it is part of, I cannot wait to support the new leader!” said La quen náay (Haida/Tlingit).

This upcoming Elders & Youth Conference will be La quen náay’s last in this role and she will stay on as to help support the new leader as needed through the end of the year. The intention is to allow for a fun farewell focused on celebrating the 40/20 Anniversary of the Elders & Youth Conference (40 years in existence and 20 years led by FAI) and allow for a smooth transition of leadership celebrating the new leader at the annual Howard Rock & Ted Stevens Smokehouse Gala. Plans for the executive search process, led by the First Alaskans Board of Trustees, will be shared in the coming weeks.

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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).*