

FAIRBANKS NATIVE ASSOCIATION

A Voice for the People of Fairbanks

Winter 2020

A healing place for women and children

One of the roadblocks that keep women from seeking substance use disorder treatment is that they don't have reliable childcare.

FNA's Women and Children Center for Inner Healing provides a place for moms and their children to begin their sober journey together, said Jenna Bruner, WCCIH program director.

"We cover the whole spectrum on how to become sober," Bruner said.

WCCIH is a residential treatment center for women with children 0-7. They come from all over the state. The program provides one-on-one and group counseling on sobriety, education, parenting, healthy family skills, as well as cultural and spiritual identity.

Women come in with alcohol, heroin, methamphetamine and other use disorders. Some women come in thin and drawn, while others look like they are perfectly healthy, Bruner said.

"Drugs and alcohol use disorders can affect everyone," she said. "We have these stereotypes, but that's not always the picture."

The moms may or may not have custody of their children for various reasons. The program works with the women to get their children with them at the facility. Sometimes the women are pregnant or are brand new mothers.

"We look at how best we can support her and keep her child safe, to get her to engage in her treatment, and get her to be a mom," Bruner said.

It can be a difficult task for those moms, as they may have legal issues, or the Office of Children Services involvement, and other family obstacles.

"That's a lot of outsiders they have to deal with," Bruner said. "Even from a sober point of view, that's a lot of people in your business."

Bruner and her staff are experienced with helping their consumers navigate those issues, but the first thing they deal with is making sure the women are physically ready to withdraw



Children's daycare room



WCCIH residential room

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Executive Director

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Out of hardship comes hope

We are finally seeing some hope ahead with this pandemic, with promises of an effective vaccine.

It's been difficult living through this pandemic for everyone. Sadly, we've buried loved ones taken by the virus. It has been a stretch of patience, and endurance, as we isolated from family and friends.

We hear every day how people are struggling to keep up with food, housing and other living expenses. We are doing everything to meet those needs through various FNA programs.

Parents are being challenged with online school, tasked with co-teaching their children without any training. JOM services are finding new ways to help.

At FNA, we've had front line workers in Behavioral Health Services whose passion for those who need help kept them at work. At Community Services staff have fed elders, helped with burials, and helped those who are hurting. Dedicated Head Start and Tribal Home Visiting workers have worried about your children, and have made sure they had diapers, food and learning activities.

This sounds like a lot of bad news, but I would like to point out that we've learned we are stronger than we thought. We have compassion for others. We want to help those who need it, and will work in impossible circumstances. Jobs needed to be done and we did them.

I want to thank our community for coming together to hold fundraisers for those in need, whether it was for funerals, or missing persons, or to help struggling people.

I want to thank FNA staff for being on the front lines, serving our community with dedication, passion and care.

Once this pandemic is over, I pray that we take the things we learned: dedication, strength, compassion and love, with us. May we remember we survived, because we are a strong people.

Mahsi choo, shalak naii. Steve Ginnis



FAIRBANKS NATIVE ASSOCIATION



We are sorry to hear of the passing of **Ralph Manook** and send our sympathies to his family and friends.

He was a regular at FNA's Community Services and he really enjoyed the company there.

We are going to miss him, his friendship, and his singing.

Rest easy, Ralph.



Meeting student needs during the pandemic

JOM family service coordinators needed more than ever



Jaime Jones

Jaime Jones, Inupiat, left her job in the oil and gas industry when she heard about how Alaska Native/American Indians had some of the lowest test scores and graduation rates in Fairbanks.

She became a family services coordinator with FNA's Johnson O'Malley program in 2019. She works at Pearl Creek Elementary School.

"I wanted to be a part of the change," Jones said. "I felt that within me. I'm part of that population. My kids are. I wanted to take action."

Jones is one of 12 JOM family service coordinators. They work in schools, along with four JOM tutors, in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District. Their job is to provide students and their families educational, social/emotional, and cultural support. The coordinators work with Alaska Native/American Indian student. In essence, they are a resource to schools, parents and students and the school community.

And it's been working. Last year, JOM reports that 72% of students served by JOM completed their school work. Another 52% showed increases in reading scores and 62% had boosts in their social/emotional abilities.

The JOM family service coordinator serves the whole school they are assigned at. At Pearl Creek, Jones works with students from pre-kindergarten to sixth grade. Kaelan Kiernan, a former coordinator with a social work background, worked with pre-k-6th graders at Weller Elementary School until recently. She now works with the Office of Children's Services.

Both noted that holding online school during COVID has been trying, and they look for ways to help. Sometimes, families don't live in an area that has internet access, or if they do, they can't afford to purchase enough for online classes to work. The coordinators will bring paper assignments to the family or let them know of parking lots of businesses offering free internet hot spots.

"I've tried to take advantage of any personal opportunity to meet with students," Kiernan said. "Little kids have a hard time with Zoom."

Phone calls to parents have increased for Jones. The pandemic has made successful education harder for those students who were already at risk, as well as for their parent, who may be working and not with their children during online school hours.

"We are really needed," Jones said. "We want to teach parents healthy family dynamics, to meet them where they are at."

Kiernan wants parents to give themselves grace in this challenging time. Maybe it's making sure the child is attending classes at least an hour a day, or doing three assignments a day.

"Most parents aren't trained to be a teacher," she said. "Do your best."



Jaimie Jones teaches Opening Doors, a parenting class to help families engage with their students.



Jaimie Jones with talking with students at Pearl Creek Elementary School.

Head Start fresh start

New learning spaces for youngsters

The renovations and new wing to the Poldine Carlo Building has been finished, providing seven new classrooms, an infant and toddler indoor play area, offices and new kitchen for FNA's Head Start 0-5 students.

"We have brand new places of learning for our youngest students" said Steve Ginnis, FNA executive director. "We are looking forward to opening our doors once it is safe."

Renovations on an existing wing at the Carlo building added two infant and three toddler classrooms, a teacher workroom, laundry, Head Start 0-5 kitchen, and offices. The work was finished this summer.

Work on 3,240 sq. ft. new addition was recently completed, adding two new toddler classrooms, and a large indoor infant and toddler play area, called the large motor room.

The preschool playground was renovated this summer with new equipment and bump-friendly ground coverings. Next year, the infant and toddlers playground will be renovated.

GHEMM Company was the general contractor and Bettisworth North did the design work.

Eric Fitzgerald, FNA director of property maintenance and contracts, said they reused doors and windows to reduce waste.

Top row, l-r: 1. Renovation in the south wing. 2. Construction in the new addition. 3-4. Cabinets going in renovated classroom.

Second row: 1. Finished classroom. 2. Small sinks for toddlers to wash up in. 3. New kitchen. 4. New laundry room.

Third row: 1. Beginning work on new playground. 2. Finished playground. 3. Closeup of ground covering. 4. Toddler size toilets and sinks.

Fourth row: Eric Fitzgerald, FNA director of property maintenance and contracts, gives Steve Ginnis, FNA executive director, and others, a tour of the new addition construction. 2. Sanitizer dispenser outside of an infant classroom. 3. The unfinished indoor play area. 4. The finished indoor play area.

Photos by Charlotte Peterson and Diana Campbell

Fairbanks Native Association





High achiever looks to be research nurse after AHPP



Erik Kohrt

Erik Kohrt is a 2019 graduate of Hutchison High School. He was one of the first students to join the FNA Allied Health Pathways Program.

Erik has been a foundational member of the program. He has attended nearly all monthly meetings in-person and by Zoom. Erik has welcomed new peers into the group, and always has a cheerful “Yo” to go around.

Erik has maintained high As in most of his university classes, which is quite impressive. He has been enrolled in several honors courses. He is an astute student and a thoughtful observer!

Erik has been a stand up member of the group and has even lent his creative efforts to the program, creating a video presentation that will be publicized soon.

We are glad to have Erik in our program and cannot wait to see what his future holds.

Some words from the man himself:

- I am an avid reader, favorite genre is high fantasy. Lord of the Rings is my favorite high fantasy series.
- I enjoy halibut fishing, and baking said halibut.
- I am aspiring to become a registered nurse in a research setting/laboratory.
- I am enjoying UAF through my long distance classes, favorite class is microbiology.

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from their substances. This may require a stay at FNA’s Gateway to Recovery, a detoxification facility. Or they may make sure they have the appropriate medications needed to withdraw.

“I’m glad FNA has been able to offer these services to mothers and their children,” said Steve Ginnis, FNA executive director.

The residential home has a daycare for the children to attend while their mothers are in recovery groups during the day. There is a daily schedule that the residents follow which includes family time, meals, chores and individual time for working on their treatment. Evenings consist of crafts, watching TV and playing games as a family. The stay can last four months, or longer, Bruner said.

The center staff recognizes both the moms and children have different needs and helps to meet those. Moms will work on their personal trauma which may have led to substance use. The children may have issues from being born to moms with substance use disorders.

The women work on life skills, too. They may need to look for work and housing before they leave.



Allied Health Pathways Project

If you are an Alaska Native/American Indian junior or senior in a Fairbanks school, or an adult, begin an exciting health career path for your future!

Earn job credentials while in high school!

Contact Erin Edenshaw at

(907) 452-1648 ext. 6426

Cell: (907) 347-1497

erin.edenshaw@fairbanksnative.org

The two most important things the women do before they leave is to develop a relapse prevention plan, and to write their life story.

The prevention plan may include where to go for continued treatment, what to do to find resources, how to avoid places that might trigger reuse, etc. They may even have to learn how to deal with being bored.

“I think it’s important for them to learn how to bored,” Bruner said. “That’s when they might say, ‘I’m going to go use or drink.’”

Recovery is Real for opioid use disorder

The cycle of substance abuse and misuse can happen to anyone. “Substance use doesn’t look like what people might assume it does,” said Zoe Sutton, program director with FNA’s Recovery is Real program.

“It can be your next door neighbor, who may have gotten an opioid prescription, started using them more than what was prescribed, and gone back to their doctor saying they were still in pain. This is how chemical dependency starts.”

Physical and psychological dependence created by substance use changes the brain chemistry. It isn’t a character flaw, it’s a physical addiction that generally requires help to get off chemical dependency.

Recovery Is Real is a nonclinical recovery program for Alaska Native and American Indian adults who have been diagnosed with opioid use disorder, have completed a treatment program, and are seeking support with their recovery.

Currently, because of COVID-19, RIR is hosting online talking circles, and other COVID safe activities.

Sutton offered advice to those worried about loved ones.

“Reach out to those you are worried about,” she said. “Don’t be afraid to talk about it. Educate yourself about substance use disorder and stick with them through the process.” Sometimes the cycle of use and disuse happens over and over. But stick with your family as much as you can.

Those struggling with opioids need to know that people care about them, Sutton said. Let them know they are not alone,

“There are a lot of people that have been in your shoes,” Sutton said. “Don’t be afraid to ask someone for help.”

Call or text 907-388-0520 or 907-388-0906 for more information.

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The life story is to address why the woman used a substance to numb herself in the first place.

“A lot of time they haven’t acknowledged the trauma,” Bruner said.

When the women reach the end of their stay, someone, either staff or another resident, will bake a celebration cake. They will have a celebration, get a certificate of completion from WCCIH, and a sobriety coin.

The staff feels a sense of accomplishment, and the women know they can come back if they need to.

“It’s a happy sad,” Bruner said. “They’ve lived here for months. The babies are so different. The moms are so different.

“We let them know we’re here for them, that they did the work and they are enough.”

Call 907-451-8164 for more information.

The Opioid Crisis
Part 2

FAIRBANKS NATIVE ASSOCIATION

SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER, STIGMA, AND WORDS TO AVOID

Substance Use Disorder is a disease which affects a person's brain and behavior. The reward system in the brain is central to problems which arise from the disorder.

There are several criteria for Substance Use Disorder. Below is a list of some of them:

- Using larger amounts or for longer than intended
- Unable to cut down or stop use despite wanting to
- Spending a lot of time obtaining, using or recovering from the use of a substance
- Cravings and/or urges to use a substance
- Unable to complete normal home, work, or school tasks due to substance use
- Needing more of the substance to receive desired effect (tolerance)
- Withdrawal symptoms that can be relieved by taking more of the substance

WHAT IS STIGMA??

Stigma is defined as a mark or brand on one's reputation, character or appearance. People with substance use disorders carry a high burden of stigma. Fear of judgment means that people with substance use disorders are less likely to seek help.

WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE! WORDS MATTER

HELLO

what you said me

SAY THIS	NOT THAT
Person who uses drugs/alcohol	Addict/drug user/alcoholic
Abstinent/not actively using	Clean
Actively using	Dirty
Testing negative/positive for substance use	Testing clean/dirty for substance use
Person who injects drugs	Injection drug user
Person with non-problematic drug use	Recreational/causal/experimental user
Primary substance	Drug of choice
Return to use	Relapse
Drug misuse	Drug abuse

For general information, contact the Regional Native Center at 907-451-8164. For more information, visit www.fna.org.



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Here comes the sun. . .



*Wishing
you the
best in
2021!*

Photo by Charlotte Peterson