



# FAIRBANKS NATIVE ASSOCIATION

A Voice for the People of Fairbanks

Winter 2021

## Not forgotten: Our missing and murdered people

It's been over a year without a word about Debbie Nictune's whereabouts. Roy Nictune, Debbie's brother, thought he couldn't bear the heaviness anymore.

Then Shirley Lee, FNA's new strategic development/justice director, called to let him know a December rally was to be held so people wouldn't forget Debbie, Frank Minano, Doren Sanford, Willis Derendoff, all of whom disappeared in 2020.

"I was at a very low point, and I felt like giving up," he said. "I got my strength back. We get our strength from people who show up to listen to what we have to say."

The rally was the effort by newly created FNA Justice Department that Steve Ginnis, FNA executive director, and FNA board of directors started in 2021. In addition to focusing on missing and murdered Indigenous people, FNA wants to foster better communication between law enforcement, and the families of the missing.

The rally was held Dec. 6, and included the families of the missing, Fairbanks Mayor Jim Matherly, Fairbanks Police Department, Alaska State Troopers, and Fairbanks District Attorney.

"This rally is the beginning of a journey," said Steve Ginnis, FNA executive director. "We want to help families. I take this very seriously."

Public rallies are a good way to keep difficult cases in the public eye, in addition to giving voice to families of the missing, said Lee.

"We are holding this rally so people don't forget," she said. She read Nictune's, Minano's, Sanford's, and Derendoff's names, saying each one is loved and missed family member.

"We say their names because we remember the joy and the love that they brought into so many lives," she said.



Roy Nictune

*Missing continued on page 4*



**Frank Minano**  
Missing since 8/17/20  
Call Alaska State Troopers  
at 907-451-5100. Incident no.  
AK20057486.



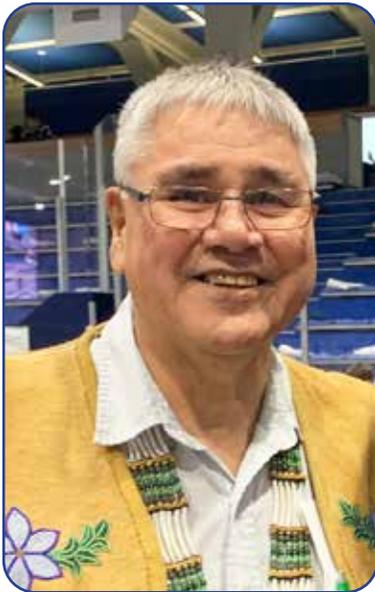
**Debbie Nictune**  
Missing since 8/20/20  
Call Fairbanks Police  
Department at 907-450-6500  
or investigations@fairbanks.us.



**Doren Sanford**  
Missing since 8/28/20  
Call Alaska State Troopers  
at 907-451-5100. Incident no.  
AK20064999.



**Willis Derendoff**  
Missing since 11/10/20  
Call Alaska State Troopers  
at 907-451-5100. Incident no.  
AK20086592



Steve Ginnis

## News from FNA Executive Director

Looks like we'll wrap up another year of COVID-19, which has dragged on since early 2020. It has been challenging over the past year, and I want to thank all of FNA staff for carrying out our mission, and serving our community during a pandemic.

I also want to thank our consumers, youth, elders, and community who have been patient and giving during this tough time.

The numbers look encouraging as they are going down. Yet, with omicron, the new COVID-19 variant, the future is still uncertain.

So please remember to use sanitizer, wash your hands, wear a mask, and practicing social distancing. I encourage people to get the vaccines or the boosters. Do what you need to do to protect yourself and others.

### FNA 2022 Goals

The board met in November to plan FNA's 2022 goals. They added the word "justice" (see pg. 5) to the mission statement.

Also, we updated FNA's purpose:

- **Tell FNA's story such that we positively impact justice, healing, and wellness in the community**
- **Sustain and enhance existing programs and address infrastructure requirements**
- **Diversify FNA's financial portfolio to include, specifically, increasing unrestricted revenue**

### Happy retirement to Alice Murphy – Welcome Debra Pitka

On a sad and happy note, Alice Murphy, FNA's controller, with FNA until the end of 2021. She is an incredible controller, part of a great finance department. She served FNA for over 15 years.



Alice Murphy



Debra Pitka  
Debra.

The happy news is that Debra Pitka, FNA accountant, will be the new FNA controller. Debra is FNA's first Alaska Native in that position. I'm confident she will do very well, and Alice will be on hand to train

But we will miss Alice, and wish her all the best.

## Here's wishing that 2022 will be healthy, prosperous and happy!

**Board of Directors**

Dr. Anna Frank, Elder Advisor  
 Dr. Jessica Black, President  
 Tonya Garnett, Vice President  
 Andrea Nield, Secretary  
 Sharon Hildebrand, Treasurer  
 Terri Cadzow, Member  
 Glenn "Manny" Carlo, Member  
 Travis Cole, Member  
 Renee Linton, Member  
 Dr. Charlene Stern, Member  
 .....  
 Steve Ginnis  
 Executive Director

# JOM receives \$3 million for internet, school help

The U.S. Department of Education awarded \$3 million to the Fairbanks Native Association Johnson O'Malley Program to improve home high-speed internet connection for families, and provide academic and social support for Fairbanks middle and high school students.

The two grants were part of a competitive bid process, and FNA was of 33 Alaska entities that also received funding to address Alaska Native education.

"FNA has always worked to help Alaska Native students with their education," said Steve Ginnis, FNA executive director. "We know during this pandemic, internet access has been critical for our families, and we can now help.

"Also, we can work specifically with teens to encourage them academically, socially, and emotionally."

The first grant of \$1,819,918 is for a program called TechConnect and will serve 100 Indigenous families within

the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District. It will increase high-speed internet connection for families. The money will also help students working on FNSBSD web-based applications, and offer technology workshops for parents.

The second grant for \$1,216,277 is for a program called Circles of Support Project. It is meant to help a about 420 Indigenous students at Ryan Middle School and Lathrop High School over three years. The money will be used to hire tutors and a family services coordinator, all of whom will deliver academic intervention and social-emotional services in a culturally relevant way. The grant also allows for a summer program.

## New FNA Senior Manager

Eric Fitzgerald has been promoted to FNA Senior Management. He is the Property and Contracting Director and supervises a team of five.

Notably, Eric oversaw the Head Start remodeling and construction projects at the Poldine Carlo Building.

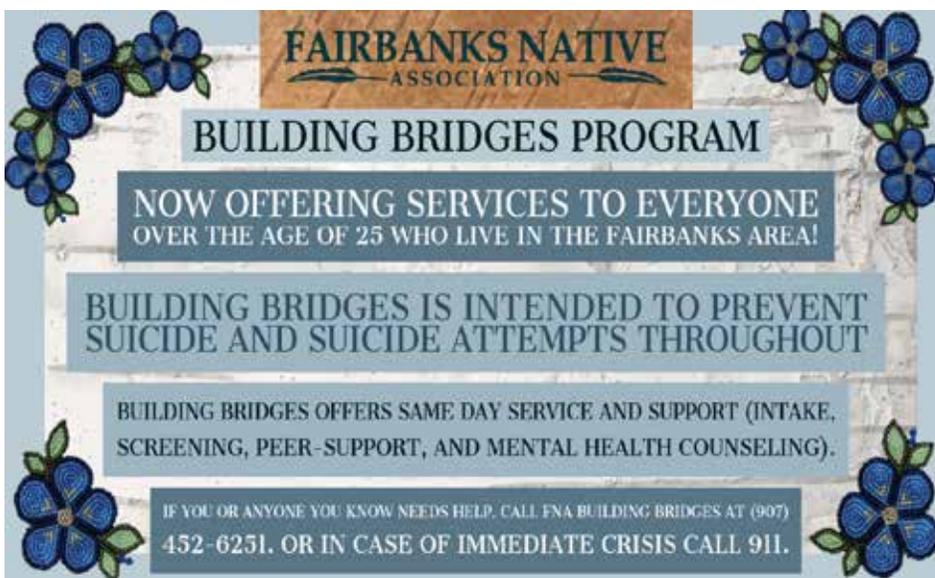
He and his team also manage the upkeep of all facilities, as well as the Native section of Birch Hill Cemetery. He has been with FNA for over six years.



Eric Fitzgerald



*Jaime Jones serves up moose soup at a Johnson O'Malley event. Jones is the FNA JOM director.*

A promotional poster for the Fairbanks Native Association's Building Bridges Program. The poster features a blue and white color scheme with floral decorations. The text reads: "FAIRBANKS NATIVE ASSOCIATION BUILDING BRIDGES PROGRAM NOW OFFERING SERVICES TO EVERYONE OVER THE AGE OF 25 WHO LIVE IN THE FAIRBANKS AREA! BUILDING BRIDGES IS INTENDED TO PREVENT SUICIDE AND SUICIDE ATTEMPTS THROUGHOUT BUILDING BRIDGES OFFERS SAME DAY SERVICE AND SUPPORT (INTAKE, SCREENING, PEER-SUPPORT, AND MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING). IF YOU OR ANYONE YOU KNOW NEEDS HELP, CALL FNA BUILDING BRIDGES AT (907) 452-6251. OR IN CASE OF IMMEDIATE CRISIS CALL 911." The poster is framed by blue flowers and green leaves.

## Missing... continued from pg. 1



Cecilia Lord Hudson

Lee also wanted to show compassion to the families.

“It’s heartbreaking to see the grief of families,” she said, adding that it’s made harder because there are people who know what happened on the day each person went missing.

Debbie Nictune went missing on Aug. 20, 2020 and was believed to have been last seen at the Northward Building. Frank Minano was last seen on Aug. 17, 2020 near Nenana.

Cecilia Lord Hudson believes he’s deceased, but she would like him to have a proper burial so his grandchildren may have a place to visit him.

“I know it’s only bones, but we still want to bury him,” Lord Hudson said at the rally.



Niisha Sanford, Jordan Sanford

She and her cousin Fatima Minano Lord urged anyone who may know something to tell the Alaska State Troopers. So did the families of Doren Sanford, who went missing in August 2020.

“He was seen the night before by several people downtown, and briefly on Aug. 29, then never seen again, said Niisha Sanford, Doren’s cousin. “Our family truly believes whoever knows (something), knows Doren, and our family.”

The family of Willis Derendoff had hoped that they would find out what happened to Willis before his father, Bill Derendoff, died of cancer a week before the rally.

“Our family knows in our hearts, his son came to him (when he died),” said Arlene Farmer, Willis’s aunt. The father had spent most of his last year of life looking for his son.

Selina Alexander, Willis’s cousin, appealed to the public to send in tips.

All of the families said they were encouraged that FNA had taken upon task of remembering unsolved missing and murdered Indigenous people cases in Fairbanks.



Selina Alexander, Arlene Farmer

“A missing person in our community is a missing person in our family,” said City Mayor Jim Matherly. “We need to find them and find answers.”

Fairbanks Police Department Chief Ron Dupee said the force was committed to the missing cases, and had followed up on a recent lead.

“We look forward to partnership with FNA, and the justice initiative,” he said.

Family members had expressed frustration that law enforcement were not listening to them.

“Sorry we are not reaching out more than we should be,” said Sgt. Jeremy Rupe, an investigator with the Alaska State Troopers. “I will work on that.”



**We welcome back Shirley Lee to FNA. Shirley is the new Strategic Development/Justice Director, and part of FNA senior management. Shirley grew up attending FNA events, and has previously served as the executive director.**

**FNA undertakes justice initiative**

In the early 1960s, Alaska Natives often encountered racial inequity and injustice in Fairbanks. Downtown windows had signs saying "No Natives Allowed." Alaska Natives could not attend many of the same social functions as non-Natives. Bill and Poldine Carlo, Ralph Perdue, Nick Gray, and others formed Fairbanks Native Association after experiencing that divide.

Recently the FNA Board of Directors amended FNA's mission statement to better reflect the overall work of FNA, including justice:

*"To improve the quality of life for individuals and families by promoting justice, healing and wellness in our community."*

The updated mission statement also signals FNA embarking on a more concerted effort to address ongoing justice issues facing the membership in Fairbanks. Shirley Lee, recognized for her work in social justice, will oversee that work.

The vision statement of FNA remains the same:

*"We are a unified, healthy, and empowered Native community that embraces all cultures."*

**FAIRBANKS NATIVE ASSOCIATION**



Steve Ginnis, Sgt. Jeremy Rupe

**Missing... continued from pg. 4**

"These missing people are not just people," he said. "They family members, friends and loved ones, a part of our community."

Those gathered at the rally had likely had better connections, and information than law enforcement, Rupe said.

"Please get us the information," he said. "That small piece of information could be the key."

If any of the missing have met with foul play, the Fairbanks District attorney's office needs information in order to build a case for court, said Joe Dellaire, Fairbanks District Attorney.



Nancy Ambrose, Lubbie James, Fairbanks District Attorney Joseph Dellaire

"Every single case we file in court, they all start off as a criminal investigation from law enforcement," Dellaire said. "Those investigations start with information from the public."

FNA encourages people with information to contact the troopers, which can be done anonymously through a tip line. Text to 847411 and then type AKTIPS.

Information about Debbie Nictune should be directed to the Fairbanks Police Department at 907-450-6500 or [investigations@fairbanks.us](mailto:investigations@fairbanks.us).

"We know somebody out there knows something," Ginnis said. "If you know something, say something."



Shirley Lee, Chief Ron Dupee, Mayor Jim Matherly, Roy Nictune

# FNA secures \$10.5 million for Behavioral Health Services

## Programs will address trauma, screening, young adults and COVID-19 impact

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has awarded FNA Behavioral Health Services \$10.5 million for five different programs.

The funds will be used to address historical trauma in indigenous families, early intervention mental health screening, young adults at risk for substance use disorders, at risk youth, and increased mental health issues brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“These types of issues are very concerning to us,” said Steve Ginnis, FNA executive director. “We are thankful for the grants, as they allow us to really help our community.”

Here is a list of the new grants for FNA BHS:

- Healing the Hurts is a five-year, \$2 million grant for a new program. The program will provide support and services for Indigenous children and their families who have suffered traumatic events, and intergenerational trauma.
- FNA BHS received a \$3.9 million grant to provide a tool called Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment, or SBIRT. It is used to quickly assess the severity of substance use, and identifies appropriate levels of treatment, according to SAMHSA. In 2021 the agency awarded \$123 million in grants to combat the national overdose epidemic, including SBIRT funding, and FNA is one of eleven SBIRT grantees nationwide.
- Preparing our Future Leaders is a \$2.1 million, five-year grant that will work with Alaska Native/American Indian young people ages 21-25. Considered transitional aged youth, they are most at risk for substance use disorders, and mental health issues. The young adults have not been previously targeted for intervention appropriate for their age group, and this grant will allow FNA staff to focus on them. The new grant will provide outpatient services using culturally appropriate and evidence based materials.
- The \$1.2 million, five-year grant, Reconnecting Youth, will seek coordination among all agencies working with at-risk youth up to age 24. This will insure a common standard of care among various agencies. Most importantly, the new grant will provide follow up services for youth who have attempted suicide and use substances.
- The Mental Health Trauma Treatment was extended for another year with the \$798,000 SAMHSA grant. MHTT was established in 2020 to address mental health issues and domestic violence that have come about because of COVID-19. The extension grant will provide staff to focus on suicide and domestic violence prevention training for community members, coalition members, and clinical providers.

In the late spring of 2021, SAMHSA also awarded another \$1.5 million grant to address the opioid epidemic in the Fairbanks North Star Borough, which has been previously reported.



## Get BHS services application

Scan this QR Code to go to FNA Behavioral Health Services website to get a pre-service application. It's brief, and meant to get people help easily.

The application is for youth, teens, families, women and outpatient services. It will also help you find the right treatment. FNA BHS has over 40 years of experience in behavioral health needs,

If you need help, contact Janet Pearson at 907-452-6251.

## Narcan kits available

FNA Community Opioid Intervention Program is giving NARCAN kits to local business and organizations to help prevent opioid overdose.

Narcan is used to reverse opioid overdoses and is administered through a nasal passage.

“This is a spray that is easy to use by nonmedical people, so friends and family of a person who might be overdosing are able to administer the lifesaving dose,” said Perry Ahsogeak, FNA Behavioral Health Service Director. “But be sure to call for emergency medical help, too.”

Narcan works by blocking the body’s opioid receptors on a cell, and rapidly reverses opioid effects. It works for 60-90 minutes, so if a person has a lot of opioid in their body, they could be at risk for overdosing again when the Narcan wears off. That’s why calling medical emergency help is necessary.

Businesses with NARCAN will have FNA posters. Kits are also available at the Ralph Perdue Center, 3100 South Cushman Ave.

For more information, call 907-452-6251.

## Congratulations to Stern on UAF vice chancellorship



Dr. Charlene Stern

Dr. Charlene Stern is to serve as the vice chancellor for rural, community and Native education at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, effective Jan. 2, 2022. As the VCRCNE, she will oversee the College of Rural

and Community Development, and the Community and Technical College.

Vice Chancellor Stern has been serving as interim VCRCNE since Jan. 3, 2021. Prior to that, she worked for six years as an assistant professor in the Department of Alaska Native Studies and Rural Development, and received tenure and promotion to associate professor in spring 2021.

Stern in on FNA board of directors, and is a past president. She is also the vice president of Tanana Chiefs Conference.

## Rasmuson Foundation visit



Rasmuson Foundation Board of Directors enjoyed seeing the new FNA Head Start playground, made possible, in part, by a generous grant from them.

Thank you, Rasmuson Foundation for the \$500,000 grant that helped remodel the Poldine Carlo Building for Head Start youngsters!



**FAIRBANKS NATIVE ASSOCIATION**

### Gateway to Recovery

**Methamphetamine/Stimulant Detox Now Available!**

FNA's Gateway to Recovery Withdrawal Management (detox) is accepting methamphetamine (and other stimulant) withdrawal consumers.

**You do not need to be Alaska Native/American Indian to receive services!**

Open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, providing medical detoxification to both male/female adults for a period of 1 to 10 days.

For more information about Gateway to Recovery and to receive services, please call 907-452-6251.



3830 South Cushman Street, Ste. 100  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701  
Main: 907-452-1648

Visit our website at: [www.fairbanksnative.org](http://www.fairbanksnative.org)  
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**FAIRBANKS NATIVE ASSOCIATION**

**2022 FNA Board Election**  
**3 seats open for election**

Candidates must submit a completed application to FNA Administration before 5 p.m., Monday, Feb. 7, 2022.  
Applications may be found on our website [www.fairbanksnative.org](http://www.fairbanksnative.org)

**To be eligible for the FNA Board of Directors, you must be**

- A direct descendent of an individual who was/is Athabascan, Inupiat, Yup'ik, Unangan, Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, Cup'ik, Sugpiaq, Eyak, and/or American Indian.
- A resident of at least 30 days in the Fairbanks North Star Borough
- Eighteen (18) years of age or older
- Not employed by FNA

**Submit an application by Monday, Feb. 7, 5:00 p.m.**  
For additional information, visit our website at [www.fairbanksnative.org](http://www.fairbanksnative.org) or call Shaylene Dublin at 907-452-1648, ext. 6235 or [sdublin@fairbanksnative.org](mailto:sdublin@fairbanksnative.org).

## FNA Employees of the Month



Kelsey Stein  
Graf Rheeneerhaanjii  
June 2021



Wanda Cover  
Head Start  
July 2021



Marie McCarty  
Johnson O'Malley  
Program/ August 2021



Sally Snell  
Gateway to Recover  
September 2021



Cassandra Harris  
Head Start  
October 2021



Belina Higdon  
Johnson O'Malley  
Program/ November 2021