

# FAIRBANKS NATIVE ASSOCIATION

A Voice for the People of Fairbanks

December 2022

## Mice, a box and a greedy woman

### FNA JOM program shares Winter Tales with families

FNA Johnson O'Malley program knows we like to hear stories. That's how culture and information is passed on to the younger generation.

In November JOM hosted Winter Tales, with guest storytellers Sam Demientieff, Athabaskan; Johon Atkinson, Tsimpshian; and DeAnn Lincoln Gardner, Yupik/Inupiat.

Here are their stories.

### Little Creature Christmas

#### Told by Sam Demientieff

Sam Demientieff wrote a poem about the world from a mouse's point of view, called Little Creature Christmas.

In it, mice know humans are scary, but the little critters watch them through the cracks in the floor, he said. They lived in the root cellar of a log cabin.

They remember how it used to be when all the animals could talk, and humans could understand them. Now it's time to find rebalance, like it used to be, a mouse said.

"We are part of creation, too," Sam read.

When the days grow dark and cold settles in, the mice see that the humans are celebrating, and welcoming guests.

It sounded so merry, and the little mice want to join in. Surely, they will be able to talk again, if they do.

But the humans get quiet. Listen, a mouse says.

The humans began praying and thanking God for the birth of the Savior. For Christmas. The mice knew what to do.

"Just like we did a long time ago, we must join in to celebrate Christmas, they said.

### The box of songs

#### Told by Johon Atkinson

Long ago when the earth was created, the sky was very low. Raven could change into anything he wanted, and on this day he was Txamsem, a Tsimpshian superhero.

Txamsem walked around the world but soon grew tired, because the sky was so heavy on his back. He took a pole and pushed the sky up high.

But the box of all the beautiful songs in the world got stuck in the sky. No one, not even birds and animals, could sing anymore.

All the birds gathered together. The eagle said he would get the songs because his wings were so big. The hawk said "I will do it, because I am strong." The raven said, "No I will!"

But the tiny little chickadee said, "I will do it!" Everyone laughed at such an idea. "You are too small and too weak," they said.

The raven tried but after four hours, he fell back to earth too tired to go on. Then the hawk flew



Sam Demientieff shares a Christmas mice story. Photo by Shaylene Dublin.

Winter Tales continued on page 6...

#### Board of Directors

Dr. Anna Frank, Elder Advisor  
Dr. Jessica Black, President  
Tonya Garnett, Vice President  
Renee Linton, Secretary  
Terri Cadzow, Treasurer  
Travis Cole, Member  
Roxanne Frank, Member  
Sharon Hildebrand, Member  
Jolene Malamute, Member  
Dr. Charlene Stern, Member



Steve Ginnis  
Executive Director

**JOM BASKETBALL IS BACK!**  
**MARCH 13-15, 2023**  
APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE NOW AT [WWW.FAIRBANKSNATIVE.ORG](http://WWW.FAIRBANKSNATIVE.ORG)

A QR code located in the bottom right corner of the JOM Basketball banner.

# Happy Holidays!

*From Steve Ginnis, FNA executive director*

I hope everyone enjoys this holiday season and that 2023 brings health and happiness to you.

It's been a good year at FNA, especially since we all returned to the office for work after COVID-19 subsided. We really went through a challenging time, and our ancestors taught us to always be prepared for them.

We are a resilient people, and we'll move forward. Let me offer my condolences to our families who suffered a larger burden brought by COVID.

We have powerful stories in this issue about suicide survivors. Trigger warning: They are stories about domestic violence, sexual abuse, mental illness, and human trafficking. They also are stories of hope and they align with our mission to address the stigma of mental illness.

FNA has help for those ++++who are struggling. Contact information is on page 5.

FNA has been reissued CARF accreditation that is good through October 2025 based on a recent onsite review. Our staff and board involved in the review did a wonderful job. I know it takes a lot of time and planning to prepare for the onsite review, so thank you to all of those that participated in the review.

We plan for our annual meeting to be in person on March 10, 2023. We have board seats held by Renee Linton, Travis Cole, and Sharon Hildebrand up for election. Board applications are available at [www.fairbanksnative.org](http://www.fairbanksnative.org). Anyone who is a descendent of Alaska Native or American Indian is eligible to run.

Our annual potlatch and FNA pageants will on March 18, 2023. This is our first potlatch since COVID, so we are excited to be hosting this longtime FNA tradition once again.

Preliminary financial reports for FY22 indicate that FNA will show a minus 5% change in net assets. FNA reported \$31,527,075 in total net assets. More about FNA's finances will be in the 2022 Annual Report available at the upcoming annual meeting.

I have consistently pressed for accountability, overall efficient organizational operations, and the urgency of generating additional third-party billing revenues to favorably impact our financial position.

Implementation of the FNA Justice Initiatives began in November 2021, after the board approved the plan. Here are some highlights from 2022:

- Successfully held four quarterly Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons rallies, with families, police, troopers, district attorneys and special guests.
- Proposed language for state legislation to create an independent law enforcement review board, and a conviction integrity unit will be fully developed in collaboration with Tanana Chief Conference.
- Discussions are ongoing for a transparency and trust plan with the City of Fairbanks and the Fairbanks chief of police.
- Began hosting Native Leadership meetings with Doyon, TCC and Denakkanaaga, to discuss mutual issues, including social justice.
- We continue to monitor the Roberts v. City of Fairbanks case, as it relates to the Fairbanks Four.

Have a prosperous 2023. Mahsi choo.



## FNA welcomes Fran Cachucha as the new Head Start Director

Fran comes with over 10 years of experience working in Head Start programs.

She is from Dulce, New Mexico, and is a Jicarilla Apache/Laguna Pueblo Indian.

"I'm having so much fun with our little ones here," she said. "The Head Start staff have been welcoming, and they are wonderful."

She replaced Katrina Nunemann. She will oversee another Head Start expansion at the Poldine Carlo Building starting in Spring 2023.



# Parents are key to curbing underage drinking

Fairbanks Native Association will start a campaign to encourage parents in understanding the risks of underage drinking, especially if they are providing the alcohol.

FNA's Strategic Prevention Framework program is using the national "Parents who Host, Lose the Most" campaign in Fairbanks. The goal is to remind parents that it is unsafe, unhealthy, and unacceptable—and, in Alaska, illegal—to provide alcohol for underage youth. They also plan to do a short survey with parents about alcohol and youth.

"Teens who begin drinking before age 15 are five times more likely to develop alcohol dependence or abuse later in life," said Brenda Hannah, SPF program manager. "Also, a teen's brain is still developing until the mid-20s. Alcohol damages areas of the brain that control cognitive reasoning, memory and learning."

Teen alcohol use increases the chance of risky behavior and alcohol poisoning. Youth who drink are more likely to have depression, and anxiety disorders.

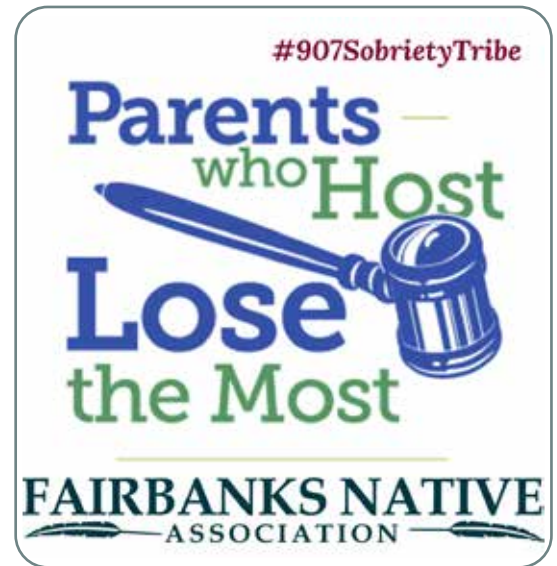
It's a legal issue, too, Hannah said. In Alaska, people under 21 who drink alcohol may face charges and fines.

It's more serious for adults who supply alcohol to young people. Anyone who is 19 or older who provides alcohol could be charged with a Class A misdemeanor for contributing to the delinquency of a minor. This also carries a fine and attorney's fees.

A report by the Centers for Disease Control says that 37.8% of Alaska youth drank alcohol provided by someone else, which is slightly below the national average. In Fairbanks, 8.1% of students in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District say they are currently drinking, according to state statistics. Yet, 57% reported they have tried alcohol at least once.

What is not clearly understood is Fairbanks parental attitudes about youth alcohol use. Hannah hopes to find out with the survey the FNA program plans, using a sticker with a QR code that will lead to a five-question survey. Look for this in early 2023.

FNA SPF want youth to find encouragement from the fact that most people don't use alcohol. The goal of FNA SPF is to prevent the onset of and reduce the progression of alcohol abuse among 9-20 year-olds in the Fairbanks North Star Borough. The program oversees a community coalition known as the Interagency Transition Council. SPF staff want to effect changes in policies, laws, and ordinances that limit access and harmful consequences of alcohol use.



Recently, FNA's Strategic Prevention Framework program held a lunch at the Effie Kokrine Charter School. They brought students and elders together so they could hear about the work SPF is doing. SPF is also looking for youth to sit on their Youth Council. The input and direction from youth is important for the success of SPF. Photos by Charlotte Peterson.

# From hopeless to thriving

## Four women share their stories of suicide survival



**Trigger warning:** the following stories contain frank depictions of suicide attempts and survival, as well as sexual assault and human trafficking. If these are sensitive topics for you, please skip to page six.

### THE CALL

Suicide?

Suicide?

Why do you call?

I hear you laughing and taunting,

Waiting for me to fall.

You tease me every day,

Trying to take my life away.

Suicide?

Suicide?

Why do you call?

Don't breathe on me with your unholy  
breath,

Turn your mocking face away,

Because I treasure life over death.

There's nothing you can say,

My life is here to stay.

Suicide.

Suicide.

Don't call me no more.

By Sharon Dayton



### Pen and paper saved her

Sharon Dayton's story

Sharon Dayton endured violence and abuse growing up.

By the time she was 11, she had enough, and reached for a rope to hang herself.

She survived. Life was still scary and uncertain.

When Sharon was 16, she got a gun, but a brother walked in on her before she was able to use it.

She then reached for a pen and paper.

"Writing saved me on that one," Sharon said. "I sat and wrote a poem personifying suicide. Since that day, I have had made no more attempts, and I look at myself as a warrior, not a victim, more than that, a survivor."

### With hope, we gain life

Jaye Palmer's story

For a large part of her life, Jaye Palmer was mistreated and abused by people who were supposed to love her.

When she became an adult, she was misdiagnosed with several serious mental health disorders, and at one point was on 12 powerful psychotropic drugs.

She was a mess. Her marriage ended and she lost custody of her two-year old son. Her ex-husband remarried, and the stepmother tried to convince the boy that she was his real mother.

Jaye finally broke inside when her son's stepmother refused to let Jaye speak to him on the telephone.

"She told me it was too confusing for him," she said. "I blamed myself."

She took a whole bottle of pills, and went to sleep, planning to never wake up. But she did. Angry at still being alive, she took another full bottle.

She immediately changed her mind and reached out for help.

"I found the strength," she said. "I'm not positive where that switch came from."

She eventually got a different counselor, who got the correct diagnosis for her. She has reconciled with her son, who is an adult now. She works in the behavioral health field, helping others.

It's been 22 years since that dreadful night, and she went public with her story for the first time this past November. She wants people to know there is help and hope.

"Suicide prevention is a passion," Jaye said. "My tagline on my email is 'With hope, we gain life.'"



## A decision out of the blue

Anonymous' story

She was fine that day. Happy, with no worries. The 16-year old girl wasn't grounded, and nothing sad was going on.

Yet that night she decided to drink for the first time. She lived in a small Alaska village, and alcohol was limited.

She drank hairspray.

"I didn't want to get caught by my parents, to get in trouble," she said. She took four different kinds of medicine in a suicide attempt.

Her sister found Anonymous passed out on a bed. Her family rushed her to get medical care. She barely remembers what happened after she took the pills.

"Then I woke up in Seattle," she said. "I had a liver transplant because of the attempt."

Four days later that transplant failed. She got another liver. It's been 27 years since.

"A decision out of the blue with lifelong consequences," she said. She takes a dozen different medications because of the transplant.

But not all her consequences are bad. She is in the prevention field, helping others, especially Native people, to find their way.

"I think when people think of suicide, they are thinking in the moment, not long term," she said. "God has something for you, and you can't do it if you're dead."



## FNA has help Please reach out

Suicide attempts and deaths have been on the rise in the Fairbanks North Star Borough.

In 2017, the suicide attempt rate, per 100,000 for FNSB AI/AN, was 882.4. The suicide mortality rate was 51.9, nearly twice that of all Alaskans and more than three times that of the nation. These rates have been increasing since 2003.

FNA Behavioral Health Services has added new programs to address this mental health emergency. Two of FNA's mission priorities are to address stigmas, and to provide needed services.

The stories on these pages are meant to offer hope, and break the stigma of suicide, mental health issues, and domestic violence.

Here's what to do if you or a loved one is facing suicide:

Go to <https://www.fairbanksnative.org/our-services/behavioral-health/> for a pre-service application so screeners can find the appropriate program for you or your loved one.

If you need immediate help:

- FNA BHS main number: 907-452-6851
- FNA BHS Mental Health Trauma Team: 907-452-6851, press 4, or ext. 6107
- FNA BHS Building Bridges: 907-452-6851, ext. 6232
- 988, a national suicide help line for call or text.

Soon BHS will have two more programs to help with suicide intervention and prevention. Look for updates on our website, and social media.

## The man of her dreams

Debbie Bourne's story

He was her every dream come true, but then he turned into a monster.

All Debbie Bourne had to do was marry the man to find out who he really was.

"Everything changed," she said. Soon after, he told her that to prove her

love for him, she had to smoke crack cocaine, and sleep with everyone he brought to her that weekend.

"One weekend turned into 10 years, with the hope that he would let me stop," she said. He didn't, but instead berated her, beat her, kept her drugged, and trafficked her out to his drug dealers.

"It's sad that I felt this is what I was supposed to do," she recalled.

It was twisted, she knows, but really wasn't much different from her childhood. Her father sexually abused her. Her mother was too abused herself to intervene.

So she kept trying to prove her love to her husband, hoping it would convince him that they didn't need to live that way.

Dream man continued on page 6..



## Winter Tales continued from page 1...



Johon Atkinson tells *The Box of Songs*. Photo by Shaylene Dublin.

up, and went longer than four hours, but he fell.

The eagle said “I should have gone first.” The eagle flapped his wings to fly and the little chickadee jumped on the eagle’s back.

Up and up the eagle flew. Five hours. Six hours. The little chickadee was terrified, screaming

silently.

The eagle could see the box, and almost reached it. But he got too tired and fell to the ground.

The chickadee jumped off eagle’s back just in time. He flapped his little wings as hard as he could and got the box. He flew down to the other birds with the box.

“You all need to learn something,” chickadee said. “I believed in myself. It is wrong to talk down to someone.”

Txamsem took the box and opened it.

“I going to take the most beautiful songs in the world, and give them to the smallest birds,” said Txamsem.

So the next time you hear a bird’s beautiful song, stand tall, no matter what anyone says.

## ***Such a greedy woman***

***Told by DeAnn Lincoln Gardner***

Long ago, little children were playing at the mouth of a river, not far from their Inupiat village.

A woman saw them, and hurried down to talk to them.



DeAnn Lincoln Gardner tells the story of *Such a Greedy Woman*. Photo by Shaylene Dublin

“Hey, you kids,” the woman said.

“Do you want some toys, some bowls and things for a picnic?”

“Yes!” the children said. The woman took off her parky and told them to get inside.

“Then I’ll know how to find you when I come back,” the old woman said. She tied them into the parky and left for the village.

A bird who saw what happened and told the children that the woman was going to have them for lunch.

“She’s gone to get her ulu. And she wants to eat you alive,” he said.

The bird used his beak to untie the knot and the children got out. The bird told the children to get rocks, fill the parka up, and make a knot. The children did.

The bird hid them on the other side of the river. The woman came back but she was so greedy, she didn’t untie the knot. She swiped the parka with her ulu and it made a loud noise. Skreee!

The kids started giggling....

***For the rest of the story, go to  
[www.fairbanksnative.org](http://www.fairbanksnative.org)!***

## **Dream man continued from page 5 . . .**

“I just couldn’t make him realize what real love was, and that was when I attempted suicide,” Debbie said.

She took 30 sleeping pills. She woke up and was mad. “I was super discouraged that I couldn’t even do that right.” Her husband beat her severely when he found out about the attempt.

“I told him you can’t kill me. I already died.”

“And that was when I walked away,” she said. She called her brother in Alaska for help. Within 24 hours she was on a plane to Fairbanks, Alaska, from Florida.

She got into therapy, started support groups, and earned a peer support certificate to help other people in need.

“I love sharing my story because it is a story of hope,” Debbie said. “Suicide is that feeling like something has to die. Except it wasn’t me that had to die, it was what was going on with me.”

# Traditional Man, Exceptional Leader

By Kris Capps, adapted from the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner

When Steve Ginnis was 10 years old growing up in Fort Yukon, he was a Boy Scout.

He and his fellow scouts traveled to the Boy Scout camp at Lost Lake to participate in an outdoor challenge. They competed in canoeing, chopping wood, sawing wood — all the things they routinely did every day at home in the village. To no one's surprise, they won every event.

This December, the Midnight Sun Council Boy Scouts of America honored Ginnis as its 2022 Distinguished Citizen for his leadership and advocacy for Alaska Natives.

Ginnis is a Gwich'in Athabascan from Fort Yukon, and the executive director of FNA.

His service list is long. He has been the executive director of Denakkaanaga Inc., president of Tanana Chiefs Conference, and CEO of Interior Regional Housing Authority. He previously served on the boards for Tanana Chiefs Conference, Alaska Inter-Tribal Council and area Vice President of National Congress of American Indians, Doyon Limited, Alaska Federation of Natives, and Yukon Flats School District.

He was named Gwichyaa Zhee Traditional Chief in 2017, and this is his 14th year with FNA.

It was clear from the size and appreciation of the audience and heartfelt public tributes that Ginnis is well respected and cherished as a leader.

"Leadership is tough," he told the gathering. "It is challenging as well as rewarding."

More than one speaker praised him for always being available for any situation, whether it be a grieving family or an opportunity for collaboration.

"You're always there," said Victor Joseph, past chief and chairman of Tanana Chiefs Conference. "Steve, you have given an awful lot, so tonight all we're asking from you is to put out your hand that you receive and accept the honor and good words."

When Ginnis took the stage, his comments were both personal and revealing.

"I have a hard time talking about myself," he said. "It goes against the grain of my cultural beliefs. It comes across as boasting about ourselves. I have a hard time with that."

So he very much appreciated the many tributes he received.

Ginnis turns 73 in March, and he said his journey has been a long one filled with challenges. Along the way, he always heeded advice from his elders, including encouragement to learn and live a traditional lifestyle.

"I'm really convinced that's what gives me the strength to do what I do," he said.

As much as he cherished all the kind words from others, he also noted "It's not about me. It's about the people."

His grandmother, grandfather and mother were all powerful people, he said. His culture requires he not talk about that much, but he mentioned it to show what kind of family he comes from.

"It's through their strength that I am here," he said.



Lifelong support: Bonnie Carrol listens to her husband, Steve Ginnis, thank the Midnight Sun Boy Scouts for their honor.



Five chiefs: L-R, Victor Joseph, Tim Wallis, Steve Ginnis, Al Ketzler, Sr. and Brian Ridley



**FAIRBANKS NATIVE ASSOCIATION**

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

Visit our website at: [www.fairbanksnative.org](http://www.fairbanksnative.org)  
 Email: [info@fairbanksnative.org](mailto:info@fairbanksnative.org)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/Fairbanks.Native](http://www.facebook.com/Fairbanks.Native)  
 Instagram: [@fairbanksnativeassociation](https://www.instagram.com/fairbanksnativeassociation)  
 Twitter: [@FairbanksNative](https://twitter.com/FairbanksNative)

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING 2023**

<p><b>Board of Directors Election</b></p> <p>March 10, 2023.</p> <p>Applications are available at <a href="http://www.fairbanksnative.org">www.fairbanksnative.org</a>.</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> </div> <p>Completed applications are due Feb. 6, 2023 by 5 p.m.</p>	<p><b>FNA Annual Meeting</b></p> <p>March 10, 2023</p> <p>Chief David Salmon Tribal Hall.</p> <p>FNA will share highlights of 2022 with membership.</p> <p>Board candidates will give speeches.</p> <p>Dinner provided.</p>	<p><b>Annual Membership Traditional Potlatch and Pageants</b></p> <p>March 18, 2023</p> <p>Chief David Salmon Tribal Hall.</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> </div> <p>Applications for Miss FNA, FNA Princess, and FNA Baby are available at <a href="http://www.fairbanksnative.org">www.fairbanksnative.org</a>.              Deadlines for each are due March 8, 2023, by 5 p.m.</p>
---	---	--



# FNA Employees of the Month

 <p><b>Julie Gracik</b>              Counselor, BHS              June 2022</p>	 <p><b>Elizabeth Bennett</b>              Home Visitor, ECD              July 2022</p>	 <p><b>Debra Pitka</b>              Controller, Admin              August 2022</p>	 <p><b>Shelley Hosken</b>              Residential Aide II, BHS              September 2022</p>	 <p><b>Nellie Stone</b>              Associate Teacher, ECD              October 2022</p>	 <p><b>DaShawn Sturdivant</b>              Facilities Manager, Admin              November 2022</p>
--	---	---	---	--	--