

FAIRBANKS NATIVE ASSOCIATION

A Voice for the People of Fairbanks

Summer 2021

The first step towards recovery starts with Janet



Janet Pearson, FNA BHS

Janet Pearson comes to work motivated, friendly, and able to deal with all kinds of people.

She is the first person people see when seeking FNA services for substance abuse. It's a job Pearson takes seriously.

"If you treat people with respect, you get respect," Pearson said. "I'm here to help them."

Pearson is with FNA's Behavioral Health Services, which helps people with substance use disorders, and mental health issues. She is a 18-year employee. Her office is in the reception area of the FNA Ralph Perdue Building on South Cushman Street. She was born in Fairbanks, and is the granddaughter of respected elder, the late Effie Kokrine.

Her area is filled with healthy plants, and bright sun catchers. She keeps a candy jar filled with goodies by the reception window. It is an inviting place.

Her kind demeanor has made her a favorite with everyone who knows her.

"She has this way with our consumers," said Siobhan Lynch, BHS clinical director. "It's so friendly, but keeps boundaries. She approaches people in a nonconfrontational way. She can work with someone who is inebriated, in a rage, or depression, and get them the help they need."

As the first point of contact for BHS, Pearson starts a case file for people seeking services. FNA BHS prides itself on the one-page, pre-service application, designed to make it easier for people to apply for treatment. Still, Pearson will help people fill it out if needed.

Once she's made the case file, she'll let the Intake/Assessment team know of the new file. The team then does an assessment to find the right place for the person. Usually that generates more paperwork, which Pearson tracks.

Her keyboard and phone get a daily workout. She easily handles 20 pieces of paperwork in a half hour. There is a well worn path between her desk and the fax machine.

"Paperwork makes the office work," Pearson said.

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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

Six people elected to FNA board of directors in spring election

The membership of Fairbanks Native Association has elected six people to its board of directors.

Renee Linton and Terri Cadzow join incumbents Travis Cole, Sharon Hildebrand, Dr. Charlene Stern, and Tonya Garnett.

Members also approved a change to FNA's Articles of Incorporation. The change will let board officers serve for three years instead of one.

The elections, held March 12 at the Chief David Salmon Tribal Hall, covered 2021 and 2020 vacant board seats. It was a walk through event due to COVID-19 precautions. The 2020 election was postponed last year due to COVID-19. Members cast 313 ballots each for both elections.

Linton, Cole and Hildebrand were on the 2020 ballot. Stern, Garnett and Cadzow were on the 2021 ballot.

Cole is the expeditor at Tanana Chiefs Conference. Cadzow is the executive assistant for health services at TCC, and Linton has rural economic development experience.

Hildebrand works for Doyon, Ltd. as the village outreach liaison. Garnett oversees the Native Village of Venetie Special Projects and is self-employed.

Stern is the interim vice chancellor for Rural, Community and Native Education at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and the vice president of Tanana Chiefs Conference.

They join Dr. Jessica Black, Andrea Nield, Glenn "Manny" Carlo, and Dr. Anna Frank on the board. In a meeting following elections, the board voted to elect Black as president, Garnett as vice president, Nield as secretary, and Hildebrand as treasurer.

FNA thanks outgoing board members Beverly Kokrine and Gerald "Jerry" Sam for their time, expertise and guidance in helping to improve FNA operations.



Cadzow



Cole



Garnett



Hildebrand



Linton



Stern



Steve Ginnis, FNA executive director, places a chief's necklace on Gerald "Jerry" Sam during a recent FNA board of directors meeting. Sam is an outgoing board member, and a former chief of Alatna. Photo by Diana Campbell



Beverly Kokrine looks at a beaded earrings and necklace set, part of gifts for her service to FNA board. Kokrine left the board to be the assistant superintendent at the Galena City School District. Photo by Shaylene Dublin.

New senior management

FNA welcomes Teresa Brand Sharpe and Joshua Peter to senior management.

Sharpe is the Human Resources Director and has over 30 years experience. She oversees four employees.



Brand Sharpe

Peter is the Information Technology Director. He worked at Tanana Chiefs Conferences as the IT director, and has taught IT at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. He is building the FNA IT department, currently with one staff, but is looking to hire more.



Peter

BRIDGES TO RECOVERY

New program highlight

Bridges to Recovery is a program developed by FNA to provide culturally appropriate treatment and outreach for Alaska Native and American Indian adults, 18 or older, who are facing opioid use disorder and stimulant use disorder.

WHAT DO WE OFFER?

Our services include peer support, weekly talking circles, and individual counseling sessions. We work to improve medicated assisted treatment, and opioid use disorders treatment. We also hold outreach events throughout the year.

Contact: 907-452-1648, ext. 6215

Funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health & Social Services, Award Number T1081816.

FNA to expand services to address opioid epidemic with \$1.5 million grant

Fairbanks Native Association will expand services to address the opioid epidemic in the Fairbanks North Star Borough.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has awarded FNA a three-year, \$1.5 million grant for opioid use disorders among Alaska Natives/American Indians.

“This is an important step for FNA,” said Steve Ginnis, FNA executive director. “FNA has years of expertise in opioid use treatment, and education. This grant will allow us to offer better options, from detoxification to healthy living for indigenous people.”

Fairbanks has some of the highest rates of opioid use and deaths in the state, among all races.

The grant will provide six new positions and expand opioid services in detoxification to recovery programs. The grant has three goals.

- Develop community education and awareness to address the opioid epidemic
- Expand access to culturally appropriate, medically assisted treatment services
- Build support systems for strengthening families using culturally appropriate methods

Public education about opioid use and the resulting epidemic is considered “central work of the opioid response” according to the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. The FNA grant will allow for the development of a marketing campaign focused on community understanding and behavioral health education in regards to opioids, said Perry Ahsogeak, director of FNA Behavioral Health Services.

Additionally, opioid use is not something that can easily be overcome by will and determination, as opioids hijack the brain. Using medication to overcome the physical and emotional distress of coming off of opioids is considered best practices, he said. The new FNA grant will increase medically assisted treatment.

Finally, people who enter opioid treatment often need to address social and relationship problems that have arisen due to their opioid use disorder. Ahsogeak said that FNA BHS will use culturally appropriate parenting curriculum, peer support, elder involvement and transition planning to help families and individuals in recovery.

“FNA has addressed opioid abuse early on in this current epidemic,” Ahsogeak said. “Because of that foundation, we are ideally situated to provide a comprehensive continuum of care for our consumers.”



FNA's Mary Wiley takes Tonya Garnett's temperature. Garnett was reelected to FNA's board



Steve Ginnis, FNA executive director, helps Dr. Elizabeth Fleagle through the line at FNA board elections.



FNA member casts his vote.



Dr. Jessica Black, FNA's board president, casts her vote.

2020 & 2021 FNA board elections



Melissa Charlie, FNA deputy director, shows Dr. Anna Frank, FNA elder, a FNA t-shirt.

FNA Community Services Child Abuse Awareness Month drive-thru



L-R: Christie Cooper-Esmailka, and Lorraine Trask, FNA Community Services, greet visitors to the drive-thru.



Give-a-Ways at FNA CS drive-thru.



PBS's Molly of Denali waves at visitors for the FNA CS drive-thru.

GOOD THINGS AT FNA

JOM Camp Read-a-Lot



FNA JOM staff hands a bag of books to visitor.



Thank you to Carpenters Local Union 1243-Fairbanks Carpenter Training Center, who made bookshelves. L-R Malachi Brooks, Ryan Peterson, Josh Ford, Dylan Sherry, Anthony Timeche, Silas Moses, Justin Dragon, Neo Neuburger and Theresa Wallace. Not pictured: Josh Bolton (training director) and Steve Bayer (instructor).



PBS's Molly of Denali greets two tots at the FNA JOM Camp Read-a-Lot drive-thru.

Elders at Graf Rheeneerhhaanji



Vernell Titus, Minto, showed youth how to cut moose neck and made fry bread. Baasee'!

Kenneth Frank taught how to make a hide scraper out of a moose leg. Marrow was passed around for Graf youths to try while he shared how ancestors would take the moose leg, and tie it to trees for later use, specifically when food was scarce. In the second picture, Frank is skinning a jaw bone, while Graf staff watch.

Photos by Charlotte Peterson and Diana Campbell

FNA program expands to cover college tuition for more degree options

Contact: Erin Edenshaw, FNA NACTEP coordinator (907) 347-1497 erin.edenshaw@fairbanksnative.org.

Fairbanks Native Association is now offering college tuition for Alaska Natives/American Indians in over 40 programs at University of Alaska Fairbanks Community and Technical College.

The Native American Career and Technical Education Program will also cover books, fees and supplies for course offerings in medical, construction, business, fire science, culinary, information technology, paralegal, and more.

The program is looking for local and Fairbanks North Star Borough School District AN/AI sophomores, juniors and seniors, but is available to eligible adults.

“Imagine getting a high school diploma and a college degree or certificate at the same time,” said Erin Edenshaw, FNA NACTEP coordinator. “This is a wonderful opportunity for Alaska Native high schoolers.” Edenshaw is looking for as many students as possible to take advantage of this opportunity.

The NACTEP program, part of FNA’s Johnson O’Malley Program, was once known as the Allied Health Pathways Program. It offered free tuition, fees, and materials for eight options at UAF CTC’s Allied Health Program. Recently the Native American Career and Technical Education Program, under the U.S. Department of Education, opened up the grant to cover all of UAF CTC offerings.

Currently, the program will go to September 2022.

“This exciting FNA program helps to ensure equal access to education,” said Michele Stalder, UAF CTC dean. “CTC is excited and honored to partner with FNA to educate Alaskans for Alaska’s jobs.”

Steve Ginnis, FNA executive director, notes the program is part of FNA’s mission.

“The education of our young people has always been part of Fairbanks Native Association,” he said. “This is a good opportunity that I hope many will take advantage of.”



First stop is Janet... continued from pg. 1

A distinctive thing about her is that she is 2’6” tall, and she uses a royal blue motorized wheelchair to get around.

Pearson has osteogenesis imperfecta, also known as Brittle Bone Disease. About 25-50,000 Americans have the rare disease, according to the Osteogenesis Imperfecta Foundation.

Pearson doesn’t have a problem talking about her disease, and was a March of Dimes poster child when she was young.

“When my kids were little, they would ask her ‘Why are you so small, Janet?’” said Lynch. “She’d say ‘I just stopped growing when I was younger.’ Then she’d show them cool things to do in a wheelchair.”

Pearson’s helpful nature is apparent in her work. People are her main concern.

“Somebody’s got to be here for them,” she said. “When someone asks for help, you don’t put them on hold.”



Pearson

Families need to know what happened to their missing loved ones



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



Doren Sanford
Missing since 8/21/20
Call Alaska State Troopers
at 907-451-5100. Incident no.
AK20064999.



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



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

If you know something, say something.

Part of speech by Steve Ginnis at a January 2021 rally for missing Native people”

“When one of our relatives suddenly just disappears, that’s difficult. As Native people, we all stand behind each other. By doing so, we give each other strength.

So my friends, I’m really thankful for this huge gathering. We had gatherings before, but they haven’t been as large as it is today. Jody Potts, I want to thank her for organizing this. I want to thank the Fairbanks Police Department, and Jim Matherly, the mayor, for being here and hearing first hand the hurt that these families are going through.

In my view, the police department, and the state troopers, need to be more transparent. I know some of this stuff is under investigation. I get that. But the larger Native community needs to be informed of what’s going on. This is not a Native issue. I want you all to know that. It could impact any race: white, black, or whatever your race might be. It’s a community problem! A community issue!

So you know I don’t mince words when I speak because the truth has to be spoken, and sometimes the truth hurts. Now I can tell you all that I had phone calls with the mayor. I encourage him that this police department need to be a little more transparent.

We have also sent a letter, a joint letter signed by Doyon, Tanana Chiefs, FNA, and Denakkanaaga requesting that they meet with us.

We have a responsibility to represent our people, and speaking for myself, I don’t take that lightly. I know that people depend on us to help raise the voice, try to find some resolve to this situation, but you can’t do it if your other partners are not really participating with you to get that done.

So, I would encourage the state troopers and Fairbanks Police Department to be more transparent. Share with the rest of us what’s going on here. Maybe by doing so we may find a solution.

So I think this gathering might be the light we need. And that’s my hope. Light the flame.

I feel the pain that these families feel, just like the rest of you are. I feel the pain. And you know what is really distracting to me is that I feel that I have no control over it because its in the hands of somebody else. That’s where I think we need to improve communication between the parties. Because these folks need to understand we have a responsibility to our tribal membership, and if we can’t communicate with them what exactly is going on, we’re not doing our job. And that’s where my frustration lies in this whole thing regarding the missing people the lack of communication. There’s a broader community here that needs to understand what’s going on.

So I’ll stop there in my language I say Mahsi’ cho, shalaak naii. Thank you so much, my relatives.”



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@FairbanksNative



FNA commissioned local artist Scott Hansen to create a mural in the indoor playroom in Head Start's new addition at the Poldine Carlo Building. *Charlotte Peterson photo.*

Employees of the Month

- March–November 2020 (During COVID-19)..... Crystal Ruerup..... Graf Program Assistant
- December 2020, Behavioral Health Services Michaela Craft RPC Mental Health Clinician
- February 2021 , Administration/Community Services Marta Hendrickson..... CS Case Manager
- March 2021 , Behavioral Health Services..... Laurie John..... Graf Case Manager
- April 2021, Education..... Carolyn Richards..... Preschool Primary Teacher
- May 2021, Administration/Community Services Lara Rambo Payroll Benefits Coordinator