

FAIRBANKS NATIVE ASSOCIATION

A Voice for the People of Fairbanks

Summer 2025

Melissa Charlie testifies before U.S. Senate committee

Melissa Charlie, FNA Executive Director, spoke before a Senate committee to say that federal health and education funding is critical to FNA's early childhood development, behavioral health services and community services.

"We assist individuals in times of great need," Charlie testified to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. "Whether they are facing homelessness, substance abuse, mental health challenges, or grief. From womb to the end of life, FNA is here to serve."

Charlie was one of five Indigenous women invited to testify before the committee. The hearing was held May 14, 2025, in Washington D.C. Its purpose was to examine U.S. Department of Health and Human Services delivery of essential public health and social services to Native Americans.

Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski, who co-chairs the senate committee, asked Charlie to be a witness. Murkowski said she has heard the concerns of constituents and others about presidential executive orders and HHS suggested reorganization and reductions in force.

Murkowski said the witness testimony would let people know the importance of the HHS programs to tribes.

"These aren't just federal services," Murkowski said at the hearing. "They're really critical components to the social safety net, and my view is that these programs support family stability, child development and basic dignity."

Charlie testimony continued on page 6...



Photo: L-R, Melissa Charlie, FNA Executive Director; Lucy Simpson, National Indigenous Women's Resource Center Executive Director; Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska; Dr. Sheri-Ann Daniels, Papa Ola Lokahi Chief Executive Officer; Janet Alkire, Standing Rock Tribe Chairwoman; and Loni Greninger, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribal Council Vice Chairwoman. Photo courtesy of Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

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Melissa Charlie
Executive Director

Message from Melissa Charlie, FNA Executive Director

We've been navigating a shifting federal financial landscape and state education budget concerns since the beginning of the year.

In January, I traveled to Washington D.C. with Shirley Lee, Deputy Director, Sharon McConnell, FNA Board Member, and Roxanne Frank, then Board Member, to meet with our Alaska Congressional delegation and attend the National Congress of American Indians Winter Session. This was a critical time, as new presidential executive orders on funding and staffing were being issued, directly impacting our operations and funding.



We had productive meetings with Senator Dan Sullivan, staff from Senator Lisa Murkowski's office, and Congressman Nick Begich. In March, we continued the conversation with staff from Sen. Murkowski's Senate Committee on Indian Affairs in Fairbanks. In late May, Senator Murkowski visited and toured our Head Start program.

In May I had the honor of testifying before the Senate committee. See page 1 article.

Our annual meeting and potlatch were both a great success, with the annual meeting seeing one of the highest attendance rates in recent years. We're thankful for the ongoing engagement and support of our members.

A special thank you to Roxanne Frank and Jolene Malamute for their board service, and a warm welcome back to Dr. Jessica Black, along with new board members Steve Ginnis and Teisha Simmons. Ginnis previously served 15 years as FNA Executive Director. Simmons is the Dean of the College of Indigenous Studies at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Dr. Black is the Associate Vice Chancellor of rural, community and Native education at UAF.

Our new board officers are Sharon McConnell, President; Beverly Kokrine, Vice President; Brenda Krupa, Secretary; and Laura Ekada, Treasurer. Together with board members Travis Cole, Sharon Hildebrand, elder advisor Dr. Rev. Anna Frank, and youth representatives Nahshon Attla and Nevaeh Opferman, we have a dynamic and dedicated team.

Have a great summer and take care of yourselves!



Dr. Jessica Black



Steve Ginnis



Teisha Simmons

FNA celebrates new royalty for bringing culture to light



Alana Moses
Miss FNA



Maddison Frank-Charlie
FNA Princess



Alana Silas
FNA Baby

In a celebration of Alaska Native culture, two young women and a baby girl were elected as Fairbanks Native Association royalty.

The new Miss FNA is Alana Moses, 18, Yup'ik, Cup'ik, Iñupiaq, and Koyukon Athabascan. Her parents are Catherine and Calvin Moses.

Alana has been sewing since she was 4 years old, and she has dreamed of being a fashion designer or working in the arts. She designed and produced all of the regalia she wore during the competition. Her headdress, called a naqurrun, was made in the traditional Yup'ik way, using a beaded line design passed down from her great-great grandmother of Hooper Bay. She also made her blue, silver and white parka, and blue flowery gaspeq. She said her boots were her take on traditional Yup'ik boots, with pink leather soles, white leather, and mink and fox fur. Each boot had three beaded stars and seven beaded butterflies.

For her talent portion of the contest, Alana held a fashion show, with each model wearing regalia designed and made by her.

"It is very important for me to be able to say that I made all of my own regalia," she said. "The materials and beads showcase my own style and harmonious blending of all my cultures. I plan to continue practicing and improving my techniques while proudly honoring myself and my cultures through wearing my regalia and teaching others to make their own."

Maddison Frank-Charlie is the FNA Princess. She is the daughter of Keith and Eilleen Charlie. She wore a skin dress with traditional tanned moose hide yoke, headband and belt, made by her mother, with guidance from Lynette Winfrey-Frank and Ruth Folger. The dress pattern was made by Bernice Dahl.

Maddison is a student at Effie Kokrine Charter School. She volunteers at concessions at the Minto Spring Carnival Dog Races and school fundraisers. She is a quick snowshoer, fishes for halibut and hunts for moose.

FNA Baby is Alana Silas. Her parents are Ashley Luke and Preston Silas. The little cutie stole the show with her tiny beaver mitts made by Temple Dillard. She wore a flower print gaspeq, and little leather, fur trimmed mukluks. Her mother made her headband out of moosehide, caribou hair, dentalium shells and beads.

Alana loves playing outside, trying to play with her dog, Koda, and singing and dancing to traditional songs.

Moose soup, basketball and books: Fun with FNA JOM

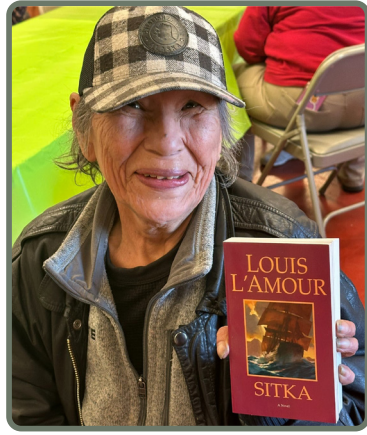
Basketball, reading and learning about culture have taken up the first half of the year for the FNA Johnson O'Malley program.

In March, the Alaska Native Youth Basketball Tournament saw 198 youth, grades 3-12, participate in the event. Of those, 70 were youth from communities around Alaska.

For Camp Read a Lot, local guest author Brooke Hartman read to the children from her book, "Klyde Kraken Wants a Friend," and she autographed her books that JOM bought for the event. JOM also gave away door prizes, books, and food. Total attendance was 70.

Finally, the JOM Culture Camp provided youth an opportunity to sew kuspuks, learn traditional songs and dances, and meet a falconer and his falcon. The camp ended with a delicious potlatch, with moose soup.





Our children are our future: Protect them from harm

By Karen Eddy, FNA Community Services Director

FNA Community Services always commemorates March as Child Abuse Awareness Month with a Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Walk and annual Spring Fling. Each event was well attended. We thank all the participants and vendors.

As always, teacher Jesse Hensel brought his first-grade class from Pearl Creek Elementary and their parents to the walk. We've had a wonderful relationship over the years with him and his students, and he is a strong advocate for child abuse prevention.

We want to especially thank Molly of Denali and the PBS Kids team. Molly took photos with fans. We watched the Molly of Denali Emmy awarding winning episode "Not a Mascot." The show talked about how Native Americans have been used in naming sports teams.

We stand for our children and their safety. Thank you for being with us.



Charlie testimony . . . Continued from page 1



Charlie spoke about how Head Start is not just an educational initiative. It is a comprehensive support system that strengthens families and builds healthier communities.

Head Start has been a long-standing cornerstone of FNA's efforts to support Native children and families.

Her remarks underscored the necessity of sustained and increased investment in these areas, emphasizing that federal partnerships and the fulfillment of the federal trust responsibility are vital to addressing disparities and ensuring that Native populations receive equitable access to essential services.

Others invited to speak said that they are experts in delivering HHS services to their tribal communities, having provided them for many years, while adding additional resources and training their workforces.

Murkowski added that FNA, and other tribal organizations, are ready to work with the current administration, and the U.S. Congress to streamline and strengthen these programs.



Gathering of Remembrance

We remembered our missing and murdered community members in May. They will never be forgotten.

FNA Employee of the Month



January 2025
Lizbet Hernandez
Head Start



February 2025
Steven Guidry
IT



March 2025
Mineta Jones
RPC



April 2025
Dina Contreras
Head Start



May 2025
Christopher Skan
IT



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Lorraine David, former FNA Head Start Indigenous Language Instructor, earned an honorary doctorate from the University of Alaska Fairbanks. L-R: Then UAF Chancellor Dan White, Dr. Lorraine David, and Dr. Charleen Stern, UAF acting Provost.



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