

# Alaska Native Success at the University of Alaska

Annual Report to AFN | 2022

# Land Acknowledgements

As we build a more diverse, equitable and inclusive future, we acknowledge the Indigenous Peoples of the land on which we work and live. We honor our Alaska Native peoples.

## University of Alaska Fairbanks

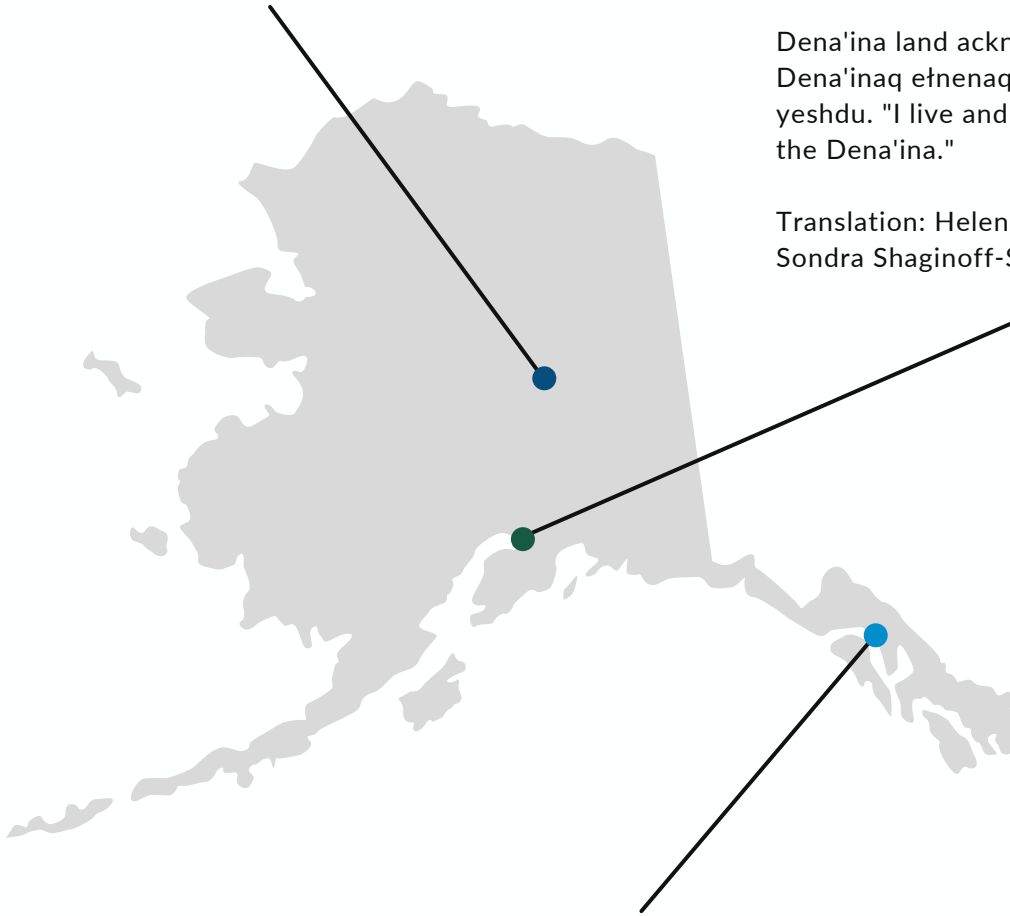
We acknowledge the Alaska Native nations upon whose ancestral lands our campuses reside. In Fairbanks, our Troth Yeddha' Campus is located on the ancestral lands of the Dena people of the lower Tanana River.

## University of Alaska Anchorage

UAA recognizes and values the diversity of our unique location in Southcentral Alaska, the ancestral lands of the Dena'ina, Ahtna, Alutiiq/Sugpiaq, Chugachmiut, and Eyak peoples.

Dena'ina land acknowledgment:  
Dena'inaq ełnenaq' gheshtnu ch'q'u yeshdu. "I live and work on the land of the Dena'ina."

Translation: Helen Dick,  
Sondra Shaginoff-Stuart, Joel Isaak.



## University of Alaska Southeast

Our campuses reside on the unceded territories of the Áak'w K̄wáan, Taant'á K̄wáan, and Sheetk'á K̄wáan on Lingít Aaní, also known as Juneau, Ketchikan, and Sitka, Alaska. We acknowledge that Lingít Peoples have been stewards of the land on which we work and reside since time immemorial, and we are grateful for that stewardship and incredible care. We also recognize that our campuses are adjacent to the ancestral home of the ǂaadast and Ts'msyen and we commit to serving their peoples with equity and care. We recognize the series of unjust actions that attempted to remove them from their land, which includes forced relocations and the burning of villages. We honor the relationships that exist between Lingít, ǂaadast, and Ts'msyen peoples, and their sovereign relationships to their lands, their languages, their ancestors, and future generations. We aspire to work toward healing and liberation, recognizing our paths are intertwined in the complex histories of colonization in Alaska. We acknowledge that we arrived here by listening to the peoples/elders/lessons from the past and these stories carry us as we weave a healthier world for future generations.

# A Word from the President

The University of Alaska system is committed to increasing Indigenous voices and presence across all levels of work, study and research. We have woven this commitment into strategies and goals at every level throughout the university system. As we near the one-year anniversary of implementing the Alaska Native Success Initiative strategic plan, I am honored to share key milestones we've reached toward our five-year vision of transformation.

In this report, you will see how efforts translate to student enrollment, staff and faculty diversity, and retention data trends. We are seeing improvements, but we know our numbers do not yet reflect the goals we have set, nor does the university system yet reflect the diversity of our state. In the end, success is measured through the stories of the successes of our Alaska Native students, faculty, staff and researchers – and those who are supporting and guiding them - that we celebrate every day.

The partnerships and support from the Alaska Federation of Natives and Alaska Native leaders within and outside of the university is driving our success. Your advocacy and support are critical as we strive to become the university where all Indigenous Peoples feel they belong, and where our transformation is visible and recognized throughout the state.

I am humbled to celebrate the achievements, talents, traditions and cultures of all Indigenous Peoples of Alaska. Guided by recognition of the past and gratitude for endless contributions, we are committed to growing initiatives, enabling opportunities and achieving success for Indigenous Peoples across the entire university system.

I am inspired to see the progress that resulted from consciously elevating Indigenous ways of knowing and being, and engaging Alaska's Indigenous Peoples.



**Pat Pitney**  
UA President

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UNIVERSITY  
*of* ALASKA  
*Many Traditions One Alaska*

UA is an AA/EO employer and educational institution  
and prohibits illegal discrimination against any individual:  
[www.alaska.edu/nondiscrimination](http://www.alaska.edu/nondiscrimination).

# Alaska Native Success Initiative

Guided by each university's mission, these priorities place people at the center of all actions. Throughout this initiative, UAA, UAF and UAS developed university-specific plans to inform the selection of systemwide goals. By identifying shared goals at UAA, UAF and UAS, the Alaska Native Success Initiative unifies the Alaska Native voice throughout our communities across the state.

## **Develop and Implement Racial Equity & Cultural Safety Training**

Commit to develop and implement a systemwide training module on racial equity and cultural safety, being responsive to Alaska Native cultures

## **Increase Alaska Native Visual Representation**

Commit to send intentional messaging of ANSI to amplify and support the universities' work to strengthen a sense of place through art, signage and other visible media

## **Publish an Annual Report on Alaska Native Success**

Commit to publish an annual report on Alaska Native success at UA, to capture qualitative and quantitative measures, to ensure transparency and accessibility

## **Increase Awareness of Institutional Change in Messaging**

Commit to promote ANSI efforts and progress, and will work with each university to share successes within the university system and greater Alaska community

## **Establish a Cabinet-level Alaska Native Position within the Office of the President**

Create an executive-level position to support Alaska Native success, with the goal of building a sustainable and functional department

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## Highlights Across the System

Of the many accomplishments we've achieved since adopting the Alaska Native Success Initiative strategic plan, below are three we're proud to share.

### **University of Alaska Anchorage**

The University of Anchorage surveyed Alaska Native students, faculty and staff to learn of representation priorities. Resulting from the survey, Indigenous place and space names are included in the facilities master plan to ensure belonging for our Indigenous students, faculty, and staff. To promote sense of belonging, UAA is developing an Alaska Native history training video for faculty, staff and students, which will include Dena'ina place, space, plant and animal names, all of which can be found on the Anchorage campus.

### **University of Alaska Fairbanks**

In June 2022, the UA Board of Regents voted unanimously to grant formal project approval of the Troth Yeddha' Indigenous Center and Park. UAF has since contracted with Bettisworth North to facilitate the schematic design. Fundraising for the facility was kick-started thanks to a generous \$1M donation from Kinross Alaska. Additionally, another \$96k in private donations was recently raised at a UA Foundation Board reception. UAF formed a Legacy Committee to guide the Troth Yeddha' fundraising campaign.

### **University of Alaska Southeast**

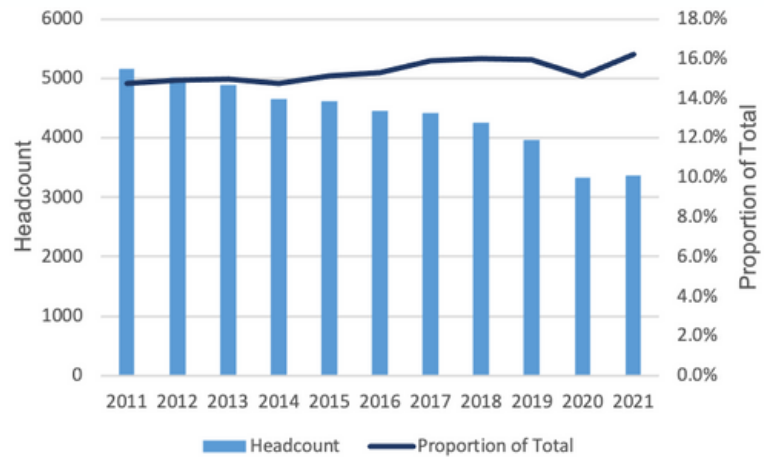
The University of Alaska Southeast is now offering non-credit courses in Alaska Native languages free of charge, ensuring Indigenous People have access to learn their own language. Removing the barriers of cost is important in the work toward language revitalization and cultural healing. UAS language course enrollment has gone up for both non-credit classes and for-credit classes. In 2011, enrollment was less than 50 students; now, enrollment is nearing 300. Partnership funding from Sealaska Heritage Institute is making this possible.

## Where We Are Now

The following data sets illustrate the most recent reports of Indigenous students, faculty, staff and executive populations. These provide UA with accountability and historical baselines to measure progress.

### Students of Indigenous Heritage\* Fall Closing

Year	Headcount	% of Total
2021	3,368	16.2
2020	3,337	15.1
2019	3,971	15.9
2018	4,259	16.0
2017	4,423	15.9
2016	4,457	15.3
2015	4,614	15.1
2014	4,643	14.7
2013	4,895	15.0
2012	5,006	14.9
2011	5,165	14.8

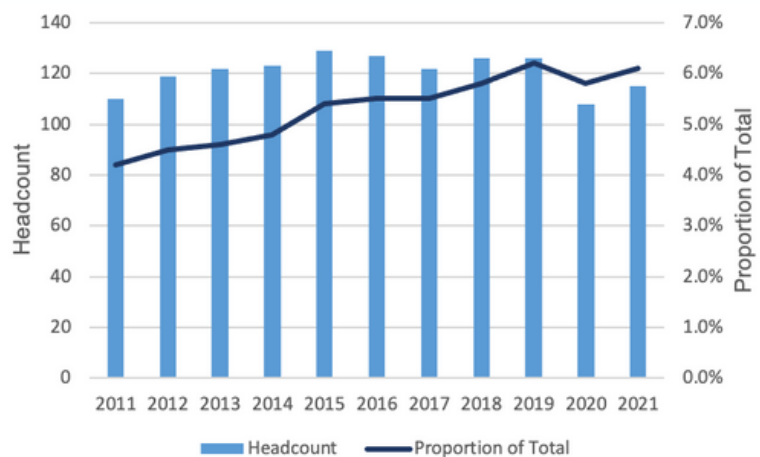


### 150 Percent (6-year) Graduation Rate, Bachelor's Degree-Seekers *Alaska Native/American Indian*

UAA, UAF and UAS are open admission universities. The FY20 graduation rate for UA students exclusively identifying as Alaska Native/American Indian was 18.8 percent. For comparison, the national six-year graduation rate for Alaska Native/American Indian students attending open admission, public postsecondary institutions was 15.5 percent; the national average for all universities is 41.5 percent\*\*.

### Faculty of Indigenous Heritage\* Fall Closing

Year	Headcount	% of Total
2021	115	6.1
2020	108	5.8
2019	126	6.2
2018	126	5.8
2017	122	5.5
2016	127	5.5
2015	129	5.4
2014	123	4.8
2013	122	4.6
2012	119	4.5
2011	110	4.2



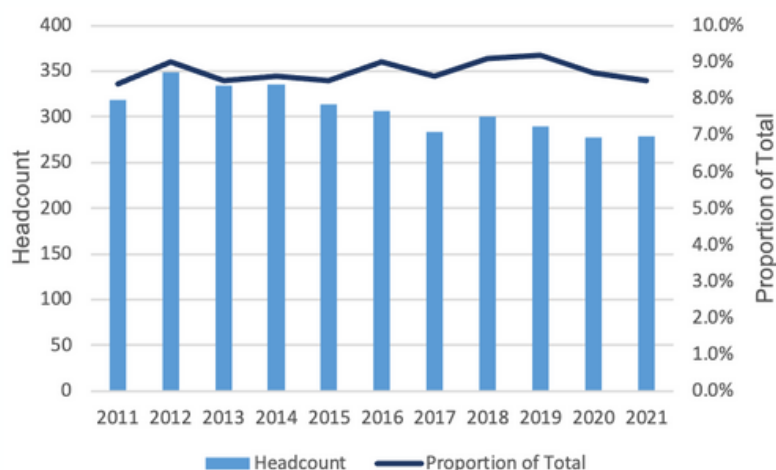
\*Those who self-identify as having at least some Indigenous heritage

\*\*Most recent national average 150% baccalaureate graduation rate data by race and institution type is for fall 2014 cohort, for students graduating by FY21, source: [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21\\_326.10.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_326.10.asp)

### Staff of Indigenous Heritage\*

Fall Closing

Year	Headcount	% of Total
2021	279	8.5
2020	277	8.7
2019	289	9.2
2018	300	9.1
2017	284	8.6
2016	307	9.0
2015	314	8.5
2014	336	8.6
2013	334	8.5
2012	349	9.0
2011	319	8.4



## Celebrating Indigenous Faculty

The following Alaska Native faculty members were promoted this year:

**Matt Calhoun** at UAA promoted to associate professor in Civil Engineering

**Laverne Demientieff** at UAF promoted to full professor in Social Work

**Lance Twitchell** at UAS promoted to full professor of Alaska Native languages

## Recognizing Indigenous Doctoral Graduates

The following Alaska Native students earned their doctorate degree this year, joining more than 50 Indigenous doctoral graduates from University of Alaska programs over the last 23 years:

**Chantel Justice** earned her doctorate in psychology.

**Maria Crouch** earned her doctorate in psychology.

**Olga Skinner** earned her doctorate in area, ethnic, cultural and gender studies.

## Alaska Native Women Guiding Our Universities

The following Alaska Native women lead the Alaska Native Success Initiative:

### Memry Dahl

UA Chief Human Resources Officer and Senior Advisor for Alaska Native Success  
 madahl@alaska.edu | (907) 450-8255

### Dr. Michele Yatchmeneff

UAA Executive Director of Alaska Native Education and Outreach  
 myatchmeneff@alaska.edu | (907) 786-1853

### Dr. Charlene Stern

UAF Vice Chancellor for Rural, Community and Native Education  
 cbstern@alaska.edu | (907) 474-5860

### Ronalda Cadiente Brown

UAS Associate Vice Chancellor for Alaska Native Programs & Director, PITAAS  
 rcadientebrown@alaska.edu | (907) 796-6058

\*Those who self-identify as having at least some Indigenous heritage