

Celebrating Indigenous Knowledge & Ways of Life: Alaska Native Success at the University of Alaska

Annual Report to AFN | 2023

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UNIVERSITY
of ALASKA
Many Traditions One Alaska

UA is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer,
educational institution and provider and prohibits illegal
discrimination against any individual:
www.alaska.edu/nondiscrimination.

Land Acknowledgements

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

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, and Eyak/dAXunhyuu People.

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 People 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 X̄aad̄as and Ts' msyen and we commit to serving their people 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, X̄aad̄as, and Ts' msyen people, 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 people/elders/lessons from the past and these stories carry us as we weave a healthier world for future generations.



A Word from the President

Dear AFN Delegates and Attendees -

I'm pleased to provide the University of Alaska's second Annual Report on Alaska Native Success. From the Alaska Middle College and dual enrollment to Indigenous Ph.D. recipients, UA continues to make strides in enabling opportunities and success for Indigenous people across the system. I'm proud of the efforts we've made over the past year.

The report's theme, "Celebrating Indigenous Knowledge & Ways of Life," spotlights Indigenous excellence around Alaska and the UA System. While a mere snapshot of the activities that have occurred, the progress, people, and programs this report highlights represent the progress of and future for Alaska Native people at the University of Alaska.

As you'll see in this report, the percentage of Indigenous faculty at UA grew slightly between 2022 and 2023, up to 6.5%. And after a slight dip in previous years, the percentage of Indigenous staff increased between 2022 and 2023 to 8.4%. Progress is still needed in these metrics to hit our FY27 targets, but these gains, combined with the broader institutional stability at UA, are positive signs for the future. While our student body is projected to grow this year for the first time in almost a decade, the number and percentage of Indigenous students at UA have dropped slightly. I'm optimistic that our stability and programmatic efforts - which help engage students at an early age and are showing their own growth this year - will help us meet our FY27 goal in this metric (19%). UA is continuing to take active measures to increase these numbers through targeted support for students, faculty, and staff to make our universities places where folks can thrive.

Our programs have also continued to show promise and positive outcomes. This year, the Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program (ANSEP) at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) expanded its dual enrollment acceleration academy in partnership with UAF's Chukchi campus in Kotzebue and welcomed its largest class ever of nearly 185 dual-enrolled secondary students. Programs like ANSEP at UAA and Tamamta at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) help keep Indigenous knowledge front and center for students pursuing post-secondary education while also providing active student support. And our scholarship support for Indigenous students continues to grow: a new \$100,000 scholarship fund has been established at the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) for Indigenous juniors and seniors studying fisheries, mariculture, economic development, social sciences, and more. I'm incredibly grateful for the anonymous donor who worked with EcoTrust to set up this fund.

When it comes to people, there's more to share than can fit in this report. While this document recognizes just a few individuals, they all are incredible representations of Indigenous success at UA. Last year, UA awarded 7 Ph.D.s to Alaska Native recipients, doubling the number of Indigenous Ph.D. awards in 2022. We also recognized Indigenous excellence in other ways. This spring, the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) recognized Anna Brown Ehlers with an Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts for her significant and lasting contribution to the university and the State of Alaska. UAF also awarded Helen (Dick) MacLean an honorary Doctor of Education and Chalyee Éesh Richard Peterson an honorary Doctor of Laws degree. Additionally, this fall, the UA Foundation awarded Dr. Jessica Black the 2023 Edith R. Bullock Prize for Excellence for her personal commitment to excellence as a researcher, educator, and administrator at UAF.

I also want to take a moment to recognize and thank the dedicated Alaska Native women who have been leading ANSI-related efforts across the system. Memry Dahl at the System Office, Dr. Michele Yatchmeneff at UAA, Dr. Black and Dr. Charlene Stern at UAF, and Ronalda Cadiante Brown at UAS have made access and accessibility for Indigenous people at UA a priority, and their service and support is what makes progress like this possible.

A Word from the President Continued

Finally, as many of you know, thanks to tireless work by Alaska's Congressional Delegation - particularly U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski - UA finally has a path forward to fulfilling our Land Grant. The process requires public notice and comment before the state conveys land from its selections directly to UA, which we'll incorporate into our existing portfolio for monetization. Revenue from our lands funds important programs like UA Scholars, helping educate Alaskans statewide. Any further development or action to monetize the land by our Land Management Office will require additional periods of public notice and comment. Above all, I want to be clear that UA is committed to proactive engagement with Indigenous People and communities throughout the current land conveyance and any future development processes.

While there's much to celebrate this year, our work is by no means complete. UA Leadership and the Board of Regents will continue aiming to meet our goals by 2027. Please accept my sincerest thanks on behalf of all our institutions - your partnership and support have been invaluable and instrumental in these efforts. We remain committed to engaging and empowering Alaska Native people while honoring, elevating, and celebrating Indigenous knowledge and Ways of Life.

Sincerely,



Pat Pitney
UA President

ANSI Leads: Alaska Native Women Guiding Our Universities

Memry Dahl

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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.

Links to each plan:

UAA: <https://www.alaska.edu/redis/files/UAA-ANSI-Plan.pdf>

UAF: <https://www.alaska.edu/redis/files/UAF-ANSI-Plan.pdf>

UAS: <https://www.alaska.edu/redis/files/UAS-ANSI-Plan.pdf>

Updates

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.

2023 Progress and Beyond: In 2022, the UA System Office developed a video training series on Race, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, with each employee encouraged to complete at least three hours of training on topic areas with Alaska and national foci. A discussion forum was also held following the development of the program, and employees are reminded and encouraged annually to review the videos and content.

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.

2023 Progress and Beyond: Across the system, 2023 has seen positive progress in showcasing visual representation of Alaska Native and Indigenous people. The systemwide "Empower Alaska" campaign includes advertisements and videos focused on Alaska Native Success, one of which debuted at AFN in 2022. The universities are undertaking additional marketing efforts to maintain that sense of belonging and opportunity. Myriad other opportunities have shown progress.

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.

2023 Progress and Beyond: 2023 marks the second edition of this document, provided to AFN leadership, attendees, and delegates in recognition of our support and partnership.

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.

2023 Progress and Beyond: All three Universities continue to support and expand their programs and academic offerings emphasizing Alaska Native and Indigenous knowledge, including new programs and certificates in Alaska Native Business Management, Arts, Languages, and other studies. Additionally, the UA System as a whole has integrated the Alaska Native Success Initiative into strategic plans, ranging from facilities to accreditation planning, to make Indigenous education and accessibility an embedded and ongoing part of our Universities.

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.

2023 Progress and Beyond: Following the departure of Dr. Pearl Brower to lead UIC, UA has been engaged in a search for a primary lead and coordinator of ANSI, embedded within the Office of the President. In the interim, UA Chief Human Resources Officer Memry Dahl has served as President Pitney's Senior Advisor for ANSI. UA continues to progress thanks to the work of the ANSI Leads at the System Office and Universities.

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

UAA has reopened the Alaska Native Art Studio, and incorporated land acknowledgment into events, and even projected them onto buildings. There's also been a focus and investment in Alaska Native and Indigenous faculty, staff, and students, with specific recruitment and retention of Alaska Natives into nursing programs to meet the healthcare needs of Indigenous people better statewide. Moving forward, UAA will continue to invest in and expand ANSEP, making more opportunities available for Alaska Native students in K-12 and college, and connecting them with networks and support systems for continued success.

University of Alaska Fairbanks

In February, UAF's Troth Yeddha' Campus celebrated 10 years of proudly bearing the Lower Tanana Athabascan name meaning "wild potato ridge" after the location on which it was built. Signage emphasizing that name has been added to campus, and a banner on the Gruening Building welcomes campus visitors in six Alaska Native Languages. Additionally, the development, construction, and completion of the Troth Yeddha' Indigenous Studies Center remains the University System's top fundraising priority. Moving forward, UAF is committed to advancing Alaska Native and Indigenous excellence throughout all facets of academics and research through programs like [Tamamta](http://www.tamamta.org) (www.tamamta.org), a graduate program focused on elevating and integrating Indigenous knowledge with Western science, which now has its third cohort of fellows.

University of Alaska Southeast

At UAS, the Native and Rural Student Center on the Juneau campus is a thriving hub for the campus community. UAS' ongoing partnership and close relationship with Sealaska has created space for Sealaska Heritage Institute to co-sponsor special events highlighting Indigenous knowledge, place, and excellence. The Preparing Indigenous Teachers & Administrators for Alaska Schools (PITAAS) program continues to be an attractive scholarship opportunity for Alaska Native students entering and advancing in the field of education. UAS, in consortia with University of Hawai'i at Hilo and Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe University has secured a 6.5 million grant initiative from the U.S. Department of Education to establish a National Native American Language Resource Center. The consortium aims to establish a Center in order to provide high quality, capacity-building services to Regional Centers, technical assistance provides, Tribal organizations, and institutions of higher education, in order to support the revitalization of Native American languages. Additionally, on August 31, 2023, the Board of Regents approved naming of the new Auke Bay Integrated Science Building on the Juneau campus as "Aak'w Ta Hit", a Tlingit place name translation of House at the Head of the Little Lake.

Looking Forward

LARGEST ANSEP ENROLLMENT

The Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program (ANSEP) expanded the Acceleration Academy in partnership with the UAF Chukchi Campus in Kotzebue, and a statewide residential opportunity, welcoming nearly 185 dual-enrolled secondary students to UAA and UAF — making the largest class in ANSEP history.

NEXT PHASE FOR TROTH YEDDHA'

The Troth Yeddha' Indigenous Studies Center (TYISC) is now in the design phase. Jones & Jones and Bettisworth North are designing the TYISC, and are led by creating a place of belonging for generations of students. In August, the Board of Regents approved a philanthropic campaign plan to raise \$53 million over the next three years to support continued design, development, and construction.

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE SUPPORT FROM SEALASKA HERITAGE INSTITUTE

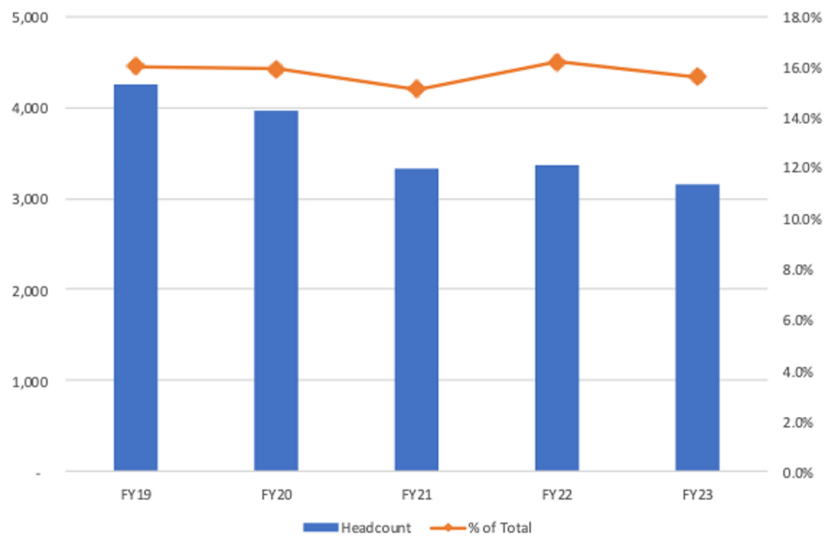
In partnership with UAS, Sealaska Heritage Institute will fund UAS students taking courses in Southeast Indigenous languages, Xaad Kil, Sm'algyax, and Lingít, and teachers to provide free, non-credit language courses. Funding is available from Spring 2023 through Spring 2025. In addition, UAS Alaska Native Language faculty Dr. X'unei Lance Twitchell and Shu Guyna Donna May Roberts were honored for distinguished service by Sealaska Heritage Institute at the Sealaska Heritage Institute 2023 Culturally Responsive Education Conference.

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.

	Headcount	% of Total
FY24	<i>Available January 24</i>	
FY23	3,146	15.6%
FY22	3,368	16.2%
FY21	3,337	15.1%
FY20	3,971	15.9%
FY19	4,259	16.0%
FY18	4,423	15.9%
FY17	4,457	15.3%
FY16	4,614	15.1%
FY15	4,643	14.7%
FY14	4,895	15.0%

Students of Indigenous Heritage*, Fall Semester



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

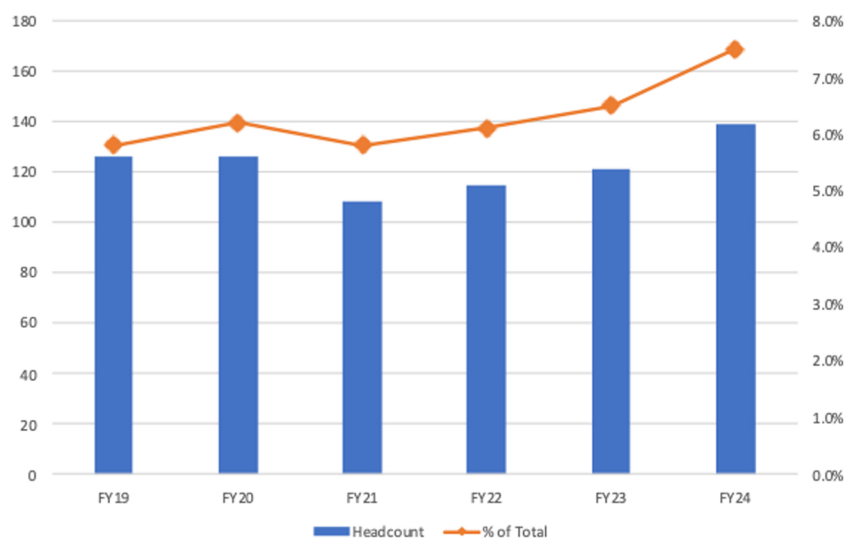
Data are for fall semester closing in the fiscal year, for example FY23 data are fall 2022 semester closing.

6-Year Graduation Rate (Any Award) for All Indigenous Undergraduate Degree-/Certificate-Seeking First-time Freshmen

UAA, UAF and UAS are open admission universities. The FY23 graduation rate for UA students exclusively identifying as Alaska Native/American Indian was 21.9 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 43.4 percent**.

	Headcount	% of Total
FY24	139	7.5%
FY23	121	6.5%
FY22	115	6.1%
FY21	108	5.8%
FY20	126	6.2%
FY19	126	5.8%
FY18	122	5.5%
FY17	127	5.5%
FY16	129	5.4%
FY15	123	4.8%
FY14	122	4.6%

Faculty of Indigenous Heritage*

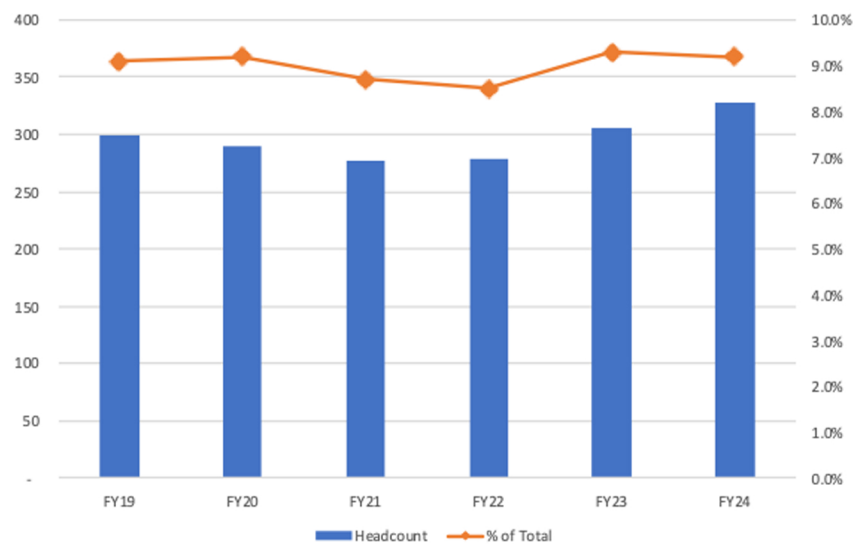


*Those who self-identify as having at least some Indigenous heritage.

Data are for October 1 of the fiscal year.

	Headcount	% of Total
FY24	328	9.2%
FY23	305	9.3%
FY22	279	8.5%
FY21	277	8.7%
FY20	289	9.2%
FY19	300	9.1%
FY18	284	8.6%
FY17	307	9.0%
FY16	314	8.5%
FY15	336	8.6%
FY14	334	8.5%

Staff of Indigenous Heritage*



*Those who self-identify as having at least some Indigenous heritage.
Data are for October 1 of the fiscal year.

Honoring Indigenous Faculty

The following Alaska Native faculty members were promoted and/or received tenure this year:

- Kelly Smith** at UAA promoted to associate professor and received tenure.
- Matthew Calhoun** at UAA promoted to associate professor and received tenure
- Angelia Trunillo** at UAA promoted to full professor.
- LaVerne Demientiff** at UAF promoted to full professor.
- Davin Holen** at UAF promoted to associate professor.
- Lance Twitchell** at UAS promoted to full professor.

Recognizing Indigenous Doctoral Graduates

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

- Jacy Hutchinson, Koyukon Athabaskan**, received her Doctorate in Clinical-Community Psychology from UAA.
- Jordan Jenckes, Unanga꤁**, received his Doctorate in Geoscience from UAF.
- Lyla Johnston, Diné (Navajo) and Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne)**, received her Doctorate in Indigenous Studies from UAF.
- Angela Lunda, Tlingit**, received her Doctorate in Indigenous Studies from UAF.
- Catherine Moses, Yup'ik**, received her Doctorate in Interdisciplinary Studies from UAF.
- Sally Samson, Yup'ik**, received her Doctorate in Interdisciplinary Studies from UAF.
- Tracy Stewart, Unanga꤁**, received her Doctorate in Clinical-Community Psychology from UAA.

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

Student Spotlight - Keith Herron

*(photo courtesy of the
U.S. Fish and Wildlife
Service)*



Keith Herron is an example of student success thanks to the opportunities at the intersection of Indigenous and Western knowledge. Keith is a Yup'ik biologist and scholar; his family comes from Bethel, but he grew up in Wrangell, Seward, and Kenai. An ANSEP and UAA alumnus (Biological Sciences, '20), he's also part of the first Tamamta cohort at UAF, pursuing an interdisciplinary master's degree. Tamamta, a Yup'ik and Sugpiaq word meaning 'all of us', is centered on elevating 14,000+ years of Indigenous stewardship and bridging Indigenous and Western sciences to transform graduate education and research in fisheries and marine sciences.

Keith's master's project dovetails perfectly with his work as an assistant fisheries manager and tribal liaison for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It focuses on the potential impacts of the fish parasite *Ichthyophonus* on Yukon River Chinook salmon runs, drawing on decades of Alaska Native knowledge and experience supplemented with Western research methods. Keith credits the people, programs, and support structures at UA as contributors to his success; he hopes to complete the project and graduate school next spring.

Faculty Spotlight - Dr. Jessica Black



Dr. Jessica Black's accomplishments as a scholar, researcher, educator, and administrator have earned her respect and accolades around the world, and she is widely respected as a leader in her local community. Originally from Fort Yukon and Nenana, she serves as the associate vice chancellor for rural, community, and Native education at UAF, and has been a faculty member since 2006. Dr. Black teaches courses in Alaska Native governance, policy, leadership, and research. She also leads two major National Science Foundation grant projects focused on the incorporation of indigenous stewardship and knowledge into fisheries and marine science.

Dr. Black is a dedicated community volunteer, serving as president of the Fairbanks Native Association board of directors among other activities. This fall, the UA Foundation awarded Dr. Black the Edith R. Bullock Prize for Excellence in recognition of her contributions to UAF and her community, The Prize is awarded annually to a member of the University community, and includes an unrestricted, \$20,000 award.

Staff Spotlight - Minnie Naylor



Earlier this year, Minnie Naylor was named the Director of the UAF Chukchi Campus in Kotzebue. Minnie has family from Shishmaref and Noatak, but was raised in Kotzebue, making her a perfect fit to lead the community campus there. Minnie has been a dedicated and involved UAF staff member for almost 10 years, and she credits guidance from her elders and community, UAF's Rural Student Services, and her connection to the region as significant contributors to her success.

Minnie is also a UAF Alumna, holding bachelor's and master's degrees in Rural Development ('08, '22). As director, Minnie will lead the Chukchi Campus team in their mission — to be a responsive and collaborative campus that inspires and develops each student to contribute to their community's cultural and civic needs. She hopes to be a driving force to develop leaders in her community and create opportunities to complete higher education in the region.

Honorary Doctorate Spotlight - Anna Brown Ehlers



Anna Brown Ehlers was born and raised in Juneau, and her parents' ancestral home is Klukwan. Her mastery of the traditional Tlingit art of Chilkat weaving is both classic and timeless, representing one of the exquisite foundational roots of Northwest Coast Art. Anna's expertise includes gathering and processing of traditional materials, a deep understanding of the complex social structure of Tlingit people represented by the technical and nuanced Tlingit art formline, and knowledge of clan histories captured by the classic rules of design. Her work honors the dignity of Tlingit identity, status, and belonging.

This spring, the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) honored Anna with an Honorary Doctorate in Fine Arts for her significant contributions towards the landscape of traditional arts and culture in Southeast Alaska and beyond. The University is proud to honor Anna for her high caliber of artistic and cultural finesse, and representation of the vital role Indigenous women play in anchoring culture and traditions through art, textiles, and traditions in the past, present day, and for future generations.