

Alaska Federation of Natives

Statewide Briefing



Week of October 25-29, 2021

AFN Announces Resolution Process for the Virtual 2021 Convention

— Submission Deadline Delayed to November 12 —

Due to the current case and hospitalization trends of the COVID-19 pandemic, the AFN Board of Directors made the difficult decision to convene the 2021 Annual AFN Convention virtually. Due to the technical challenges associated with a virtual Convention, the same 2020 virtual resolution process will be used for 2021.

2021 Resolution Process: The aspects of a virtual convention make it very difficult to ensure that every delegate has an equal opportunity to participate or offer amendments to resolutions due to limited broadband and connectivity in rural communities. As such, consideration of resolution will start after the 2021 Annual AFN Convention through a series of meetings, in which delegates have multiple opportunities to amend and comment on the draft 2021 resolutions. Final approval of the 2021 resolutions will be done by the AFN Board of Directors at its February 2022 meeting. Additionally, **the deadline for the 2021 resolutions has been extended to November 12, 2021.**

Below is the step-by-step outline of the 2021 virtual resolutions process:

Step 1: Members submit resolutions for consideration by the 2021 Resolutions deadline (November 12, 2021).

Step 2: AFN Resolution Committee meets for an initial review. Draft 2021 Resolutions will be shared with AFN's membership prior to the 2021 Virtual Annual AFN Convention.

Step 3: AFN Resolution Committee develops a 2021 Virtual Annual Convention Report on the draft resolution, committee recommendations, and next steps. The report will be presented at the 2021 Virtual Annual AFN Convention on December 14, 2021

Step 4: AFN will host a series of meetings for delegates to submit amendments and comments on the 2021 draft resolutions. An updated copy of draft 2021 resolutions and a report of action taken will be shared with delegates after each meeting. The meeting schedule will be announced before the 2021 Annual AFN Convention.

Step 5: AFN Board of Directors will approve the 2021 resolutions at its February 2022 meeting.

How to submit comments and amendments to the 2021 resolutions:

Delegates can submit amendments on the draft 2021 Resolutions by emailing resolutions@nativefederation.org or by sending a fax with amendment language and questions to (907) 276-7989. Please include the following in your message:

- Contact information AFN member organization
- State what resolution(s) you are addressing
- Your recommended amendment language or question

Click [HERE](#) to download the AFN resolution policies and submission format.

Please email resolutions@nativefederation.org if you have any additional questions.

Interior Seeks Input on Indian Boarding School Initiative

The U.S. Department of the Interior seeks Tribal and stakeholder input regarding the implementation of the Indian Boarding School Initiative that Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland announced in June 2021. In a [Dear Tribal Leader letter](#), Interior stated that the Initiative's purpose is an initial collection and review of Department documents and records, and compilation of its existing data. These are first steps in addressing Indian boarding school policies and their effects as part of the Department's report due to the Secretary by April 1, 2022.

For over a century, the Bureau of Indian Affairs was involved in the operation and oversight of Indian boarding schools in the United States. As a result, the Department is uniquely positioned to assist in the effort to recover the histories of Federal Indian boarding schools.

The Department seeks to consult with Tribal governments, Alaska Native Corporations, and Native Hawaiian Organizations on key issues for inclusion in the Department's Initiative report and help lay the foundation for future sitework to protect potential burial sites and other sensitive information. To facilitate discussion during the consultations, participants are requested to address the following topics:

- Appropriate protocols on handling sensitive information in existing records;
- Ways to address cultural concerns and handling of information generated from existing records or from potential sitework activities;
- Potential repatriation of human remains, including cultural concerns and compliance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act;

- Future policy and procedure implementation to protect burial sites, locations, confidential information, and culturally sensitive information;
- Management of sites of former boarding schools;
- Privacy issues or cultural concerns to be identified as part of the Initiative; and
- Other issues the Department should address in its review.

Interior will conduct the webinar consultation sessions listed below and will accept oral and written comments. Please register in advance for any consultation session you plan on attending. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. Please note that these Tribal consultations will be closed to the press and the public to protect confidential information that may be discussed during the sessions.

The consultation schedule is:

Tuesday, November 2, 2021

1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. ET

Please [register in advance](#).

Tuesday, November 16

1 :00 p.m. - 5 :00 p.m. ET

Please [register in advance](#).

Thursday, November 18

1 :00 p.m. - 5 :00 p.m. ET

Please [register in advance](#).

You may provide written input by Friday, December 17, 2021 to consultation@bia.gov. I look forward to speaking with you. If you have questions regarding this effort, please contact Heidi Todacheene, Senior Advisor to the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs, by email at Heidi_Todacheene@ios.doi.gov or by phone at (202) 208-7163.

Interior to Consult with ANCs on Its Strategic Plan

The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) is hosting an Alaskan Native Corporations (ANCs) consultation session to help inform the development of the Department's Fiscal Year 2022-2026 Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) on Wednesday, November 3, 2021 via Zoom.

The DOI Strategic Plan will outline the goals and objectives of the Secretary of the Interior, strategies to accomplish those goals, and performance measures to track the progress of the plan. The strategic plan will also identify key risks, establish plans to mitigate risks and build evidence to help achieve the Department's goals. Previous strategic plans can be viewed by visiting DOI Strategic Plans. Your input is requested on the Department's Strategic Plan framework which addresses the strategic priorities of the Biden-Harris Administration and Secretary Haaland.

The framework is structured around four overarching mission goals for the Department:

- Promote well-being, equity, and justice for Alaska Natives
- Conserve, protect, and restore natural and cultural resources
- Sustainably balance the use of resources while supporting communities and the economy
- Serve and honor the public trust

By February 2022 DOI will have incorporated feedback into the plan and developed performance measures that set near-term outcomes (approximately five years). The Department will routinely track, assess, and report on the progress of these performance measures. The Department would appreciate your input on the strategic plan framework, including responsive implementation strategies and performance goals that honor our trust responsibilities.

In addition to influencing the strategic plan, ANC feedback will also inform the Department's Risk Profile and Learning Agenda for the next four years. In conjunction with bureaus throughout the Department, the Office of Planning and Performance Management will lead the Zoom consultation session for ANCs, which will be held on November 3, 2021, and will be recorded.

The Zoom call information is:

November 3, 2021

10:00 a.m. (Alaskan Time)

[ANCs Consultation Session Zoom Link](#)

Meeting ID: 161 930 9611

Passcode: 397156 833 568 8864

Feedback on the proposed Strategic Plan framework can be provided during the session, and up to November 19, by emailing comments to DOI_Strategic_Plan@ios.doi.gov. Feedback and comments will be considered as we finalize the Department's Strategic Plan, as well as in the development of annual performance plans, strategic reviews, and other related efforts. The final Strategic Plan will be published on the Department's website in early 2022.

For questions regarding the upcoming sessions, please contact Mark Oliver at the DOI_Strategic_Plan@ios.doi.gov or by calling 202-573-4376.

AFN Urges Congress to Pass Voting Rights Legislation

AFN President Julie Kitka testified October 28 before the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs in an oversight hearing on "Voting Matters in Native Communities." The hearing offered AFN a second chance in the span of one week to speak to a key Senate committee in support of safeguarding Native voting rights through the [John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2021, or S.4](#), (VRAA), and the Native provisions in the VRAA's Title III section, known as [The Frank Harrison, Elizabeth Peratrovich, and Miguel Trujillo Native American Voting Rights Act of 2021 \(NAVRA\)](#), .

In its testimony, AFN sought to dispel the false narrative that voting rights violations are a thing of the past in Alaska, attributable to previous administrations. The facts, evidence, and judicial decisions say otherwise and point to the role of the current Director of the Division of Elections in those violations. More regions of Alaska are currently designated for federal observers under the Voting Rights Act than in the remainder of the United States.

“We believe that in voting rights there are mutual responsibilities. There are responsibilities for us as Native leaders to do our part, and there are responsibilities for government,” Kitka stated in her testimony. “Our way of life creates a lot of barriers. We live in the largest landmass in the United States. We have tremendous diversity across our state and very remote and isolated communities.”

Kitka explained that the problems continue because of the inertia inherent in the system. There is a perceived lack of funding, where elections officials make budget reductions while at the same time they have money in an interest-bearing account that they could use to solve these problems. “The pressures on government to cut corners or to stretch funding further, real human beings make decisions based on those pressures, and often we’re the ones who lose out,” she said.

AFN testified that Alaska’s election officials have repeatedly shown that they cannot be trusted to exercise their discretion to provide equal registration and voting opportunities to Alaska Natives. The VRAA and NAVRA are needed to provide a failsafe against the discriminatory actions of the Director and other Alaska election officials. In the absence of the Voting Rights Act’s Section 5 coverage, Alaska Native voters and organizations like AFN that represent them are left with pursuing relief through the federal courts.

Both the VRAA and NAVRA are needed to address Alaska’s present and ongoing discrimination against Alaska Natives, AFN said. This is not the time for half-measures that will leave Alaska Native voters without the full protections guaranteed by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, the Elections Clause to the United States Constitution and the broad plenary powers that Congress has to regulate its relations with federally recognized tribes through free and equal access to the political process. The VRAA and NAVRA are complementary provisions that the Senate must pass immediately. Anything short of passage of both the VRAA and NAVRA would reflect a lack of commitment to eradicating, once and for all, the first-generation voting barriers that Alaska Native voters face every day.

“I would like to acknowledge the leadership of AFN’s Vice President and General Counsel Nicole Borromeo on Native voting rights,” Kitka said. “She has made fighting for our rights and improving Alaska’s election system one of her top priorities for many years.”

To read AFN’s written testimony, click [HERE](#).

To watch Kitka’s oral remarks at the hearing, click [HERE](#).

2021 White House Tribal Nations Summit -- November 15 & 16

The White House has announced that the 2021 White House Tribal Nations Summit will officially take place November 15-16, 2021. Please note that the date has changed. This year the Summit will take place virtually.

The White House announcement stated that President Biden and Senior Administration

Officials look forward to hosting a robust and meaningful dialogue with Tribal leaders on key issues, policy initiatives, and goals for Indian Country. To better reflect the federal government's Nation-to-Nation relationship with Tribal Nations, we have changed the name from a conference to a summit. The Biden-Harris Administration is deeply committed to honoring our trust and treaty responsibilities with federally recognized Tribes and the Summit provides an opportunity for Tribal leaders to engage directly with officials from the highest levels of the Administration.

Additional details about the Summit are forthcoming. **Please be sure to register for the 2021 Tribal Nations Summit by Friday, November 5, 2021.** If you have already submitted your registration for the Summit, you do not need to re-register.

[Click here to register for the 2021 Tribal Nations Summit](#) The Summit will feature panel discussions and listening sessions with high-level Administration officials on Tribal priorities. Your input is highly valued and we ask that you fill out this short questionnaire by Friday, November 5th. - AFN highly recommends members submit what priorities are most important to be taken into consideration.

[Click here to fill out the questionnaire.](#)

If you have any questions, please reach out to TNS@who.eop.gov.



Vaccination Is Our Best Tool to Stop the Spread of COVID-19...

Getting vaccinated remains the best defense against serious illness and death, health authorities say. The recent report found unvaccinated Alaskans were 7 1/2 times as likely to be hospitalized as vaccinated people.

Misinformation about vaccinations and how well they work and the downplaying of the seriousness of COVID-19 continues to be a big factor in why so many Alaskans remain unvaccinated. There is a lot of misinformation out there, particularly on social media. Click [here](#) for CDC's helpful page for [mythbusting](#). For facts, guidance, and data at the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services' main COVID page, click [here](#).

YOU CAN TAKE ACTION – Choosing to get vaccinated is the single most important action you can take to protect yourself and your community and to reopen our economy. Check with your local health care provider to get the facts about vaccines, wearing masks and protecting your families. If you haven't been vaccinated yet, [find a vaccine](#).

For more information about vaccines, visit covidvax.alaska.gov.

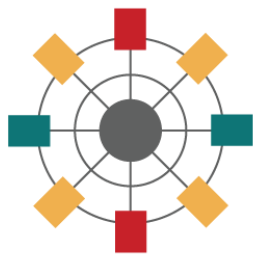


...and vaccinate to stop the spread of the flu!

Keep yourself and those around you safe! Flu season is upon us and ANTHC, state, and federal health officials are urging Alaskans to vaccinate against the flu. Many tribal health organizations are running flu clinics across Alaska. Please check with your local facility for times and dates near you. It is important for all people to get vaccinated for the flu to protect ourselves, as well as our family, coworkers and community. In addition, influenza poses a greater risk to certain people like pregnant women, children and Elders – they are all at high

risk for flu-related complications. For more information about flu vaccines from ANTHC, click [HERE](#). For CDC info, click [HERE](#).

A common myth about the flu vaccine is that it can cause you to get the flu. Fact: You cannot get the flu from a flu vaccine. The vaccine does not contain live flu viruses or in many cases, the flu virus at all. Vaccine safety is closely monitored annually by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). To learn more about influenza and vaccination myths and facts, click [HERE](#).



AFN
Navigator
Program

*Helping Alaska
Natives stop COVID
and secure resources.*

AFN Navigator Program Trainings, Events & Workshops

Click [HERE](#) for a calendar list of upcoming AFN Navigator events, workshops, and training.

AFN Meeting Schedule

AFN Special Board Meeting — November 10, 2021

AFN Annual Convention — Virtual, December 13 & 14, 2021