



Alaska Anthropological Association Newsletter

Volume 46, Number 2

www.alaskaanthropology.org

April 2020



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2020 NPS Alaska Archaeology Month Poster: *Antler!*

This is number two in a series focused on vital raw materials. Last year we focused on clever ways people used wood in the past. This year the poster highlights antler, a valued material in all corners of Alaska and for as long as people have been here because of its great resiliency and plasticity. The range of uses included snow goggles, combs, net shuttles, arrowheads, snowshoe needles, fish hooks, fish spears, war clubs, armor, harpoon heads, and even food, on occasion. See page 19.

Recent publication? Updates from summer field research? Email dskinnner2@alaska.edu to be featured in August 2020 newsletter.



Like the AkAA Facebook page to stay current on news and events in Alaskan anthropology



President's Message



Dear Members,

I hope this message finds you well. Alaska and the world have experienced a dramatic change since our annual meeting a couple months ago in Fairbanks. I am grateful that we were able to gather together to share research endeavors and celebrate one another's accomplishments. Thank you to the organizers, sponsors, keynote speakers, and presenters who made the 47th Annual Meeting a wonderful success! View photos and share your own memories from the meeting on Google Photos (<https://photos.app.goo.gl/GrUHbVGzaq7tVw8r5>).

This special newsletter features stories from the Alaska Anthropological Association team on unique opportunities and challenges we are encountering during the COVID-19 pandemic. Like many of you, the prospect of working from home and homeschooling your children at the same time was not in this year's plan. For others, the isolation from coworkers and friends is testing our capacity to self-entertain. Despite these challenges, social distancing has opened up space to try out new hobbies, take a trek outside, and spend additional time with family.

There has never been a more relevant time for the field of anthropology. Far-reaching changes to our societies and economies during the pandemic will be a rich field of study for years to come and one to which anthropology can contribute unique understanding. Right now there are a series of excellent short films being produced on COVID-19 titled "Ask a UAA Expert." Several of these films feature members of our organization. Visit www.youtube.com and type in "Ask a UAA Expert" to view and share.

President

Amy Phillips-Chan

Board Members

Morgan Blanchard

Joshua Lynch

Scott Shirar

Sam Coffman

Brittney M. Howell

Other Association Officials

Ann Biddle, treasurer

John Hemmeter, student intern

Dougless Skinner, newsletter editor

The purpose of the Alaska Anthropological Association is to serve as a vehicle for maintaining communication among people interested in all branches of anthropology; to promote public awareness and support for anthropological activities and goals; to foster knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of Alaska Native and circumpolar cultural heritage; to work in collaboration with Indigenous communities on all aspects of research and education; and to facilitate the dissemination of anthropological works in both technical and

The Alaska Anthropological Association holds a strong financial position. We continue to operate under our 2020 Annual Budget, which includes a diversity of funding sources to offer programs and services related to our mission. The Association also has an operating reserve to respond to any unexpected downturn. Your continued support through the purchase or renewal of an annual membership, donation to student scholarships, and participation in the annual meeting is invaluable to maintaining the financial health of our organization.

The *Alaska Journal of Anthropology* Volume 18(1) is now at the printer and will be reaching you shortly. Special thanks to copyeditor Rachel Fudge and layout designer Sue Mitchell for their dedication to the volume under unusual circumstances which has seen it through to completion.

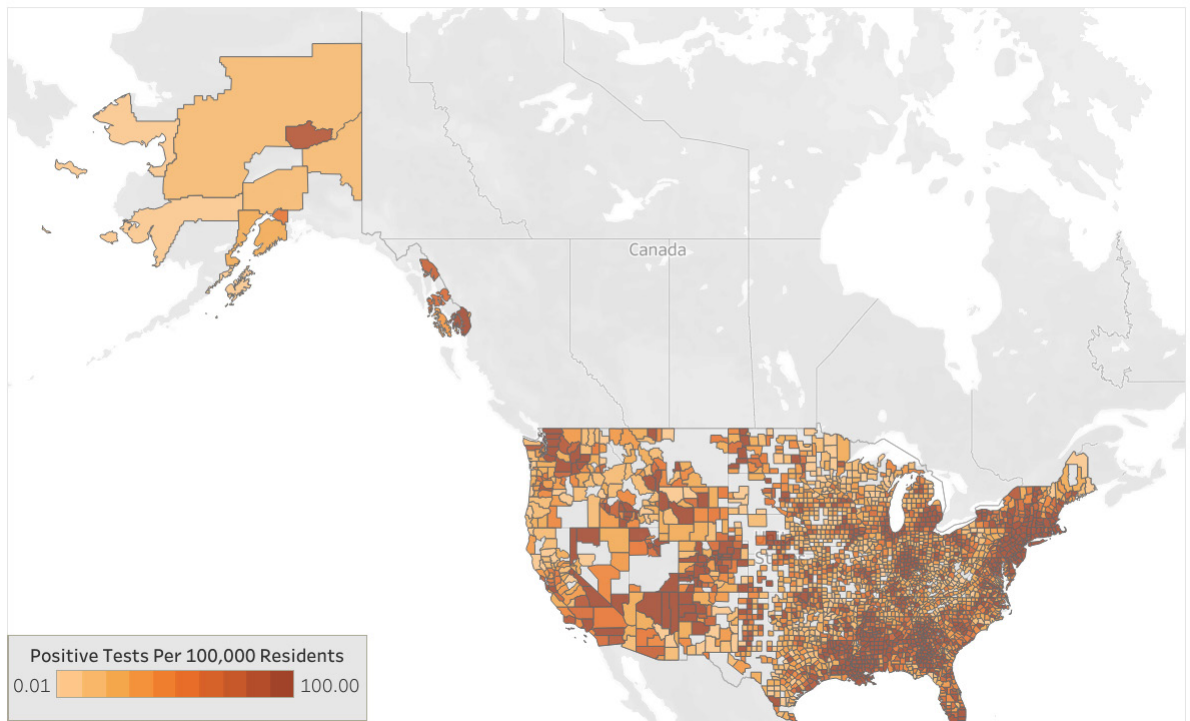
Our organization comprises a strong and resilient group of professionals, students, and local knowledge experts. We would love to hear from you during this historic time. Please send your stories, insights, or resources to External Affairs Board Member Brittney Howell (alaskaanthroexternalaffairs@gmail.com) for sharing online and in future newsletters.

Stay well friends,

Amy Phillips-Chan

Responses to COVID-19

Cumulative Postive Results for COVID-19 in the Continental United States and Alaska



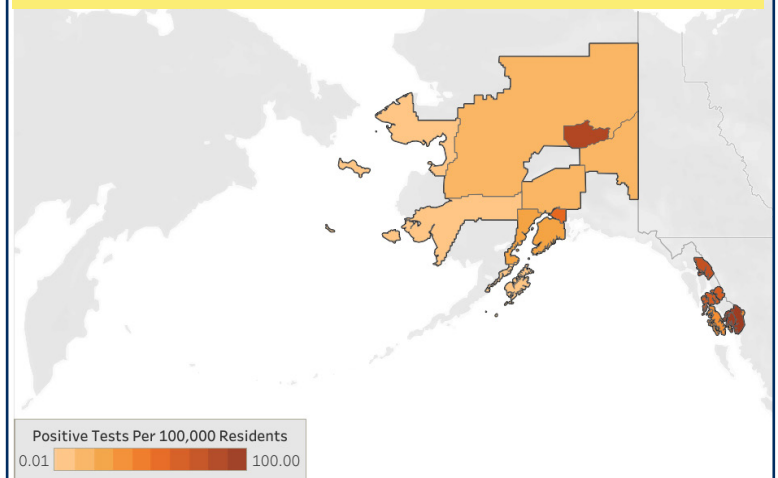
John Hopkins University
Center for Systems
Science and Engineering

Cumulative COVID-19 numbers

Updated April 16th

<https://www.ktuu.com/covid-19map/>

Cumulative Postive Results for COVID-19 in Alaska



Responses to COVID-19:

AkAA Board Members

Living in Interesting Times: Morgan Blanchard

After the successful 2020 AkAA meetings in Fairbanks, the individual board members were asked to contribute something about the conference to the Newsletter. I had planned to discuss some interesting sessions I attended and things I had learned at the meetings, but before I got down to the writing, our world seemingly changed as a result of Covid-19. In retrospect, we were lucky to have the meeting when we did. A number of other conferences scheduled just after ours were canceled. Now, many of us are working from home, we are social distancing, universities are closed, studies, research, and field seasons are delayed or in doubt. It seems like a new world for those of us who have lived most of our lives where life threatening epidemics are an aberration. Covid-19 has taken us back to a place where science cannot fully protect us, and Alaskans are again learning to live with a pandemic.

Even a cursory examination shows that disease has played a major role in shaping Alaska's history. I am hard pressed to think of place in Alaska where I have worked where post-contact epidemics have not decimate the Native Alaskan population. Many early Alaskan boarding schools were opened to care for and educate children orphaned by epidemics, compounding the loss of life with a loss of culture. Many communities in Alaska have graveyards for the victims of the 1918 influenza (some of which have been found to contain live samples of the virus). Alaska is known worldwide for the Iditarod, which commemorates actions taken to halt the diphtheria epidemic in Nome in 1925. These are just a few of the ways that Alaskans live with the legacy of disease and epidemic every day.



Historical photograph shows doctor Linus Hiram French with Alaskan orphans of the Spanish flu epidemic in 1919. Photo found in *100 Years Ago, Spanish Flu Devastated Alaskan Native Villages*. Photo added by the newsletter editor.
<https://www.peninsulaclarion.com/news/100-years-ago-spanish-flu-devastated-alaska-native-villages/>

So, what should we learn from Alaska's past experience with epidemics? First, it will pass. Second, proactive action, both as a community and as an individual can impact the pace of an epidemic and save lives. I hope you are all taking good care of yourselves, your families, and your friends. I look forward to the time when this is nothing more than another chapter in Alaska's history and we can all get together at another AkAA conference. Be sure to do your part to ensure that we are all able to attend.

Morgan Blanchard, Vice President
Anchorage

Responses to COVID-19:

AkAA Board Members

How childless board members are coping with COVID-19: Britteny M. Howell & Sam Coffman

With schools, daycare, and many workplaces closed, most aaa members are finding themselves trying to work from home while being cooped up in close quarters with family members. From little humans to furbabies to significant others, this sounds like an incredibly stressful time for everyone to “hunker down” and try to remain productive. We can only imagine what this is like because we are having a very different COVID-19 experience. As childless professionals, we are finding ourselves home alone with little opportunity for social interaction. Although Sam is in Fairbanks and Britteny is in Anchorage, we realized we are having very similar experiences that we wanted to share with others.

At times we are incredibly productive, pumping out those reports or making headway on those journal articles that have been sitting on the shelf for who-knows-how-long. Living alone means that our houses are always quiet. Maybe too quiet. Despite short bursts of productivity, this solitude can create a sense of loneliness and isolation in even the staunchest introvert. Although we are each trying to stay in virtual contact with our respective friends and family to keep up some degree of social interaction, this is a tough time for everyone. Like many of you, we have found our research halted. Sam’s fieldwork and Britteny’s data collection with older adults (a COVID-19 vulnerable population) is up in the air, creating a real sense of stress and anxiety for our future work. Coupled with the looming potential of UA furloughs and bleak economic outlook for the state, all has created a sense of hopelessness, loss of productivity, and perhaps a sense of meaninglessness.

Even though there are many things we should be doing to stay productive, we each find ourselves getting bored with all this “spare time” on our hands. Sam has been smoking last year’s left over salmon and going on hours long walks. While investigating hobbies he never thought he would be interested in, such as baking bread and learning to speak Hawaiian (he visited the state prior to the pandemic). Britteny has been tearing through apocalypse novels and begun painting mini-action figures for a Lord of the Rings board game like a true nerd. These are desperate times.

We both wish to express our sincere gratitude that we and our respective loved ones are safe and healthy. We also express our sincere condolences to those of you with sick loved ones or those of you who may have lost someone to the virus. We realize that everyone is having a different (yet stressful) reaction to these unique and challenging times, but we are hopeful that we can all return to some semblance of “normal” sometime soon and discussing our anthropological work. It could always be worse.

Stay safe and best wishes to all!

Britteny M. Howell, External Affairs
Anchorage

Sam Coffman, Publications
Fairbanks

Responses to COVID-19:

AkAA Board Members

Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum: Amy Phillips-Chan

As fifty-seven intrepid racers of the 2020 Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race set out on the trail from Willow, AK, officials and community members in Nome met to discuss the Covid-19 pandemic and the weeklong festival of events that accompany the mushers' arrival at the finish line. Iditarod week is Nome's largest annual event that brings much anticipated revenue to local businesses and city coffers. A Covid-19 case had not yet been confirmed in Alaska but there was strong concern that the thousand people flying in to Nome from across the country and world would carry the virus with them.

On March 14, 2020, the weekend before the start of Iditarod festivities, the majority of City of Nome facilities, including the Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum, closed to the public. Then the domino effect. Iditarod events were cancelled. Organizations closed and sent staff home to work remotely. Restaurants had to rely on carry out orders. The coffee shop closed. Our museum wrapped up installation of a new special exhibition that has now sat in a dark gallery for six weeks.

Nome has always carried its own unique sense of isolation. We're actually pretty proud of it. However, we're used to distancing ourselves from the outside world not from each other. No more chatting in the narrow grocery store aisles or hugs with Elders at the post office. For our family, the absence of story time and play dates has been keenly felt by the two-year-old. Trying to explain to a toddler why his favorite airplanes have disappeared from the skies has posed a challenge. He can now say "coronavirus" like a pro, a word that should not be in any of our children's daily lexicon.

Our museum has been fortunate to carry on with projects and activities. I find the days flying by with research and writing for publications that are receiving renewed attention and strategizing

on shifting budget numbers. As Covid-19 Public Relations personnel for the City of Nome, my days are also filled with Emergency Operations Center meetings and drafting public service announcements.

I am particularly grateful for the Zoom meetings, tele-conferences, and board work with colleagues that are helping to keep me grounded and connected. A couple weeks ago, a small group of Alaska museum directors meet via Zoom to discuss current challenges within our organizations. With the assistance of Museums Alaska, the conversation is expanding to include directors from across the state. A growing number of Alaska museums are offering collections and programs to the public via online formats, such as University of Alaska Museum of the North's Virtual Museum (<https://www.uaf.edu/museum/virtualmuseum/>) and strengthening each other through distance networking events (i.e. #museumfromhome). It is an uncertain and anxious time but seeing the new partnerships and innovative projects that are emerging in the face of, or perhaps in spite of, our enforced separation is inspiring. Collaborative endeavors initiated during this time will continue to make a positive impact in the coming years.

Amy Phillips-Chan, President, Nome



Installation view of Karen Olanna: *Inspirations from the Seward Peninsula* that was scheduled to open at the Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum on March 16, 2020. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the opening has been slated for early summer 2020.

Responses to COVID-19:

AkAA Board Members



Museum of the North

Fairbanks, Alaska

UAF Campus Map and Visitor Guide

[https://uaf.edu/campusmap/for-visitors/
buildings/museum.php](https://uaf.edu/campusmap/for-visitors/buildings/museum.php)

The Museum of the North: Scott Shirar

The University of Alaska Fairbanks and the Museum of the North closed to all but essential personnel on March 28th; before the closure, I had been more or less working from home for two weeks. Needless to say working remotely from home has been quite an adjustment. With a six-year-old and three-year-old boy at home, trying to balance remote kindergarten class work, a daycare environment, and normal work days with my wife, who is working full-time from home, has proven challenging. For portions of each day, rather than guiding undergraduate students through collection cataloging, rehousing, and database entry, I now guide our big blue sled with the boys down the hill in our backyard; and more recently guiding toy monster trucks down a ramp and into the puddles now forming in our driveway. Rather than staff and students popping into my office throughout the day to ask a question or catch up about a project they're working on, it's the boys rushing into where my laptop is set up on a card table in the corner of my bedroom to ask me to play stickers or help them turn the couch into a fort or set them up with a snack and a movie.

The days absolutely fly by and I've found it difficult to even keep track of the day of week. I interact with my colleagues via phone, email, and zoom, and as much as possible we have focused our work and that of our student workers on projects that can be accomplished outside of the lab. As difficult as the past five weeks of isolation have been, and as dismal as the forecast is for how much longer we may have to do this, I find it helps to take several moments throughout the day to try and focus on something positive and realize the ways in which I am truly lucky. At some point the isolation will have to end and when it does I look forward to re-inhabiting my office, the archaeology lab, and collection range at the museum, re-establishing the hands-on projects that cannot be completed remotely, and especially interacting face-to-face with staff, students, volunteers, and the researchers who regularly visit the museum.

Scott Shirar, Scholarships and Awards
Fairbanks

Responses to COVID-19:

AkAA Board Members

A Note to Students: Joshua J. Lynch

Few events loom with the magnitude of a global pandemic. Universally, life has been disrupted. It is challenging to write of the specific obstacles, barriers, and hardships archaeologists are facing in this new world while national and statewide contingencies are being evaluated and when so many members of our communities are risking their personal health and safety to perform jobs deemed “essential”, though rarely do their compensations reflect the long-under valued necessity of the services they provide.

Jobs for others have transitioned to working from home status, and across the country universities have abruptly jumped into distance learning formats that have required the ingenuity, resourcefulness, and compassion of students and faculty alike to sustain. Summer fieldwork and research programs will certainly be substantially impacted, likely canceled all together in many circumstances. Graduate students traditionally rely on work during summer field seasons to support their education and research in the following year, and many undergraduates will miss the chance to have formative field archaeology experiences. I am gripped by heartache thinking that new students will be missing out on rambunctious field school days and the beauty of short, hard-earned, golden Alaskan summers.

But, as ever, I have been amazed by the resilience of anthropology students in Alaska. I have witnessed students organizing community give back programs, producing and donating personal protective gear, and rallying to provide support to at risk native elders in Alaska. Graduate students with packed research agendas are being leaned on by largely unsupportive university systems to cover ever increasing teaching loads with ever dwindling support; and these young professionals have rushed to embraced the most effective ways to reach and engage their classes in online formats.

I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to each of you for all the effort each of you is making under extraordinary circumstances. I have never been prouder of this generational cohort of students that have already endured several ‘once-in-a-generation’ systemic and structural collapses. Earnestly, great job.

Joshua J. Lynch, Student Board Member/Secretary
Fairbanks

Responses to COVID-19:

AkAA Officials

Personal and Professional Challenges in light of COVID-19:

Ann Biddle

The changes in my professional life, as a result of the current pandemic, have been thankfully minimal. Prior to moving to Palmer a few years ago, I already worked from home. After relocating, I have an office in which I work. I am employed in a statewide capacity for Cooperative Extension and 4-H and remote meetings have always been a regular part of my day. In the present situation, however, I have more video conference meetings for work than I thought possible. Switching to video educational outreach, as opposed to the face-to-face classes and workshops has been a learning experience. This has fostered some pretty awesome creativity, partnerships, and thinking outside of the box. I am thankful every day that I can remain employed and also very appreciative of those who are essential workers and helping to keep the rest of society functional.

Personally, the challenges have been a bit greater. It has been difficult not being able to see my son (Anchorage-based) for family dinners or meeting for lunch regularly any more. I also have two high school-aged daughters at home all of the time now. The conversations that we've had to have regarding the unfairness of the situation have been long and complex. How do you empathize with a senior in HS who had to cancel a trip to visit a college

and then have to make the college choice based on virtual tours? No senior prom, no "last walk through the halls", no in-person graduation ceremony or family from out of town supporting, encouraging, and celebrating. As for my freshman, wearing all of her emotions on her sleeve: no end to the cheer season or state competition, no closure to her first year in HS, no trip to visit grandparents, no sleepovers. Having to have the conversations about how unique this is for this generation to have to go through; how they will be in a special cohort of teenagers across the world who had similar experiences.

How do we all survive this? We adapt. Video happy hours with work and college friends. Chatting on my sidewalk 6 feet apart with friends and neighbors. My girls take walks with friends, each holding an end of a 6 foot dog leash. Board games, cooking lessons, and movie nights are now more regular occurrences in my house. It will be interesting to see what the new-normal will bring to us and our communities. Until then, wave from afar, wash your hands, and don't touch your face.

Ann Biddle, Treasurer
Palmer

The Corona virus "hunker down" has affected many of us in our work and daily life: John Hemmeter

Professionally, I am fortunate to be employed at Northern Land Use which has kept us on through the lockdown to help prepare for the upcoming field season. Educationally, my programs future at UAA is up in the air and access to the sites I will be using in my thesis is up in the air. I hope to finish up, but the timeline will most likely be extended, so that is up in the air as well.

I would say that right now, everything is just up in the air. Stay safe everyone.

John Hemmeter, Student Intern, Anchorage

Responses to COVID-19:

AkAA Officials

Is it Finally Spring Break-Up? And I'm Stuck in my House: Dougless Skinner

I initially planned for the April AkAA Newsletter to spotlight upcoming field seasons, chances for students and volunteers to work, perhaps for the very first time, in the field, and to reflect on February's Annual Conference success. The events of the last month have changed the focus of this newsletter to reflect personal and professional challenges of members of the Alaska Anthropology Association during the COVID-19 crisis. Along with other association officials, I have been stuck working from home, watching the days go by without changing out of my pajamas.

This winter proved a difficult one; after graduating the UAF Master's degree program I decided to take a year away from university and for the first time in 21 years I didn't have the comforting schedule of a school week, then mid-winter I crashed and totaled my truck slipping off an icy road into a ditch at -35 degrees Fahrenheit, and subsequently, in a horribly unfortunate accident, my beloved dog was caught in a trapper's wolf snare and passed away. I was unbelievably ready for the joy of spring break-up, the migration of birds, and annual floods rebirthing the land. After the long and grueling winter, the first signs of spring were ushered in by a world-wide pandemic—an almost sickeningly appropriate end to the season.



The flowing Tanana River, near Fairbanks, Alaska.
Photo taken by author.

I count my blessings for the ability to work from home as an archaeologist for the Center for the Environmental Management of Military Lands, many of my peers have been awaiting unemployment and the stimulus checks to pay for rent and groceries. I have attempted to fill my days with some semblance of order, walking early enough to make a cup of tea and sitting at my corner desk, back to the television so my partner's daily news viewing doesn't distract me. Although, inevitably I hear current events of the world, and it

is a roller coaster of lows and highs. My partner is a pipefitter's apprentice who just returned from his essential job on the Northern Slope and we watch the economic oil collapse and worry about his future. We have attempted to escape by being outside, starting a fire, roasting hot dogs and finding joy in the warming North. I hope, along with many here, to productively use this time writing over-due articles and to begin an ethnographic book for my Gwich'in collaborative partner.

I zoomed with my family for Easter, they all live within a 2-hour radius of each other in southern Idaho, and I felt such a longing to be with them. This is a new time for my family, living so close it is a rare holiday that there isn't some sort of get-together celebration. My grandmother is diabetic and has Parkinson's disease and we all are particularly nervous about her contracting the virus. During our virtual Easter celebration, always the busy body, she sewed masks for local families and care-providers. With the oncoming summer and longer daylight hours, I hope we can get the pandemic under grips and look forward to some semblance of a field season. I keep spirits high by imagining visiting my family and enjoying summer field work.

Dougless Skinner, Newsletter Editor
Fairbanks

Responses to COVID-19:

AJA Editors

Life in the Slow Lane: Ken Pratt

The incredibly strange period we are currently living in has a lot of us worried, frustrated or just generally on edge. I mostly fall into the frustrated category. As one who is not a social butterfly in even the best of times, the “social distancing” required in response to the COVID-19 threat does not bother me much. But the associated closure of restaurants, coffee shops and watering holes that prevents me from casually meeting with friends is frustrating. Like most everyone else, I’m just trying to adapt to the situation and not be dumb. And I’m doing even more reading than usual, even tackling and getting through a few particularly challenging books that have sat untouched on my bookshelves for years.

I’m also getting shaggy enough to realize that I’ll have to take up the scissors and cut my own hair soon, despite the shaming that will undoubtedly ensue once I’m finally able to again make an appointment with my regular, wise-cracking “barber”: a good, fun person who is surely going through hard times right now since her job has been shut down. Or maybe I’ll just grow shaggier to present her with a bigger challenge down the road.

With respect to the Alaska Journal of Anthropology, the current circumstances have impacts of varying types on authors, reviewers and the journal staff.

Library, university and office closures are restricting access to certain research materials and the overall environment of life right now in itself can be a distraction from scholarly work. Impacts on my own research projects are a mixed bag: one project requires serious research time at an out of town museum that I cannot go to due to travel restrictions, whereas others are receiving renewed attention because I suddenly have more time on my hands.

Finally, I was saddened by the recent, COVID-19 related death of John Prine, one of my favorite folk musicians. So his voluminous and entertaining music has been a topic of conversation in email communications with several of my close friends. This tends to lead me to pondering. The other day I found myself wondering if something positive might come out of this crisis? I want to believe that science and facts might once again be recognized as valid and useful, and carnival barkers will be recognized for what they are. I want to believe that will happen but I’m too jaded to think that it actually will.

Ken Pratt, Co-Editor,
Alaska Journal of Anthropology
Anchorage

Responses to COVID-19:

AJA Editors

COVID-19: A Report from New York: Brian Wygal

For 21 years, Kate Krasinski and I have spent our summers conducting archaeological and anthropological field work in rural Alaska. From late August through mid-May we live in the New York metropolitan area where we are faculty at a medium-sized liberal arts school. It's a wonderful annual commute and we love teaching and research in the classroom and laboratory as much as we do the field. As MA graduates of the UAA Anthropology program and long-time members of this association, Alaska is our second home. But this year, in early March, the coronavirus pandemic has forced spring courses online, canceled May graduations, closed shops, and restaurants, and put summer field work around the world on hold. It's surreal to see the city that never sleeps fall into a very deep slumber.

Today, April 15, I wake up-at some time, it doesn't matter. I've lost track of days and nights. I put on my Belzoni Society shirt, again, and make a cup of coffee, decaf. I tune the radio to WNYC and the computers to check student activity in my now completely online Rise and Fall of Civilizations course. I think, perfect timing for the covid-19 pandemic to wash across the metro area like a tsunami, bigger and more destructive than the Superstorm Sandy eight years ago. My class had just covered the initial rise of communicable diseases and dense urban cities like Uruk in Mesopotamia and Thebes in Egypt. The students are intrigued to learn how humans first started living in close proximity to each other and their recently domesticated farm animals resulting in deadly zoonoses. I wonder how many of my students have never been vaccinated. Last year, there was a huge measles outbreak directly across the Hudson from us.

Kate does yoga and trains for a marathon that was canceled weeks ago. She is far more disciplined than I. Every evening at 7 pm, we step out on to the balcony and join several hundred of our neighbors we don't know in a cacophony of cheers, clapping, and pot banging in praise and gratitude for the frontline medical health care providers, grocers, bus and train drivers, and other front-line workers. We enjoy the view and regain faith in humanity. Dozens of

front-liners have died because they lack personal protective gear. In fact, so many New Yorkers have died that hospitals use refrigerated trailers as make-shift morgues and the city digs at least one mass grave a day on Hart Island for the mounting unclaimed dead. Sirens wail throughout the city.

In this morning's Gov. Cuomo report, we hear the first good news in nearly six weeks of home isolation. In the past 24 hours we only lost 606 New Yorkers to the novel virus, down from at least a week of daily deaths above 750. On April 8, we lost the most—799 New Yorkers. These are just the official tally. Everyone knows there are many more uncounted dying at home. We still have 2000 people checking into a hospital every day—an indication of the morbidity to come but substantially less than in late March. There seems to be a 10 to 14-day lag between the ventilator and death. Because most infected do not die from covid-19, it means there are magnitudes more infected out there—as many as ten times more than we know about. It's best to just stay home.

Gov. Cuomo quoted Winston Churchill:

"Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning." --Winston Churchill (November 10, 1942).

Because of the heavy forest fire season in interior Alaska last summer, I had purchased many N-95 respirators for our large crew. Turns out, they also help reduce loess lung during the deep excavations along Shaw Creek. Somehow, two N-95s ended up in my day bag when I returned to New York in late August, fortuitous. By mid-March, these masks were more valuable than my retirement account and a life-saver on my weekly foraging trips through the local shops and Saturday farmers market. I prefer being prepared, so a few years ago, I picked up two military grade gas masks just in case our building caught fire or we found ourselves in a cloud of tear gas. We sent one of these to my sister-in-law, a nurse, so she could use it during intubations...

Continued on page 13...

Responses to COVID-19:

AJA Editors

COVID-19: A Report from New York: Brian Wygal

My brother is also a front-line worker, manager at a grocery store, his wife is an RN too and she was called to work the floor as the patient loads increased. We are so proud of them and want them all to stay safe, but their jobs put them in danger. We learn of too many deaths, a colleague's mother, brother, and husband has passed away. Our students are missing their online classes because they got sick and ended up in the hospital. They have grandparents that are sick and alone, and no way to contact them by phone. We offer them a pass/fail grade and wish them well. They recover, recommit, and ask to make up the work they missed. One of them is writing a book.

I go out once every 7 days, to check our mail, local groceries and bodegas. My shopping forays bring me some fresh air, leaving our tiny place to enter the world. Elevator buttons and door knobs are the greatest threat to life here. I act more like an opportunistic scavenger than a professor. We've passed to the point of optimal foraging. If I am fortunate this week, I'll bring home high prestige goods and praise for over-priced vegan chocolate bars, kombucha, and any type of disinfectant like rubbing alcohol, peroxide, or white vinegar. Even the farmers market is running low on my favorite Saturday pastries. Times are hard in New York when the pastries run out. We truly are privileged.

The normally cheerful and friendly merchants have grown visibly stressed for fear of contracting the disease. I pop into my favorite falafel shack where on a normal day, I would eat hummus and fresh pita bread and watch the employees who live upstairs with their two young boys wreaking havoc on each other and the furniture. They run in and out, up and down the street. Their very hard-working mother prepares my lunch and reprimands the two little ones. "Be nice to your mother" she tells them. In store dining is no longer allowed and I'm concerned of contracting the virus anyway, so I buy one baklava for a dollar and tip her a \$20. This outbreak has been devastating to our local restaurants and small shops. So many have lost their jobs. I am paid for "working" from home which consists mostly of Zoom

meetings, writing, and editing. With online teaching, you can create assignments that grade themselves. Soon, classes will be automated by administrators.

When I return from my foray, it's a multiphase reentry, many flights of stairs wearing rubber gloves, outer clothes, and two masks as if I am sampling an ancient bone for aDNA analysis in the lab. After I enter the apartment, I put everything down, wash my gloves again, take off my homemade mask, wash everything I brought into the apartment or throw out its exterior packaging, put it away, and set the mail in a holding location. We wait three days to open it, sometimes it's seven days. We lose track. I soak my keys, cell phone, and wallet in rubbing alcohol. Then I wash my gloves again, take them off, hang them up to dry, and then wash my hands again, and again. Weeks ago, I took off my wedding ring because of all the washing.

As we make plans for summer projects, we are hoping it will be safe enough for quarantine restrictions to be lifted next month and the Canadian border will open so we can drive north this year. Who wants to fly? The worst thing we could do is carry this devastating disease to my parents or the rural communities we love. Until then, we wait, work online, write stuff, edit papers for the AJA, and check in with our students and family, hoping for the best and prepared for the worst. While so many have been severely impacted, disrupted, and devastated, we are thankful that our immediate family and friends have been spared. Kate and I need only to stay and work from home. Clearly, our troubles are trivial in these strange times and we're able to enjoy the company for a time. Gov. Cuomo says that's good, because its going to be at least another month.

Brian T. Wygal, Co-Editor,
Alaska Journal of Anthropology
New York

Spotlight on the AkAA 47th Annual Meeting

Thank you to all those who attended
and presented!

Our sincere appreciation to the
National Park Service in Fairbanks
for hosting the AkAA 47th Annual
Meeting from February 26-29, 2020.



Spotlight on the AkAA 47th Annual Meeting

Alaska Anthropological Association Provides Anti-Harassment Policy & Training

At the opening of the 47th Annual Meeting of the Alaska Anthropological Association, held February 26-29, 2020 in Fairbanks, the board provided a training workshop on our new anti-harassment policy. Facilitated by two trainers from STAR (Standing Together Against Rape) from Anchorage, this session helped members to understand our policy and provided tools to prevent and respond to harassment.

Combining the popular Green Dot bystander intervention curriculum with the specifics of our anti-harassment policy, STAR trainers thoroughly covered definitions of harassment, its impact on individuals and society, and how we as AkAA members can contribute to a culture of respect. Some important take-aways were examples of unacceptable behaviors, the three methods of intervening (direct, get help, distract) if you see harassment, how to report unacceptable behaviors to the AkAA board, and possible disciplinary actions for offenders.



Our excellent STAR facilitators were impressed with the thoroughness of our policy and provided a truly useful training for our members. To view this presentation from our annual meeting, please go to <https://www.alaskaanthropology.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Preventing-and-Responding-to-Sexual-Harassment-2.27.20.pdf>.

And as always, please reach out to a board member if you have any questions.

Britteny M. Howell, External Affairs

A Note of Gratitude from the UAF Anthropology Faculty



University of Alaska

Fairbanks, Alaska

[https://www.alaska.edu/alaska/
campuses.php](https://www.alaska.edu/alaska/campuses.php)



We are writing to thank everyone who, on an extremely short notice during the weekend of March 21-22, was able to come through with letters, phone calls, and video-recorded messages to UAF Chancellor Dan White in support of the UAF Anthropology Department and our programs. We realize that, in addition to the approximately 70 letters that we know of, a number of you sent support statements to Chancellor White without a “cc” or a forward to the Anthropology Department, and thus we were not able to thank you personally. We therefore appreciate this opportunity to extend our deep heartfelt gratitude to everyone in the Alaska anthropology community via the AkAA newsletter.

This astounding turn of events began to unfold late in the evening on Friday, March 20, when at 9:20 pm the UAF community received an email entitled Expedited academic program review: Early indications of feedback from the Office of the Chancellor. Having fared strongly in the expedited review evaluation by the committee that conducted the review, we were much surprised to read in Chancellor White’s email that all of the undergraduate and graduate Anthropology programs were being considered for elimination. The

stated Monday noon deadline for contacting the Office of the Chancellor with any feedback exacerbated the gravity of the situation and the urgent need for a swift, effective response. In tandem with the weekend-long teamwork in preparing the Anthropology Department’s response statement, we reached out to our students, alumni, and colleagues. A number of you in turn shared our SOS within your professional networks.

It was relatively shortly into the weekend that, deeply moved and highly energized by the volume, diversity, and thoroughness of the letters pouring in from our allies, we knew the Chancellor would be presented with an extraordinary opportunity to learn about the nearly a century of contributions by the UAF Anthropology Department, our ongoing collaborations with institutions and communities on every continent - especially within the Circumpolar North - and the utterly impressive achievements of UAF Anthropology program alumni. The letters and video-recordings came from students, alumni, professional societies, State and Federal agencies, Indigenous organizations and Tribal entities, and research and educational institutions from around the world. Continued on page 17...

A Note of Gratitude from the UAF Anthropology Faculty

Early on Monday, March 23, Chancellor White's assistant Jeannie Phillips very kindly confirmed that she would deliver a printed copy of each letter directly into the Chancellor's hands. It was that same Monday afternoon that everyone at UAF received the final recommendations from the Chancellor, with Anthropology no longer listed among the programs being considered for elimination. While that was by no means a moment of celebration, as these continue to be very difficult times at UAF and the elimination of any program is a sad loss for students and the university, we did breathe a sigh of relief.

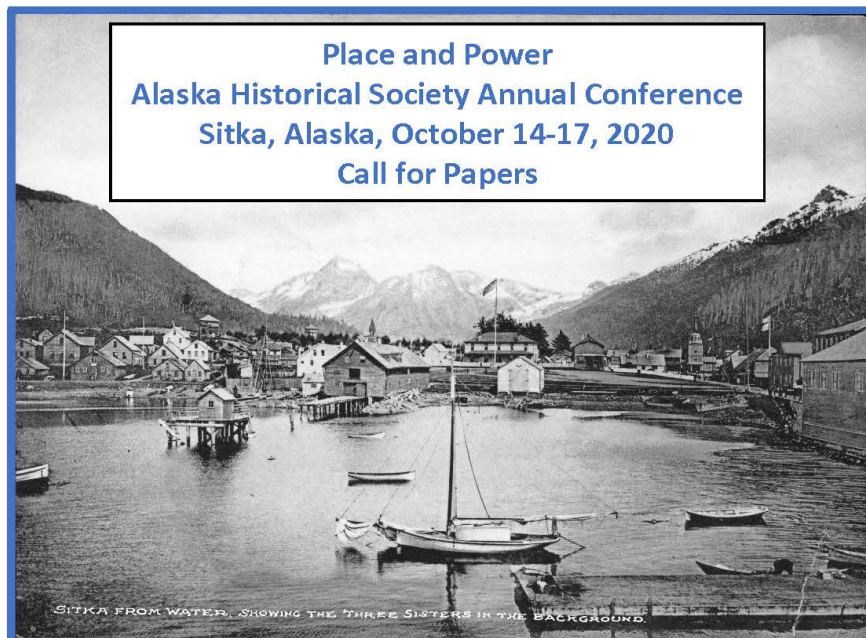
Stressful as it was, this experience has provided a great lesson on the power of collegiality and teamwork, a reminder of the strong foundations laid by our predecessors (and thereby of our own responsibility to continue building upon them with honor and dedication), a much-appreciated chance to hear from you and to rejoice in the rich professional accomplishments of colleagues of whom many are UAF Anthropology alumni, and a testimony to the indisputable fact that we are all part of a supportive and diversely talented community. No one should be reading work-related emails that come at 9:20 pm on

a Friday night, but we are sure glad that we did, and we are grateful that so many of you read the call-for-help emails we sent shortly thereafter.

The official final decision on all of the University of Alaska programs will be announced following the June meeting of the Board of Regents, but we have good reasons for cautious optimism with regard to the Anthropology programs here at UAF. It is in great part due to the incredible show of support of our allies who swiftly came to our rescue. We see you, we value you, and we thank you with all our hearts.

Sincerely,
Anthropology Department Faculty,
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Upcoming Events



Sitka from water, showing the Three Sisters in the background. Sitka Harbor-7, Alaska State Library Photo Collection.

“Place and Power” is the theme for the 2020 Alaska Historical Society Conference, to be held in Sitka, October 14-17. Gathering in Sitka while the community commemorates the 1867 transfer of Alaska from Russia to the United States provides a fitting location for exploring larger questions of power relations over time, such as how governmental laws and policies impact Alaskans and shape our understanding of history and identity.

Millennia of Tlingit history are marked in clan houses, place names and clan histories intimately connected with specific places. The power relationship between the Russian American Company colony at Sitka and the Tlingit people is represented in the Fort Site from the Battle of 1804, now the Sitka National Historical Park, and in surviving structures such as the Russian Bishop’s House and St Michael’s Orthodox Cathedral. The struggle between Alaska Native people and the U.S. government is also represented in the history of the Alaska Native Brotherhood Hall, Sheldon Jackson School, and Mt. Edgecumbe High School.

Conference sessions are being planned on Women’s Suffrage, the 50th Anniversary of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), and the Legacy of Richard Nelson. The West, including Alaska, was ahead of the nation in recognizing the rights of women, thereby challenging us to ask how place influenced attitudes and what effect the Progressive Movement had on Alaskans and their views on women’s rights. Next year, 2021, marks the 50th anniversary of the passage of ANCSA, a major political settlement with profound consequences for Native sovereignty, subsistence rights, and governmental regulations on land use. The death of noted anthropologist and nature writer Richard Nelson provides a chance to examine a legacy of recording Native relationships to place and discuss how spiritual lessons learned from elders influenced his own understanding of place.

In addition to the planned sessions, papers on all topics related to Alaska history are welcome. Presentations are limited to 20 minutes, and all presenters must register for the conference.

To submit a proposal, please send your presentation title, an abstract of no more than 100 words, and two sentences about yourself to Rachel Mason, Program Chair, rachel_mason@nps.gov. Proposals are due May 31, 2020.

FOR
THOUSANDS
OF YEARS,
ALASKANS
HAVE TURNED
ANTLER INTO
THE RELIABLE,
RESILIENT
TOOLS OF
EVERYDAY LIFE.



Harpoon (Chukchi)
The Chukchi used harpoons to hunt marine mammals.
They were made of antler and bone.

Knife (Chukchi)
The Chukchi used knives to cut and carve.
They were made of antler and bone.

Spearhead (Chukchi)
The Chukchi used spearheads to hunt marine mammals.
They were made of antler and bone.

Fishhook (Chukchi)
The Chukchi used fishhooks to catch fish.
They were made of antler and bone.

Awl (Chukchi)
The Chukchi used awls to make holes in wood and bone.
They were made of antler and bone.

Drill (Chukchi)
The Chukchi used drills to make holes in wood and bone.
They were made of antler and bone.

Chisel (Chukchi)
The Chukchi used chisels to carve wood and bone.
They were made of antler and bone.

Spindle (Chukchi)
The Chukchi used spindles to spin thread.
They were made of antler and bone.

ALASKA ARCHAEOLOGY MONTH 2020