

A Circle of Support

THE CASE FOR AN
INDIGENOUS STUDIES CENTER
AND **INTERPRETIVE PARK AT**

Troth Yeddha'

UNIVERSITY
OF ALASKA
FAIRBANKS



H O N O R V I S I O N L E G A C Y

Troth Yeddha'



**Now is the time to honor the past,
celebrate the present and shape
the future.**

The hill on which UAF sits is called Troth Yeddha'. Troth means wild potato root in the local Athabaskan language. Since time immemorial, the Athabaskan people gathered here to pick troth. While together, they talked and learned from each other.

The university cornerstone was placed here in 1915. More than 100 years later, Troth Yeddha' still serves as a great place of learning and discovery — the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

**A place to
honor Alaska Native leaders**

**A place to
leave your legacy**

**A place for students to
achieve their vision**

Dear friends,

The University of Alaska Fairbanks is a place of possibilities. Students learn, lead and serve. Researchers discover ways to improve our world. And families celebrate the state's rich culture and heritage.

Alaska Native students embrace opportunities in labs, classrooms and libraries. Support services and social activities abound. Students find friends and learn valuable life lessons. We are doing so much good. What would make it even better? **A central Alaska Native gathering place with classes, services and activities. We envision a breathtaking tribute that affirms Alaska Native culture and contributions across Alaska: the Indigenous studies center and interpretive park at Troth Yeddha'.**

Students and the community will gather here for events and performances. The seven-acre interpretive park will include gathering circles and artistic tributes to Indigenous leaders. And it will preserve natural beauty in the heart of campus.

The Indigenous studies center and park will create a sense of place for indigenous cultures. The center will be prominently located on the ridge between the UA Museum of the North and the Reichardt Building, home to the College of Natural



Science and Mathematics. With a panoramic view of the valley and Alaska Range, this is the last prime space available at UAF.

The university's founders envisioned all Alaskans thriving at UAF. The Indigenous studies center and interpretive park will strengthen opportunities for Alaska Native students. This document describes research on why stand-alone centers benefit students.

Creating this legacy takes all of us. This visionary project will cost \$25 million. We are counting on a gift from every person, family and business that cares about preserving our heritage and supporting our students.

This investment will pay off for generations. Please join us in making a generous contribution today.

Sincerely,

Miranda Wright

UAF EMERITUS
CO-CHAIR,
TROTH YEDDHA'
LEGACY COMMITTEE

Admiral Tom Barrett

PRESIDENT,
ALYESKA PIPELINE SERVICE CO.
CO-CHAIR,
TROTH YEDDHA'
LEGACY COMMITTEE

Aaron Schutt

PRESIDENT & CEO,
DOYON, LTD
CO-CHAIR,
TROTH YEDDHA'
LEGACY COMMITTEE

Hockey coach turns business leader



As head coach of the Florida State University Seminoles hockey team in 2008, **Gordon Pullar, Sr.** made history by

leading the team to its first Thrasher Cup victory. After earning a master's degree in rural development at UAF in 2010, Pullar now scores goals in business. The 2015 Top 40 Under 40 honoree is business operations manager at Koniag, Inc. He aspires to one day lead an Alaska Native organization.

"My rural development master's degree coursework provided me a critical understanding of Alaska Native history, particularly the passage of the Alaska Native Settlement Claims Act in 1971. Understanding the history and intent of ANSCA has allowed me to better achieve business goals for my Alaska Native corporations," says Pullar. In addition to being an employee of Koniag, Inc., he is a board member of Leisnoi, Inc. "The Rural Development program made it possible for me to develop professional relationships and meet distinguished Alaska Native leaders from across the state."

Pullar is active in his community as a Woody Island Tribal Council member and a board member of the Alutiiq Heritage Foundation (Alutiiq Museum). He also serves on the board of the Alaska Native Professional Association.

A place for students to achieve their vision

Alaska Native students arrive at UAF full of hope. Many are the first in their family to go to college. They honor their families by doing well in school. They plan to graduate and make Alaska a better place.

While students want to succeed, they face challenges. If current trends continue, the majority will not graduate. Twenty percent of Alaska Native students graduate from UAF within six years, compared to 40 percent of all students.

This is not only an Alaska problem. In 2007, the Institute for Higher Education Policy compared the ethnicities of individuals with at least a bachelor's degree. The Native American subset, which includes Alaska Natives, had the lowest percentage of degrees. Native Americans also were least likely to attend graduate school.



A place where students receive help

The Alaska Native students who graduate from UAF reap the rewards for the rest of their lives. And so do their communities. College graduates earn more, contribute to their local economies and live healthier lives. Alaska's prosperity will increase when more Alaska Natives graduate from UAF.

What will help students succeed? A place of belonging — where they receive one-on-one support, make friends and find a home away from home.

Research validates this idea. In 2001, George Fox University Professor Terry Huffman published a study on how to support Native American college students. He found those who stay in touch with their cultural identity are more likely to stay in school than those who lose their connection to their heritage.

At the University of California Los Angeles, a research team led by psychologist Howard Adelman investigated how to improve Native American college graduation rates. They say students need stable mentoring relationships and programmatic support.

“Because there is a high rate of dropout during the first year, it is essential to provide social supports as early in the transition period as is feasible and to plan for extended transition interventions as soon as the need is identified,” Professor Adelman and his colleagues wrote in their 2013 published report.

The Indigenous studies center at UAF will bring together the many existing support services for Alaska Native students. In this central gathering place, they will receive what they need to thrive, graduate and go on to serve their communities.

Homegrown teachers

Alaska needs more homegrown teachers. Alaska schools currently import, on average, 64 percent of new teachers each year from out of state. This contributes to teacher retention rates around 30 percent in remote Alaska Native communities. The University of Alaska works to increase the retention rate by growing our own teachers from within local communities.



Indigenous knowledge matters

Growing up, **Barb Amarok** dreamed of becoming a teacher like her father and aunt. She wanted to make a difference in the lives of Alaska's children. While earning her doctorate in Indigenous education, her premise that formal schooling should authentically represent Alaska Native cultures and history was reinforced. This education has shaped her work as president of the Nome School Board, a member of the First Alaskans Institute Visionary Council and the Norton Sound Education Workgroup, and a veteran educator.

"Indigenous knowledge is of value to all and the expertise of educators must be applied within the context of the local communities," says **Amarok**. "When the identities of the students are represented, they become prepared for self-determination and leadership."

A place for graduate students and scholars

The Indigenous studies center will house UAF's exceptional programs offering master's degrees in rural development and cross-cultural studies, and a doctorate in Indigenous studies. Here, students and faculty will collaborate and create knowledge together.

The growth and success of these graduate programs is critical to Alaska's future. Students are prepared for leadership in public- and private-sector organizations. These include universities, school districts, social service agencies, Native corporations, tribal governments, and state and federal agencies in Alaska and beyond.

The graduate students become skilled researchers. They learn to find solutions for the unique challenges of the circumpolar North, with a particular emphasis on Alaska. Improvements to every aspect of community life become possible with their training. Their studies include social, political, educational, economic and cultural issues.

Students learn from scholars from around the world who travel to UAF for seminars, conferences, exchanges and comparative research programs organized by the Indigenous studies faculty and staff. Our leadership in issues of concern to Alaska, the circumpolar North, and indigenous peoples throughout the world draws scholars to UAF. The center and interpretive park will showcase UAF's commitment to this area of strength.

Faculty contribute and tap into new knowledge in fields such as ecological studies, natural resources management, health care, education, language revitalization, community development, social services, justice and Native studies.

In this place of beauty, students and faculty will create the vision and knowledge to make this state a better place for future generations.





Benefits of a stand-alone center

- Provides place for students to bond
- Links students with community leaders
- Gives students an inspiring place to learn and study
- Instills pride in Native heritage

Representing her culture on a national stage

Marjorie Tahbone, a member of the Inupiaq tribe, graduated with a bachelor's degree in Alaska Native studies in winter 2012. Since then, she has been active in her hometown of Nome, working as a cultural materials developer, Native games coach, radio DJ and traditional tattoo artist.



Tahbone's accomplishments also include being crowned Miss World Eskimo Indian Olympics in 2011 and Miss Indian World in 2012. She says her education plays a big role in her success.

"The Alaskan Native Studies program strengthened my identity and encouraged me to learn more about where I come from," says Tahbone, who minored in Inupiaq language. "The classes allowed me to build a stronger foundation for learning, understanding, and speaking our language. I would not be where I am today if it was not for the dedicated service I received from the instructors and staff from the Alaska Native Studies department."

A place of pride and learning

Alaska Natives have made the state what it is today. From instilling a love of the land and its resources to creating thousands of jobs, Alaska's first peoples have worked together for future generations.

The Indigenous studies center and interpretive park will celebrate the contributions of Alaska Natives. Students will feel pride in their heritage while receiving the support they need.



The students will learn here, too. The center will be home to classes offered by the Department of Alaska Native Studies and Rural Development and the Tribal Management, Indigenous Studies Ph.D. and Native arts programs. The UAF oral history collection will move here, and artists will exhibit their work. Students will learn in a vibrant place conducive to optimal thinking.

The interpretive park will provide a gathering place. Students will feel at home, connect and receive inspiration

Models of excellence in student support

Several universities have constructed stand-alone Native American centers to support their students. The University of Montana's Native American center opened in 2010. Two years later, leaders saw the difference the center was making. A faculty committee found in conversations with students:

"The Payne Family Native American Center was named numerous times as both a symbolic and a real strength. Symbolically the building is a statement of the strong commitment of UM to Indian country in Montana, and to the integration of Native students, knowledges, and community into the fabric of the institution."

At the University of North Dakota, students gather at the American Indian Center to expand their circles of friends and mentors and learn through experience. This "instills and affirms cultural pride," the university says.

A place to honor Alaska's Native leaders and culture

Both history and nature are great teachers. The Indigenous studies center and interpretive park at Troth Yedtha' pay tribute to both aspects of our heritage.

The university commissioned the respected architectural firm Jones and Jones to design the center and park. Plans for the center include 30,000 to 33,000 square feet of space for study, research and celebration. Design elements will celebrate Alaska Native peoples' spiritual ties to the animal, plant and physical worlds.

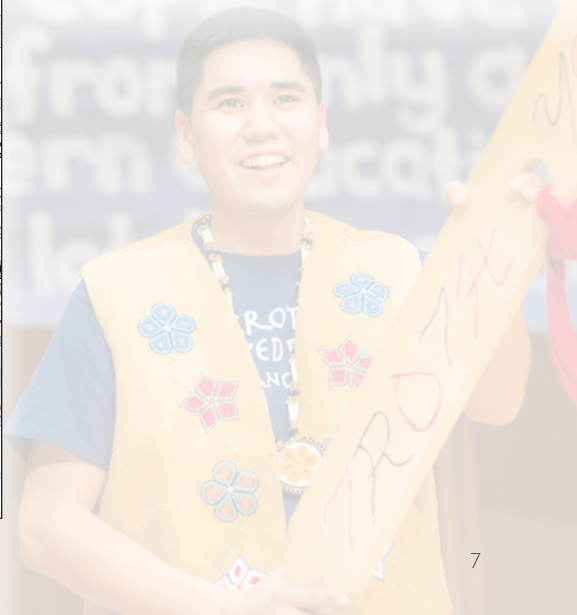
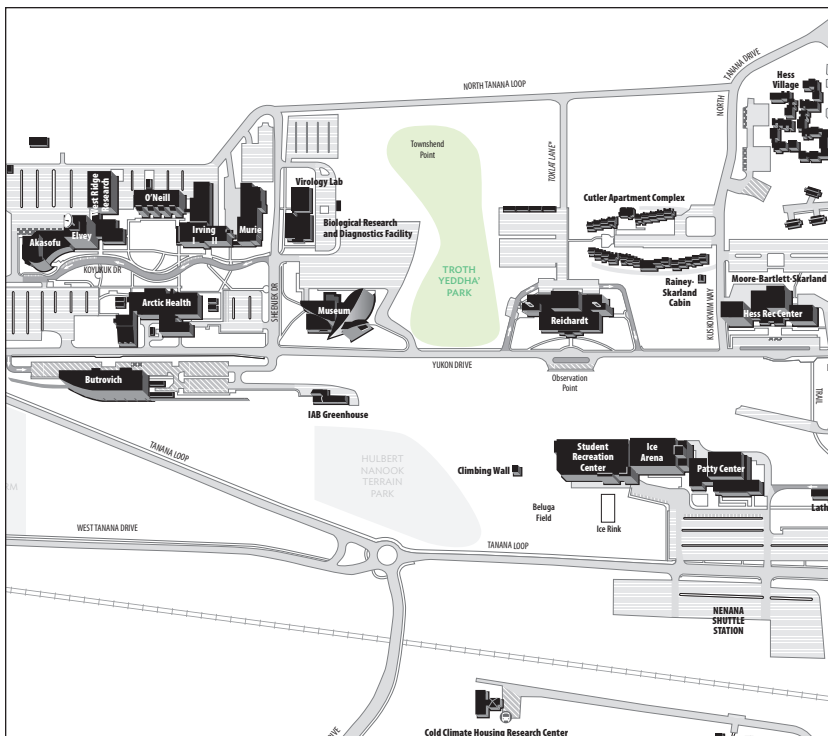
On summer days, the park will echo with the sounds of dancing, drumming and singing. Other times, it will provide a tranquil place for students to study, think and spend time together. In every season, the park will remind us of the rich natural and cultural diversity of Alaska.

The centerpiece of the park will be the Tanana Chiefs Honoring Circle. A stone wall inscribed with the names of all 229 Alaska Native tribes will surround the circle. Life-sized sculptures of honored chiefs and leaders Peter John, David Salmon, John Sackett and Andrew Isaac will mark the four cardinal directions. A circular stone bench will honor women leaders Katie John, Poldine Carlo, Katherine Peter, Catherine Attla, Mary Jane Fate and Flora Jane Harper.

Defending tribal rights

Two minutes — that's all the time Rhonda Pitka had to share what traditional hunting and fishing rights mean to Alaska Native people and communities with President Barack Obama. The first chief of Beaver Village Council was part of a roundtable discussion with President Obama during his visit to Alaska. She said in her opinion, mismanagement of hunting and fishing resources and lack of tribal rights are the top issues facing Alaska Natives.

"They were two of the most important minutes of my life," says Pitka, who also serves as chairwoman of the Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments. "I owe this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to meet the president to the Tribal Management program, which has opened doors and given me the chance to network with people that I wouldn't have had as the chief of a small village."



From graduation to public service



Barbara Blake dreamed of a better life for her son and all Indigenous people. As a student at UAF, she quickly found

classes supporting her passion for advocacy. Blake received three degrees: an associate in tribal management and bachelor's and master's in rural development.

Today, she uses her knowledge to shape public policy. She has served on the staff of the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture's office in Washington D.C., as a staff member to the Alaska State Legislature and currently in the lieutenant governor's office.

"I recommend the Rural Development and Tribal Management programs to anyone who wants the practical skills and knowledge needed to make a difference," Blake says. "These programs are invaluable when it comes to the future of Alaska and our rural communities."

Training to lead, manage and govern

Alaska's tribal governments are growing in the health care, justice, wildlife management and general administrative areas. UAF's Tribal Management program is responding to this need by expanding course offerings and adding faculty.

Alaska animals also will be recognized in the artwork in this circle. The park also will include several grass-covered circles:

- A large gathering circle
- A veterans' circle
- A women's circle

Alaska Natives will celebrate and demonstrate customary skills in these circles. A picnic area, fire pit and amphitheater will provide more places for gathering and teaching.

Large plantings of traditional grasses, berries and plants will add to the natural beauty of the park. Forested areas will buffer the park from streets and parking.

The park will be a place of learning and pride for the entire community, from children studying Alaska history to elders honoring their heritage. It will be a destination for visitors to Fairbanks and the campus community alike.





"I truly believe that the Troth Yeddha' project will help to celebrate Alaska's First Peoples.

It will honor all cultures while positioning UAF as a global leader in cultural and arctic research. Universities are an ultimate expression of who we are. This project will further cement the importance of linking cultural knowledge with higher education. Every single one of us needs to feel we have sense of place, and Troth Yeddha' will create that unique space at the University of Alaska Fairbanks."

—Lieutenant Governor Byron Mallott

founding Troth Yeddha' planning committee member
and avid supporter of indigenous knowledge



The time is now

Your support for the Indigenous studies center and interpretive park is a gift toward the future of Alaska. The center and park will provide the resources for students and scholars to soar. Please help buoy this project with a generous gift.

For more information or to discuss a gift please contact:

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