



AFP Fall Newsletter

Hello from the newest cohort of Alaska Fellows! It has been a busy, hectic, and rewarding two months as we have all settled into our new homes in Juneau, Anchorage, and Sitka. Some of us are returning home to Alaska from far away, while others have left our homes throughout the country and moved to Alaska for the beautiful landscapes and outdoor adventures.

The Alaska Fellows Program (AFP) is a seven- to nine- month residential fellowship that pairs young professionals with non-profit or public sector organizations in each of its three sites. Fellows live communally and work full-time for the duration of the program year for their host organization and work closely with professional mentors.

The program begins with a retreat for each cohort, and an opening convening across all three locations to foster community and connections across the sites. We have already made many memories together, and we are all excited for the adventures to come!



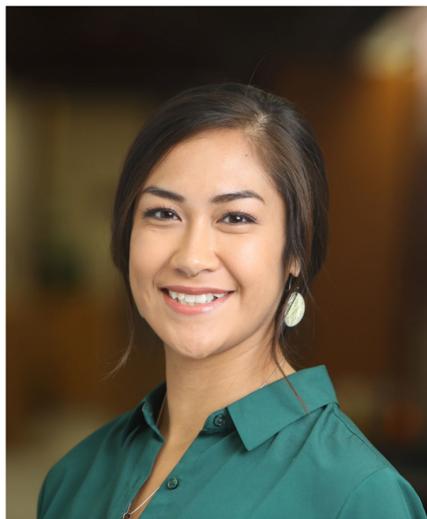
Meet the Fellows

Juneau

With a name inextricably linked to “The Happiest Place on Earth,” Disney Williams’ drive to make the world a better place is not just a self-fulfilling prophecy, but emanates from her rich Tsimshian heritage of gift-giving, by way of the potlatch. Disney is the daughter of Evelyn Dickerson and Patrick Williams, both of the Raven (Ganhada) Clan of Metlakatla, AK. Her maternal grandparents are Alma and Frank Hayward. Her paternal grandparents are June and Romey Williams.

After recognizing the effects of historical trauma on her own people, Disney felt a strong urge to address the systems and behaviors that contribute to violence and unhealthy relationships. In 2012, she received her bachelors in Feminist Studies with a Focus on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault from Stanford University. Today, her passion lies heavily in working with youth and teens to create safer, healthier, and happier school climates and communities.

Disney Williams- Rural Youth Engagement Fellow, Sealaska Heritage Institute



Sarah Lubiner- Internal Capacity Fellow, AWARE



Sarah Lubiner came to Alaska from Washington, D.C. where she was working at a progressive non-profit supporting the legal advocacy team. Seeking more trees and less political cognitive dissonance, Sarah moved to Juneau to work as the Internal Capacity Coordinator at AWARE, a non-profit that provides support to people who have experienced domestic violence or sexual assault. So far, Juneau's early sunset has meant more time for baking bread, rediscovering a love for playing the violin, and learning how to trail run (hint: walking quickly up a trail counts). Sarah is heading to law school in the fall of 2020 and is looking forward to building a career in gender-based violence advocacy. When Sarah plays Monopoly, she always chooses the thimble as her piece.

Austin Burdette - Public Education Fellow, Alaska Council of School Administrators



Austin is one of a handful of Juneau fellows hailing from the great state of Maryland. After spending two years in rural Cambodia, he knew Alaska would fulfill his need for mountains and cold weather. Currently, Austin works with the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA) doing policy research in preparation for the upcoming legislative session. In Juneau, he spends most of his time weighing food, practicing the piano, and exploring the nearby mountains. Austin's highest life aspirations include hosting the Juneau Fellows Competition Cup come April.

Mandy Nguyen is a creative/video producer who has spent the past five years investigating the relationship between history, storytelling, and systems change—and currently works as the Equity and Inclusion fellow at AWARE. As a recent graduate of Minerva School at KGI, she has been globetrotting with international communities in pursuit of this investigation, leading her from nimble documentary production in India, campaigns for accessible education in Myanmar, to start-up product development in Japan. Catch her in her free time doing hip hop dance, writing poetry, or exploring the great outdoors.

Mandy Nguyen- Equity and Inclusion Fellow, AWARE



David Song is an educator and student advocate from Baltimore, MD. He most recently worked for CitySprouts, a nonprofit that seeks to integrate community gardens into STEM education, in partnership with the Boston and Cambridge Public School systems. He also served as an AmeriCorps member in Boston's English High School (America's oldest public school), where he was a science educator. These experiences sparked his interest in education policy, especially as it relates to English language learners and other marginalized student populations. David received a BA in Biology from Wake Forest University in 2015, and received an MPA from Brown University in 2019, where he conducted research for the Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

David Song- Communications and Engagement Fellow, Association of Alaska School Boards



Izzy Haywood- Community Economic Development Fellow, Spruce Root & The Sustainable Southeast Partnership

Izzy is working at Spruce Root and the Sustainable Southeast Partnership as the Community Economic Development Fellow. She grew up along the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland fishing, sailing, and crabbing and then went on to study microbiology and French at Barnard College in New York City. During her time in school, she escaped the big city to study biodiversity and natural resource management in Madagascar. Izzy is thrilled to finally be in a place where her many hobbies can co-exist and thrive. You can find her knitting small hedgehogs, developing the perfect sourdough bagel recipe, scouting out surfing spots, and foraging for mushrooms along the Perseverance trail.

Sitka

In 2019, Carolyn graduated from Stanford University with a master's degree in environmental communication and a bachelor's degree in environmental science. She loves working with the Sitka Conservation Society and the Forest Service as the Tongass Communications Fellow to publicize the hard work that goes into managing the Tongass — and how awesome it is! Raised in a tiny town in the Colorado Rockies, Carolyn has since lived all over the American West. Now, she "kind of" hails from Portland, Oregon, but feels at home generally in kitchens, under the stars, and when her feet are dirty. She loves to make sourdough bread, run, write poetry, and watch sunsets. One of her favorite Alaskan experiences so far has been walking on semi-frozen muskeg: squish *and* crunch!

Carolyn Rice - Tongass Communications Fellow, Sitka Conservation Society & U.S. Forest Service



Xannie Borseth hails from Seattle, Washington and is currently living and working in Sitka as a legal fellow with the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault and a Tribal Elder Community Coordinator with the Sitka Tribe of Alaska. She has enjoyed wearing many different hats so far— running coach for elementary school boys, novice kombucha brewer with varied success, sponge for all things family law and elder care-related, and recent running-in-the-rain convert, among others. Most of all, she feels lucky to continue learning about this place — Lingít Aaní, the Land of the Tlingít — and the people who call it home. Xannie gained a new appreciation for rain while studying sociology and political studies at Pitzer College in perpetually drought-ridden Claremont, California. This past year, she worked as a paralegal on class action cases back in Seattle.

Xannie Borseth - Tribal and Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Fellow, Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault & Sitka Tribe of Alaska



Missy Mongiovi - Youth Outreach Fellow, Sitka Counseling



Prior to September 2nd, 2019, all that Missy knew about Sitka was from the movie The Proposal, which actually has nothing to do with Sitka. Today, she enjoys exploring the beauty of the small town from both mountain and sea and is constantly amazed by its depth of culture, warmth, and wholesomeness. She is currently working at Sitka Counseling where she focuses on drug and alcohol prevention with youth. After graduating from Stanford in 2019 with degrees in political science and psychology, Missy was excited to finally venture farther than the state of California and move out of her hometown of Santee. She's looking forward to more hikes, puzzles, and living room dance parties in the months to come.

Frank Eccher - Programs and Operations Fellow, Outer Coast



Frank Eccher is so excited to join the Sitka Fellows this year as the Programs and Operations Fellow for Outer Coast, a nascent two-year liberal arts college in development on the historic Sheldon Jackson campus in Sitka. He's primarily involved in the development of Outer Coast's two upcoming programs: the Summer Seminar 2020 and the Outer Coast Year. He hails from Montrose, Colorado, where he grew up fly fishing with his parents and younger sister. He earned his BA in Environmental Studies at Yale, alongside a multidisciplinary program in Education Studies.

Maike Prewett is the Travel Writing and Community Engagement Fellow for the Greater Sitka Chamber of Commerce and Visit Sitka, where she is writing about everything from haunted Sitka to the local Russian dance troupe. Maike's Sitka experience has been filled with many firsts, such as her first time fishing and her first time volunteering in (believe it or not, Mom) a gym. She is a graduate of New York University Shanghai's Interactive Media Arts and Global China Studies programs, where she explored projects in emerging media; in her free time, you can still find her procrastinating on art projects.

Maike Prewett - Travel Writing and Community Engagement Fellow, Greater Sitka Chamber of Commerce



Grace Greenwald, from Denver, CO, just graduated from Stanford, where she studied Human Biology and Poetry. She is so excited to be in Sitka working for Outer Coast as their Development and Administration Fellow. She cares strongly about the work Outer Coast is doing: creating a financially accessible and purposeful college that gives students the power (and daunting responsibility) of creating meaningful education on their own terms. She's grateful for her housemates, and a home that's filled with ever-present Queen, impossibly fresh bread, and the spirit of the semi-housecat, Gus.

Grace Greenwald - Development and Administration Fellow, Outer Coast



Joelle Jura - College and Career Guide Fellow, Mt. Edgecumbe High School



Joelle hails from Massachusetts. She works as the College and Career Guide at Mt. Edgecumbe High School. In Sitka, she has been acquainted with a plethora of four-legged creatures as well as some two-legged creatures and one three-legged creature.

Johnny Elliott - Recruitment and Program Design Fellow, Outer Coast & AFP



Johnny Elliott was born and raised in Juneau, Alaska, just a 30-minute flight from his new home in Sitka. An avid runner with an never-satiated love for Ultimate Frisbee, Johnny can be frequently found running on the Cross Trail or along Kaasda Héen (Indian River Trail). For work, Johnny splits his time between recruiting for Outer Coast programs and recruiting for the Alaska Fellows Program. One day, Johnny hopes to be as cool as fellow fellow Izzy Haywood, but until then he's content taking life one day at a time and enjoying the world's beauty whenever possible.

Anchorage

China Kantner- Climate Action Plan Fellow, Mayor's Office

China works as the Climate Action Plan Fellow in the Mayor's office. In June, she graduated from Stanford University with a major in earth systems, and minors in urban studies and German studies. China is from Kotzebue—up north about 550 miles from Anchorage, so it's nice to be closer to home. She loves cities and urban planning is her passion, but she also loves to hike, pick cranberries, and bake pies. China is having a great time exploring Anchorage and the area with the cohort!



Louise Bednarik- Economic Development Fellow, ACLT & CILC

Louise Bednarik is the Economic Development Fellow at Anchorage Community Land Trust and Cook Inlet Lending Center. She grew up in Port Townsend, WA and is very happy to be living near mountains and water again after going to school on the East Coast. Louise is really grateful to be starting her post-grad life working with two great organizations, hiking in the mountains on the weekends, learning to drive in the snow, and doing it all along with seven other incredible people!



Griffin Plush- Community Development Fellow, Foraker Group

With the 2020 Census fast approaching, Griffin came onboard at the Foraker Group to help implement the Alaska Counts initiative as the Community Development Fellow. His role is largely focused on outreach and education, helping community leaders around the state rally their marginalized neighbors who are at risk of going uncounated. Griffin is driven to do this work because for every Alaskan who is counted in the census, there is a measurable and real benefit over the next ten years for our communities. Griffin received a BA in Social Science from the University of Alaska Southeast - Juneau in 2019, with particular study in colonization and environmental politics in Alaska.



Rylin is originally from upstate New York and moved to Alaska after graduating from the University of Richmond with a degree in international development and Russian studies. She loves spending time outdoors, practicing yoga and painting. Her current fellowship is with the Anchorage museum where she works with the SEED Lab, a space dedicated to coming up with creative solutions to climate change. Rylin loves research, is passionate about environmental justice and is always trying to learn something new. While in Alaska, she hopes to start mountaineering and figure skating.

Rylin McGee- Urban North Fellow, Anchorage Museum



Alice works at Solid Waste Services at the Municipality of Anchorage where she enjoys working on recycling and composting efforts in Anchorage, managing social media, and helping with the implementation of the Anchorage Climate Action Plan. At long last, she has found a log in Anchorage to continue her passion for log rolling! She has also become involved with Junior Nordic ski coaching this winter. She hopes to continue to explore the spaces around Alaska whether that be yurt visits, glorious hikes, or traveling throughout the state. Alice graduated from Middlebury College where she studied Environmental Policy and German.

Alice Butler- Sustainability Fellow, Municipality of Anchorage



Sarah works with the Alaska Humanities Forum, where she develops curriculum and facilitates community events with the goal of fostering connections between individuals around the state. She moved up to Anchorage from Portland, Oregon, where she attended Reed College and studied economics. She is passionate about using collaborative art and conversation to explore new approaches to the social and economic issues we face today. She spends most mornings basking in the light of her happy lamp and looking at the Chugach range in admiration. She spends most evenings trying to learn how to play the banjo and putting together jigsaw puzzles with her housemates.

Sarah Richmond- Public Programming Fellow, Alaska Humanities Forum



Emily Cornett - Community Development Fellow, CIHA

Emily works as the Community Development Fellow at Cook Inlet Housing Authority (CIHA) in Anchorage. She has been developing a programming and creative marketing plan for CIHA's community and cultural hub, the Church of Love, as well as getting involved in CIHA's resident engagement, economic development, and homelessness initiatives. Emily grew up in Baltimore, MD and graduated from Yale University this May with a bachelor's degree in American Studies and Psychology. Anchorage has been a blast so far—she's enjoyed exploring the trails, cooking with the other fellows, and playing cello with the symphony here!



Julie Gardella- Entrepreneurship and Research Fellow, CED

Julie is excited to have joined this AFP cohort as the Entrepreneurship and Research Fellow with the Center for Economic Development at the University of Alaska Anchorage. She works on supporting early stage startups, researching economic development strategies, and strengthening the network of entrepreneurs in Alaska. Julie grew up in Massachusetts and went to college at NYU, where she majored in Environmental Studies. So far, her favorite things about Alaska have been the beautiful hikes, the welcoming community, and the opportunity to travel throughout the state, and she is excited for the many adventures to come.



Opening Convening

Anchorage, Juneau, and Sitka fellows gathered for several days in late September during AFP's opening convening. We spent two nights in scenic Hope, a small town on the Kenai Peninsula, where we explored the local library, went on beautiful hikes, cooked meals, and participated in team-building activities. Our time together set the foundation for inter-cohort connections and a sense of community across all three fellowship sites. From Hope, we all drove back to Anchorage for further program orientation and bonding. Highlights included professional development workshops with Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, the founder of AFP and member of the State House of Representatives, and Megan Zlatos of the Alaska Humanities Forum. We also enjoyed a book club with Vic Fischer, the last living delegate to the Alaska Constitutional Convention, and an introduction to Alaskan politics through political satire films with Pat Race. While we were sad to say our goodbyes after the retreat, we're excited to for all three sites to reunite again in April for Folk Fest in Juneau!

Emily Cornett



Excursion Down to Seward



Life in Juneau

Our Road Trips: One Very Long (852 miles), One Very Short (almost 40 miles!)

After our opening convening, we ventured from Anchorage to Juneau to settle into our new home. On the way, we stopped at a musk ox farm in Palmer, dined at Fast Eddie's in Tok, and had a windy and wonderful ferry ride from Haines to Juneau. When Mandy joined us a month later, we wanted to recreate this road trip experience for her. So, we all piled into a borrowed car and drove "the road" from Thane to past Auke Bay, stopping at the Mendenhall Glacier to splash around in Nugget Falls and at Donna's Diner for a bite to eat.



Comfort Food Dinner Series



For our weekly dinners, we have been showcasing some of our favorite comfort foods. Mandy made Thit Koh (eaten too quickly to be photographed!), a Vietnamese dish with pork belly and eggs. David made Dakdori Tang, a Korean spicy chicken stew, and Izzy made Potage, a French potato leek soup.

The Sustainable Southeast Partnership's Retreat in Kake

During the first week of November, Izzy boarded a 6-seater plane to Kake along for the Sustainable Southeast Partnership's annual fall retreat. These retreats allow organizations and community members throughout Southeast Alaska to unite and discuss how to collaborate and create more resilient communities. In Kake she was delighted to meet up with former fellow Joe Weyhmiller and AFP founder JKT, who were there on behalf of Outer Coast.

During the retreat, Izzy visited local businesses, like Sagebrush Dry, which makes incredibly durable dry bags, and took tours of projects like the Keex' Kwaan Community Forest Partnership, where teenagers are trained to track salmon streams, survey the forest, and develop environmental remediation projects. After full days of learning journeys, workshops and presentations, she played impromptu volleyball games, went looking for mushrooms in a muddy pickup truck, and ate deer, moose stew, and herring eggs with Kake community members.



Adventures in Anchorage

Cabin Trips



Yukla Yurt at the Eagle River Nature Center



Manitoba Hut on the Kenai Peninsula

Axe Throwing Champions



Costume Contra Dance



Morning Visitors at Virginia Court



Road Trip for AFN

Julie Gardella

In October, Anchorage fellows embarked on the ~360 mile road trip to Fairbanks to attend the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) Annual Convention. On the way we passed Denali, the highest peak in North America, just in time for sunset. We continued on to Fairbanks, arriving at Alice's friend Tricia's house, where we crashed for a few hours before heading to the convention.

We made it in time for the panel on public education; panelists discussed preserving indigenous languages and the importance of fostering (and funding) schools that support Native cultures. We also heard the panels on public health, public welfare, rural infrastructure, climate change, and criminal justice reforms. Later that evening, we watched Alaska Native dance groups perform traditional dances. On the second day, we caught a debate around the precise language for legislation to allow Alaska Native languages to fulfill the public education requirement of "foreign" language study.

Next, we headed out and met up with Tricia, who took us on a tour of the permafrost research tunnel where she works. She taught us about the challenges of building on permafrost, and the damage climate change is causing. It was hard to ignore the sudden dips in the road where the frozen ground underneath had melted! The next morning, we headed out to Chena Hotsprings, where we relaxed in warm water before starting the journey back to Anchorage.



Sitka Happenings

Sitka Fellows Stardust Debut!

Maike Prewett

Since time immemorial (at least, as far as any of us were concerned), the Sitka Fellows have participated in the Stardust Ball lip sync competition. The Stardust Ball is much more than just a fundraiser for Raven Radio, Sitka's community radio station. It is a spirited, passionate, cutthroat night of lip sync, costume contests, and live music, where people from the community show up in everything from feathers and sequins to elaborate foam mushroom suits.

We knew that we had big shoes to fill.

After countless house meetings, we settled on a fish-vs.-fisherman-turned-love-story featuring "I Will Survive," by Gloria Gaynor. We would transform from a house of humble fellows into the unforgettable "Glorious Seiners".

The week before our performance we amassed a healthy supply of salmon-colored satin, glitter hairspray, and bands of silver sequins: the makings of our salmon suits. The other fellows — the fishermen — wore Xtratufs and borrowed Grundens. With the Outer Coast office as our stage and former fellow Cecilia Dumouchel as our wise choreographer, we crafted and rehearsed our routine.

We had our highs and lows. High: when we successfully executed a full forty seconds of our routine; low: the moment our stage manager asked us, "Hey, you know this is a lip sync, right?" We finally stepped on stage, poised above a sea of costumed coworkers, neighbors, and friends.

But after all that, we blacked out most of it. Or, at least, I did. Because it turns out nothing is quite as terrifying as performing a lip sync and dance number in front of your mailman dressed as Elton Jon Snow. But looking back on the recordings from that night, I feel a sharp stab of pride. We lip synced, we danced the "meerkat", we mastered our can-can. We might not have won, and yes, whether the contest was "rigged" was and still is a point of contention, but hey. We contributed to a long and glorious Stardust legacy.



700 Etolin: At a Glance

Our home at 700 Etolin Street is rarely quiet. Our first two months in Sitka have included:

ONE community potluck

FIFTY-SIX one-on-one house dates

NINE family dinners

ONE drama-laden Bachelorette competition

HUNDREDS of plays of Queen's "Don't Stop Me Now"

EIGHT miniature themed house-parties

TWO anthropomorphized fermenting agents

ONE ancient, disgruntled cat named Gus

TWO minor Gus-related injuries



Hikes Across Sites



Meals Across Sites



Shoes Across Sites

