

FOLLOWING THE FELLOWS

An update from the Last Frontier

Hello from far up North!

MAY 2018

Though the sun barely sets in Alaska now, the sunset is coming for our program. This is our closing newsletter! We have lots of news to share: the new Alaska Fellows Program, our final Folk Fest adventure, some highlights from the past months, and our plans going forward.

We'd also love to say what we said last time: thank you! To this big wonderful community that has made this opportunity possible, we appreciate it dearly. These past nine months wouldn't have been possible without your support, dedication, floors shared, emails sent, phone calls made, and love. We can't say it enough: thank you, thank you, thank you.



THE ALASKA FELLOWS

Beginning with the 2018 - 19 fellowship term, the Sitka Winter Fellows program and Anchorage Urban Fellows program will be joined by a Juneau program under a new name: the Alaska Fellows Program.

The Alaska Fellows Program three-site structure facilitates opening and end-of-year retreats individualized to each site and respective cohort of fellows (e.g., fellows in Sitka escape to [Samsing Cove Cabin](#) as a group for the start of their program and hike [Mount Edgecumbe volcano](#) at the end of the program year; fellows in Anchorage abscond to [Manitoba Hut](#)).

To bring together the fellows from the three sites, the Alaska Fellows Program will host an "opening convening" in October in the rural south-central town of Hope. Sitka and Juneau fellows will ferry to Haines and road trip north, and Anchorage fellows will meet their Southeastern compatriots in Hope. Relationships forged during the opening reunion will carry forward through the duration of the program year. In addition to fellowship and frivolity, the opening reunion will include professional development seminars. And at the other end of the program year, in April, is the "closing reunion," which takes place in Juneau during Alaska Folk Fest.

Fellows are backed by a team of the well-connected and generally wonderful members of the Anchorage, Juneau, and Sitka communities who help make introductions, integrate the class of Fellows into the community (e.g., [Arctic Entries](#), [Stardust Ball](#), [Alaska Folk Fest](#)), and share high-octane Alaska experiences in outdoor, civic, and community life.

Read more about the future of the program at our new website, [here](#)!

Quick stats

of locations for next year: 3 (Anchorage, Juneau, and Sitka)

of concerts seen and danced to at folk fest: 15? 20?

of sleeping bags we fit in Northern Lights United Church: 18

Folk Fest

The Anchorage Urban Fellows (AUF) and the Sitka Winter Fellows (SWF) finally all met in Juneau last month. AUF crammed into a mini-van and road-tripped to Haines to catch the ferry to Juneau, seeing glaciers, the Yukon, arctic foxes, bunnies, and a few Dall's sheep along the way. SWF got up bright and early to take the plane to Juneau (but got to take the ferry back).

Our time in Juneau was jam-packed with events and getting to know each other, and many, many breakfasts and coffees at The Rookery and evening concerts (including a performance from Sitka Fellow Julia!). We also connected with alumni and friends of the program over a potluck, drinks at Amalga (the location of the best gin+tonic you might ever have), a party at JKT's host house in Juneau, many an evening spent dancing to folk music, and the frequent run-ins that occur in a town the size of Juneau. We hiked Mendenhall Glacier together, exploring ice caves and taking the time to share our experiences and become friends. *Blonde Indian* book club readers met with Ernestine Hayes, an incredibly candid, brilliant, and wonderful author. The same day we met Governor Walker, who offered us his advice and compliments to the program!



Anchorage and Sitka Fellows at Mendenhall Glacier.



Fellows meeting with Governor Bill Walker in Juneau.



Book club with Blonde Indian author Ernestine Hayes.



Fellow bonding at the beginning of our Juneau retreat.



SITKA UPDATE

Quick stats

Rock-paper-scissors tournament winners: 1

Number of fellows who summited Mt. Edgecumbe: 6

Number of hours of visible light today: 17 hours and 10 minutes (and it's not even summer!)

What's next

Turns out it's hard to leave Sitka! Emily and Siraj are excited to stick around for the summer to work as sea kayak guides. Nat will be staying on in Rep. JKT's office to continue work on statewide recreation development projects. Caitlin will continue working at the Sitka Conservation Society as the Wilderness Stewardship Project Coordinator—ask her how she feels about wolves! Erin will continue on with Outer Coast as a Program Coordinator and a Morning Edition host with Raven Radio. This summer, you can find Jackie slinging fish in the Ashmo's food truck. Julia will also be serving fish at Beak Restaurant through May, and Victor will be dishing up fish tacos at Agave Restaurant. Nate will be returning to the Seattle area and working as a mountain guide in the Cascades.



ANCHORAGE UPDATE

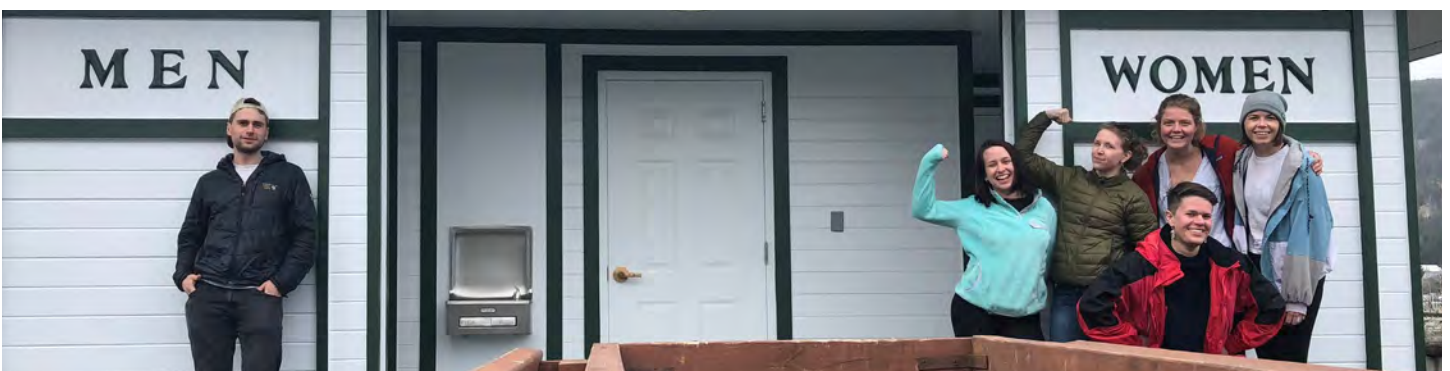


Quick stats

of glacier caves we've been inside: 2
Coolest Conference Location: Bodø, Norway
Birthday breakfasts to date: 4

What's next

All six Anchorage Fellows have been bitten by the Alaska bug—not the mosquitos just yet, but the deep passion and love for this amazing place. We're thrilled to all be sticking around and excited about what's to come! Allie will work coordinating and managing campaigns for candidates such as JKT, Liz Snyder, and other progressive candidates to come. Ira will stay on with the Governor's Office, and Katie and Kelsey will also both stay on at their host organizations as the Research and Policy Analyst at Cook Inlet Housing Authority and Digital Communications Manager for the Stand for Salmon Campaign, respectively. Jenny-Marie will be the lone AUF-er to leave Anchorage, spending a few months in Haines at the Chilkat Valley News (but hopefully returning after, unless the Southeast bug bites her). Veri will stay on at the Municipality for a few more months so she can complete her fellowship term, but she'll be in and out of Alaska attending the [CoLang Conference](#) in Florida.



Reflecting on the fellowship



ALLIE BANWELL, Anchorage Urban Fellow

As a fellow with Alaska Media, I wrote stories about people and happenings across rural Alaska, learning what was important to community members and the unique hardships of living so remotely. This work has been eye-opening, and I particularly valued traveling to Noatak and Unalakleet and seeing villages up close. I've also had the privilege of having a mentor in Jason Evans. Jason has given me an introduction on everything from business marketing to Alaskan politics to ANCSA corporation practices. With Jason's guidance, I've written stories, helped to start a non-profit, consulted on business acquisitions, and advised politicians. I'm grateful to have spent this past year learning, and I'm excited about what's to come.

EMILY BRISTOL, Sitka Winter Fellow

My year in Sitka took me from 60 feet underwater to 4,000 foot mountain ridges, from eating sea cucumber on Easter Sunday to grilled cheese in a high school cafeteria, from culturing bacteria in a university biology lab to counting berries with elementary students. Thanks to all the strangers (now friends!) who invited me to potlucks, brought me aboard skiffs, and accompanied me on hikes— getting to know you was the highlight of my Sitka experience.

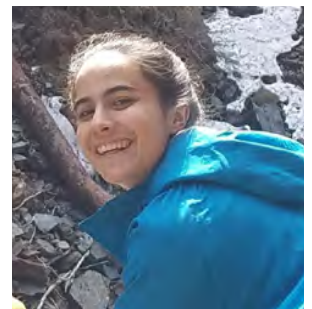


JULIA CARNES, Sitka Winter Fellow

This year, I've learned so much about Alaska's education policy, played hours and hours of games with good company and written 19 songs (and counting)! From technocontra to Belly Meat, from constant rain to the warm embrace of the sun on a 60 degree day, from late-night community radio shows to impossibly early sunrises, I love Sitka and hope to return to this lovely island and community one day.

JACKIE FERRO, Sitka Winter Fellow

This year, I've learned more than I could've imagined about the specific needs, deficits, and values of Alaskan public education, both at the secondary school level as a tutor at Mt. Edgecombe High School and at the higher education level through UAS. I've also had the opportunity to make and share community media, making educational media for UAS, assisting Ellen Frankenstein with her 14 Miles web series, and creating community radio with KCAW!



NAT HASLETT, Sitka Winter Fellow

I've worked with an incredible family of outdoor recreation leaders across the state. Best of all, Nate and I are still on speaking terms.



CAITLIN PURDOME, Sitka Winter Fellow

Through my position I have learned so much about the ways that people use, rely on, and are nourished by the forests and waters of Southeast Alaska. In my free time I have gotten to explore the same land, harvesting wild foods like clams, mushrooms, fiddleheads, and berries, practicing photography, and spending lazy Sunday afternoons napping on the beach.

KELSEY SCHOBBER, Anchorage Urban Fellow

My fellowship with SalmonState can be best described as an intensive in fish politics and the ocean economy. I have had the pleasure of working on a variety of projects, from helping draft a crash course in Alaska fisheries to managing digital communications for the Stand for Salmon ballot initiative. Highlights of my work include: interviewing Alaskans about what salmon mean to them and their communities, attending a Master's course about Northern economic development in Norway, spending time in off-the-road-system Alaska, and dancing with a modern dance company in town. I am grateful that even after 18 years in Alaska, I have spent the last 9 months delving even deeper into the place that I'm proud to call my home.



KATIE SCOVIC, Anchorage Urban Fellow

As a fellow at Cook Inlet Housing Authority, I've been fortunate to work on a wide variety of projects, most recently Path to Independence, a housing pilot that's taking a public-private approach to address homelessness in Anchorage. I'm excited to be staying on at CIHA, where I've been surrounded by thoughtful, driven coworkers and mentors. Outside of work, I've been fortunate to be surrounded by some of the most motivated, genuine, and genuinely fun people I've met in the other fellows. Between the work, the people, and the mountains, I accidentally fell in love with Alaska these past nine months, and I can't wait for my first summer here.

NATE SIEVERT, Sitka Winter Fellow

I'm a cheerleader for recreation infrastructure development in Alaska, a coach for the Sitka High track team, and a consumer of many pounds of Tillamook Sharp Cheddar. I hope that one day Nat and I will again be on speaking on terms.

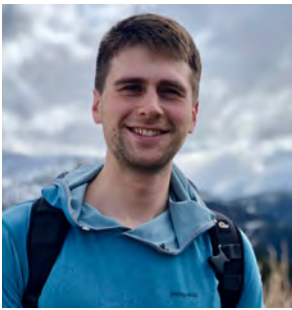


SIRAJ SINDHU, Sitka Winter Fellow

I work, yes—at a desk, at an after-school program for elementary students, with a youth leadership group, and with a team of attorneys—but the fellowship is so much more than work. I've built and deepened friendships and relationships, learned to sail, hiked more in nine months than I had hiked in 22 years, learned to bake bread, learned to kayak & canoe, and practiced being intentional about my day-to-day life.

ERIN SLOMSKI-PRITZ, Sitka Winter Fellow

There's something very special about living in community with friends; coming home after a long day of work and chatting over late dinners, going on spontaneous runs on the Cross Trail, singing rounds around evening fires. Returning to a communal living situation after a couple years of "being an adult" in a city has made me realize that we're very lucky to get this little window in our lives: to live with other people and to try to create something positive. I'm grateful to have experienced this again, even (/especially) as the the resident grandmother. I've benefited from all this youthful energy. :) And Sitka. Wow. It has a serious magic to it. Ira likes to tell people, if you visit, have an escape plan. I arrived unprepared, so I guess I'll be here for a while.



IRA SLOMSKI-PRITZ, Anchorage Urban Fellow

I spent the first few months of my Fellowship working directly with the Chief of Staff to the Governor—staffing him during meetings, keeping track of follow-up actions, taking on research or constituent outreach projects at his request—all of which amounted to an incredible crash course in Alaska state government. Since February, my role has both grown and become less defined. I work on the policy team, the communications team, and continue taking on projects for the Chief of Staff. I'm grateful for the access and exposure I have been given. I was recently hired on, and I'm excited to continue my work at least through November.

JENNY-MARIE STRYKER, Anchorage Urban Fellow

I feel incredibly lucky to have had this opportunity to pursue projects as I choose from the eighth floor of City Hall. My work has spanned the spectrum of economic development, from building private-public partnership with local non-profits empowering low-income residents, to organizing investment and entrepreneurship events. I have figured out opportunities for collaboration such as a grant application (pending!), and developed a new podcast to encourage local business owners. Additionally, a highlight of my experience was becoming IRS-certified to prepare taxes and traveling to New Stuyahok to volunteer for over 50 families. I'm grateful for my crash-course in local government, and I'm excited to continue learning and contributing to Alaska.



VERI DI SUVERO, Anchorage Urban Fellow

During my fellowship with the Muni, I've worked on Alaska Native language revitalization projects, sending out a weekly digest to over 500 people around Alaska, building a resource site for Alaska Native language learners and speakers, and working to build a language resource database at the Division of Community and Regional Affairs. I've also worked with the 49th State Angel Fund (a public investment vehicle) at the Muni to revise their policy and procedures and forayed into podcast recording, interviewing local entrepreneurs. My time with the Muni has been varied and wonderful and I'm excited to continue working there for the next few months.

Signing off

Thank you for reading! It's hard to believe that this will be our last sign-off as a group, but this is certainly not a goodbye. You'll likely see us in and about Alaska and other places in the world.

