

a LASKA

f ELLOWS

p ROGRAM

SPRING NEWSLETTER

2025



ALASKA FELLOWS PROGRAM

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FROM THE EDITORS

AS WE INTRODUCE THE SPRING EDITION OF THE AFP NEWSLETTER, which we're launching after the conclusion of our fellowship, we want to say thank you for an incredible nine months in Alaska. From Anchorage to Sitka, Fairbanks to Juneau, it's been a wonderful opportunity to explore, learn, and grow – not only in our workplaces, but through the experience of living in a place as mythologized as Alaska. The Last Frontier looms large in America's psyche, and as fellows, we have been able to take the unknown and make it our lived reality.

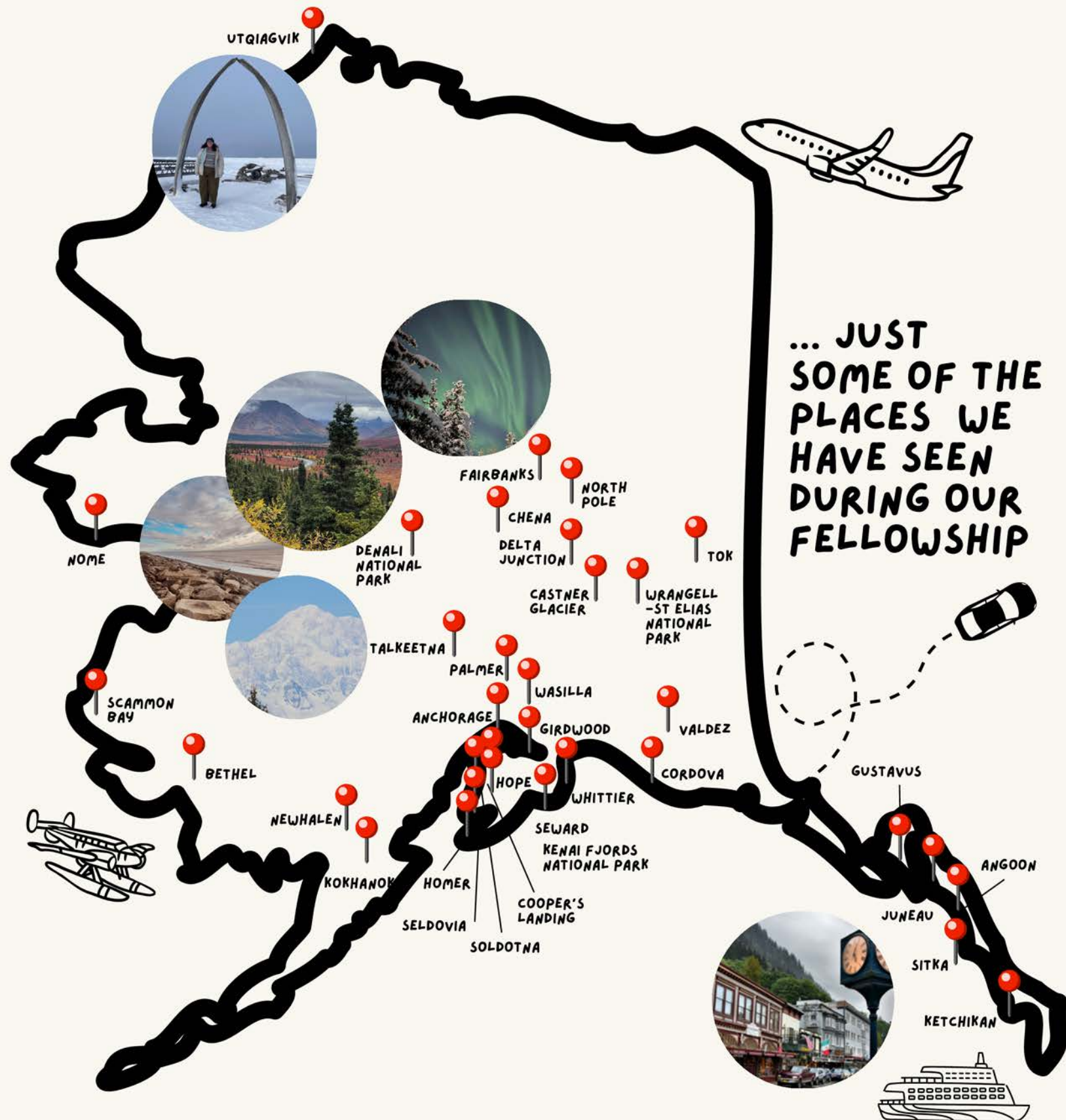
While winter was challenging, it also brought us new and exciting experiences. In Anchorage, for instance, we ice skated three miles across a lake to Portage Glacier. But we also challenged ourselves individually—to share our stories on the Arctic Entries stage, to polar plunge for charity, to perform in drag, or to compete in cross-country ski races and boxing rings. There is a phrase, “grow where you're planted,” and we have. Living in community has brought us together in ways we may not have otherwise, with our diverse backgrounds and varied interests: we may be artists, economists, writers, geographers – but we are all fellows.

Many of us will part ways this summer—some of us to graduate school, others to the unknown, and a sizable number of us choosing to stay in this wonderful state. Whether we keep in touch or not, we will all remember the nine months we spent living and growing in Alaska.

SAMANTHA SHARKOFF & CHARLOTTE MOORE



LOOKING FOR ALASKA



ALASKA WRAPPED

WHAT HAVE THE FELLOWS BEEN LISTENING TO?

LONG WAY FROM HOME

THE LUMINEERS

YEARS

JOHN ANDERSON

NOMAD

CLAIRO

HIGHWAY QUEEN

NIKKI LANE

WHAT WAS THAT

LORDE

DOWNTOWN

MACKLEMORE

I REMEMBER CAROLINA

MARGO CILKER

WE ARE NOWHERE AND IT'S NOW

BRIGHT EYES

DREAMS

FLEETWOOD MAC

WE ARE YOUNG

FUN.

PINK PONY CLUB

CHAPPELL ROAN

EVERYTHING IS AWESOME

TEGAN AND SARA

APT.

ROSE AND BRUNO MARS

UNWRITTEN

NATASHA BEDINGFIELD

CAMP ISN'T HOME

(FROM THEATER CAMP)

IDITAROD TRAIL SONG

HOBBO JIM

CRV

CUCO

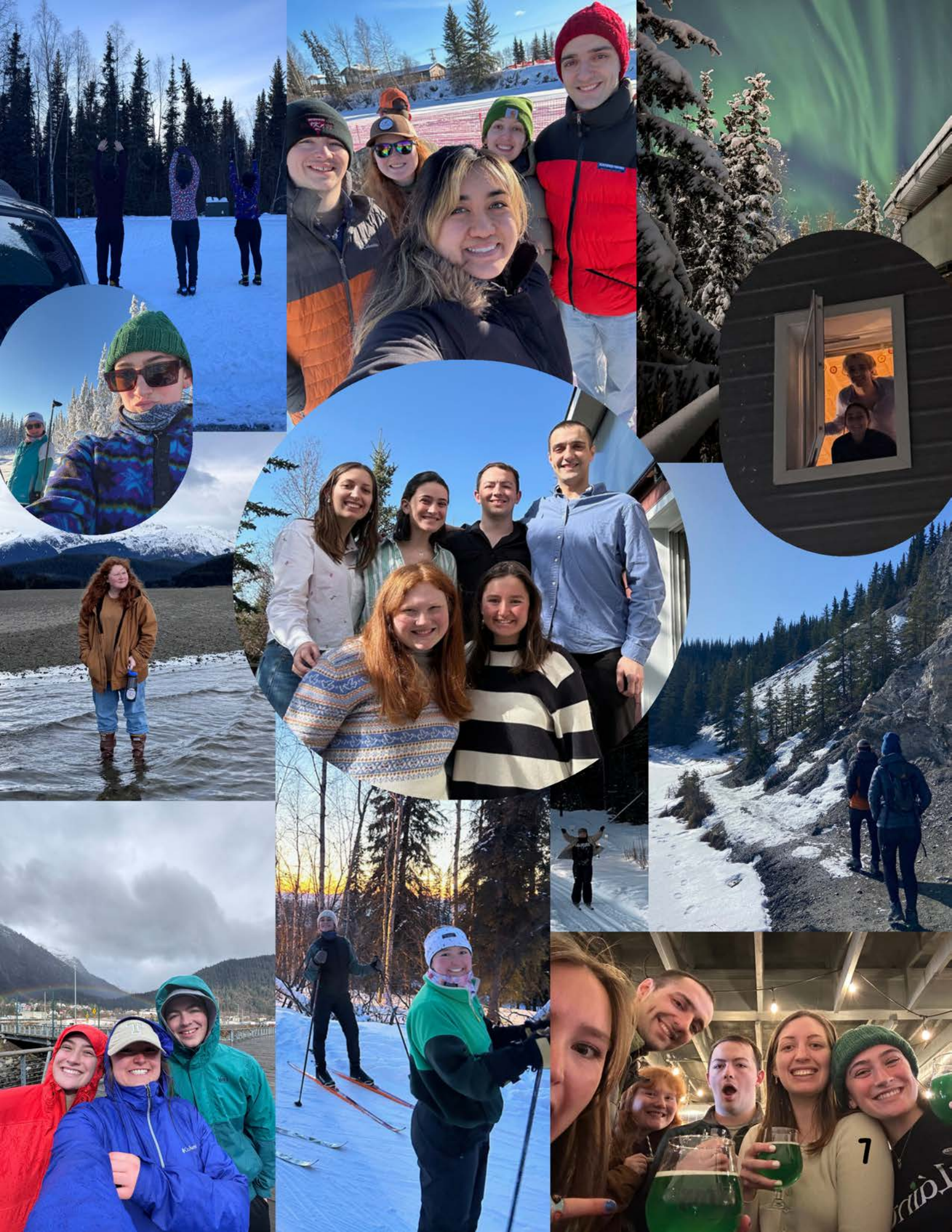
ALASKA

MAGGIE ROGERS



FAIRBANKS





Trail Tales from Fairbanks: A Review of the Season's Best

By Julia Cheesman

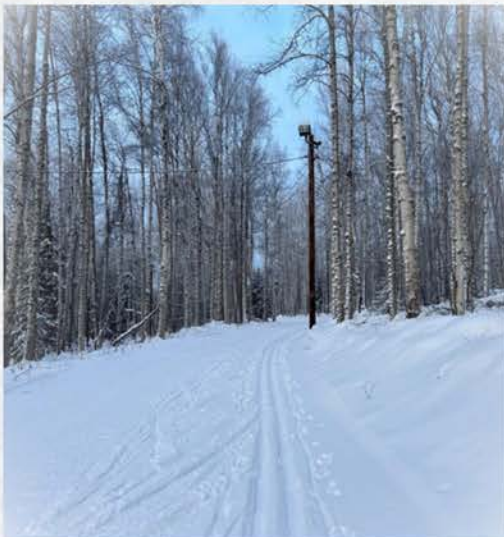
To say that skiing got the Fairbanks Fellows through winter is an *understatement*. At the first snowfall, we eagerly waited to hit the trails. We scrounged together old AFP skis and even cluelessly purchased gear from fall ski swaps in preparation for the winter ahead.

The first skis were challenging, some may even say discouraging if you factor in the number of bruises you walked away with. None of us were up to par with the skills required for the Fairbanks trails, but that did not stop us. We skied, skied some more, and kept skiing each week. Eventually, we did not stand out on the ski trails as newcomers.

As we grew our confidence, we explored trails of varying difficulty. Here are the tales of our times on the trails this winter:

Birch Hill Trails

Tower Loop ★★★



Competing for our most frequented trail, Tower Loop started as a big challenge and became an easy warm-up by the end of the season. This trail only earns a 3-star rating for the scary tumbles that occurred early on in the season.

Outhouse ★★★

With an old outhouse planted in the middle, this trail sloped gradually downward on the Southwest side of Birch Hill. If we had limited time, this quick trail provided a good ski and view of Fairbanks.

White Bear ★★ ★



When looking for a longer ski, White Bear was our go-to. This 10K trail was the perfect length for a Saturday ski in the peak of winter. Despite our affinity for this trail, it earns a 3-star rating for ‘heart rate hill,’ which, as the name suggests, was a demanding and lengthy hill at the end of the 6 miles.

North Forty + Black Hole ★★ ★ ★

As a double black diamond, this trail was not tackled till the end of the season. The difficulty of this trail was exciting and showcased how far we had come as skiers by March.

UAF Trails

Big Whizzy ★★ ★ ★ ★



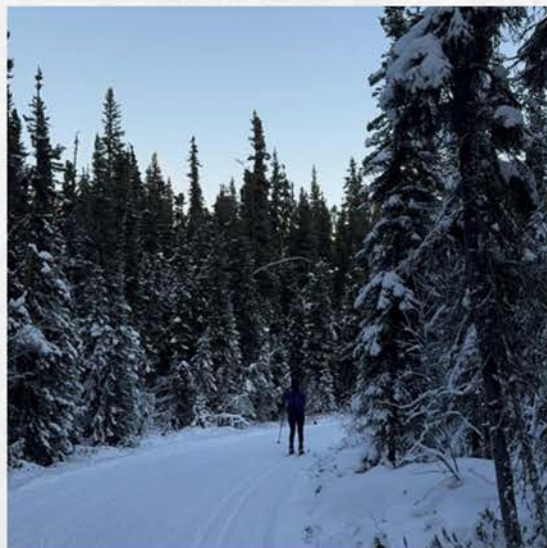
Big Whizzy scores a 5-star rating for two reasons—its iconic name and legendary hills. This trail makes you bob and weave through the trees, with sharp and steep inclines and declines. It lives up to its name, earning it a 5-star rating.

Beaver Slide ★★★★★



If at the UAF trails, Beaver Slide was part of our route. This gradual incline got us warm and immersed us in the snowy trees. Sunset viewing was a fan favorite on this trail.

Skarland ★★★★★

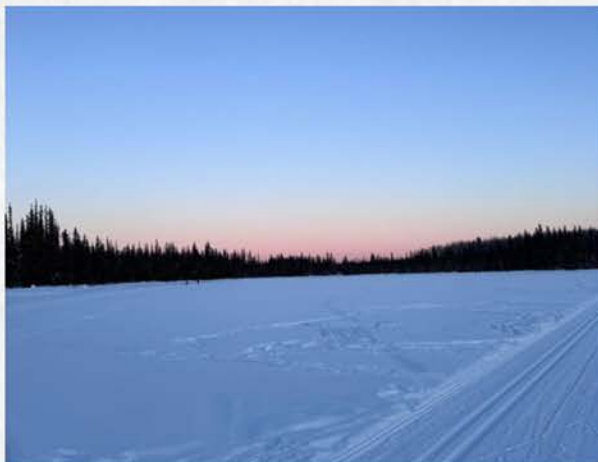


This 6-mile loop around the perimeter of the UAF trails made for an excellent weekend ski. We crossed frozen lakes, skied up & down large hills, and hit some of our other favorite trails along the way. The Northwest section of this trail—my personal favorite—was ungroomed and only passable during peak trail conditions.

Potato Field ★★★★★

Potato field provided us with safe passage each crossing. But, this inclined trail often fell at the end of our ski, resulting in a 3-star rating.

Smith Lake ★★★★★



Smith Lake was at the core of the Western trails at UAF. This circular track was a perfect sunset viewing spot in February and March. It provided a flat area to catch our breath before heading uphill to the next trail.

Powerline ★★★★★



This short trail, a one-shot steep downhill connecting Skarland and T-field, was exciting on our skis. Sometimes, we even skied back up just to go down again.

Must See Alaska Stops!

By Liz Carter



Milano's Pizzeria – Nome

As a secret past-life archaeology nerd, I think of Milano's—a small restaurant designed like every pizza place was 40 years ago—as a testament to time told in layers. When you open their menu each page is representative of an era, a moment in time. An Italian restaurant, then Korean, then Japanese, then the American specials of burgers and nachos. Each page is the story of a family who has owned the place at some point, and rather than changing the restaurant with each passing of the keys, there was just a new page added to the menu.

Highliner Coffee – Sitka

Meet an old friend here. Talk about life. It will be cozy and the chai will be chai-snob approved. But mostly, walk around town with the chai to warm your hands. Sure, the coffee shop is lovely, but so are the cute streets and the views of the water and the fact that your friend, who has lived here for only a month or two at this point, knows the people she passes on the street.

The Ocean – Juneau

My always favorite place! Despite having lived in the interior for a whole fellowship now, the love of my life is and always will be the ocean. From a cold dip, that probably permanently did some damage to my circulation in February, to many walks down to the beach during closing retreat, to seeing a whale from The Shrine, even just overlooking the water from Mount Roberts, there is something about the ocean in Juneau that is a particular kind of magical. Sometimes I try to convince myself I have already seen the best ocean scenes that this world has to offer, but the sunsets and tidepools and goose-poop-avoiding cold plunges here proved me wrong again.

Castner Glacier – Delta Junction

If you ever have a friend from college come visit while you probably have a cold, it is recommended even then to drive almost 4 hours and walk along the frozen river to see this glacier. There's a certain feeling standing in an ice cave looking at all the unique crystal structures above you that feels really life affirming. The further back you venture, the lower that you have to duck, the more you can hear the water rushing from somewhere just beyond where you dare to go, the more it feels like a real and beautiful adventure.





The Whale (Coastal Trail) – Anchorage

When I first moved to Alaska, the one thing I was told not to do was walk on the mudflats in Anchorage. But come the winter and an early end to a conference day, I recommend venturing out onto the mudflats to the fin whale that washed up earlier that fall. Tell whoever you're with way too many facts about fin whales. Contemplate the universe and soul implications of the whale. Walk the coastal trail with a new appreciation for life, for nature, for biotic community.

Highway Viewpoint – Denali National Park

On a road trip mostly fueled by the desire for a sandwich in Nenana, on your way back from a quite lovely and strange weekend in Anchorage, there is a particular beauty in stopping at the only pull-off viewing point on the highway that isn't blocked off or still filled with snow in March. Even when the wind almost takes the doors off the car and reminds you that you are never quite free from the threat of a Mary Poppins-esque travel situation, there is so much beauty in the still frozen river, in the snow on top of the mountains, in the way that Alaska still looks magical even when you've been here for a while.

Sustainable Village – Fairbanks

I guess I could say a lot of different places in Fairbanks are my favorite. I love walking at Creamer's Field, my go-to meal when I don't want to cook comes from Lemongrass Thai, and I think I can confidently say I walked/skied the UAF campus trails over a hundred times throughout the winter. But, no place has been as important to my time in Alaska as the quirky, sometimes permafrost shifted, always unique houses at the Sustainable Village. Here I have laughed, I have cried, I have laid on the floor until 2 AM answering "what's your deepest, darkest secret?" and "what's your ideal sandwich?" with the same level of seriousness. I have made the kind of friends I will have for a lifetime. I have developed what many would call a parasocial friendship with a pair of mallard ducks that have made a spring home of the snow melt puddle outside of Spruce's living room window. These houses are a testament to community, to love, to life in the interior. I got to Alaska afraid of the cold and dark of the winter, but here I have found more warmth, more bright and shining moments than I ever thought possible.



Postcard

Dear Farthest-North Fellows,

Welcome to Fairbanks! or as we like to say...WTF!
Here in the Interior you will find more Thai restaurants
than you can count, a million and a half birds, some
of the best skiing in the world, a ton of midnight sun,
and an amazing community. Somehow it is both cold
and warm, hitting lows of -40 and highs in the 80s,
but you will always manage to find a way to get
outside—skiing in the winter and pickleball in the
summer. You'll get to explore Alaska, the Arctic, and
Fairbanks itself with amazing, adventurous, caring,
witty (I could keep going) people who help make
Fairbanks home.

And it will become home, even if only for nine
months; Fairbanks has a sneaky way of imprinting it's
version of home on your heart. Home means goofing
off while skiing under the lights at Birch Hill. Home
means sharing family photos and TV shows and Pop-
Tarts. Home means supporting each other through
celebrating each others successes (even if it means
moving on after nine months). Home means a forever
family unit. I could not have asked for better people
with whom to make Fairbanks home. ♥

P.S. And I cannot wait for more Fellows to make Fairbanks their home!



this is us!

to: future Fairbanks Fellows

from: Molly

(Fairbanks Fellow 2024-2025)

Welcome to

FAIRBANKS

the Golden Heart City



Ice Fishing for Beginners

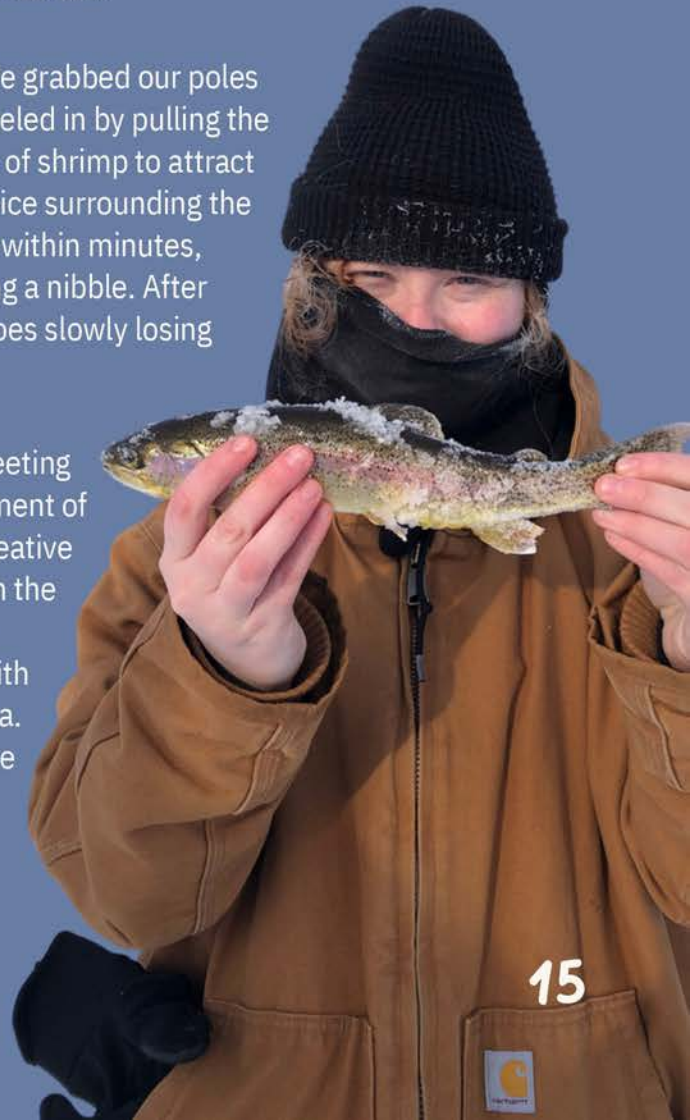
By Autumn Shelton

The Folk School Fairbanks, my host site for the fellowship, has a mission to spread the joy of hands-on learning. This includes offering intergenerational courses on subjects such as printmaking, woodworking, nature studies, and more. Although my work has focused on community outreach, my experience at The Folk School has also inspired me to view my fellowship year through the lens of doing things outside my traditional wheelhouse. Instead of simply maintaining my normal hobbies and workplace expectations, I pushed myself to say “yes” and embrace Alaskan craft and outdoor traditions. In this essay, I will highlight one of those experiences: ice fishing.

A lifelong seafood hater, I have little fishing experience. This winter, I remedied that by going ice fishing. At 7 am one February morning, I joined a bus of strangers to drive to Chena Lakes (the University of Alaska Fairbanks has an amazing outdoor program where you can sign up for low-cost adventures). Once there, we walked onto the lake where the ice was more than five inches thick. Using an ice fishing drill, our instructor dug until he reached the water. However, as it was more than -20 Fahrenheit that morning, the water instantly reached the consistency of a slushie. To fix this, we used a large metal ladle every 10 minutes or so to scoop the ice out.

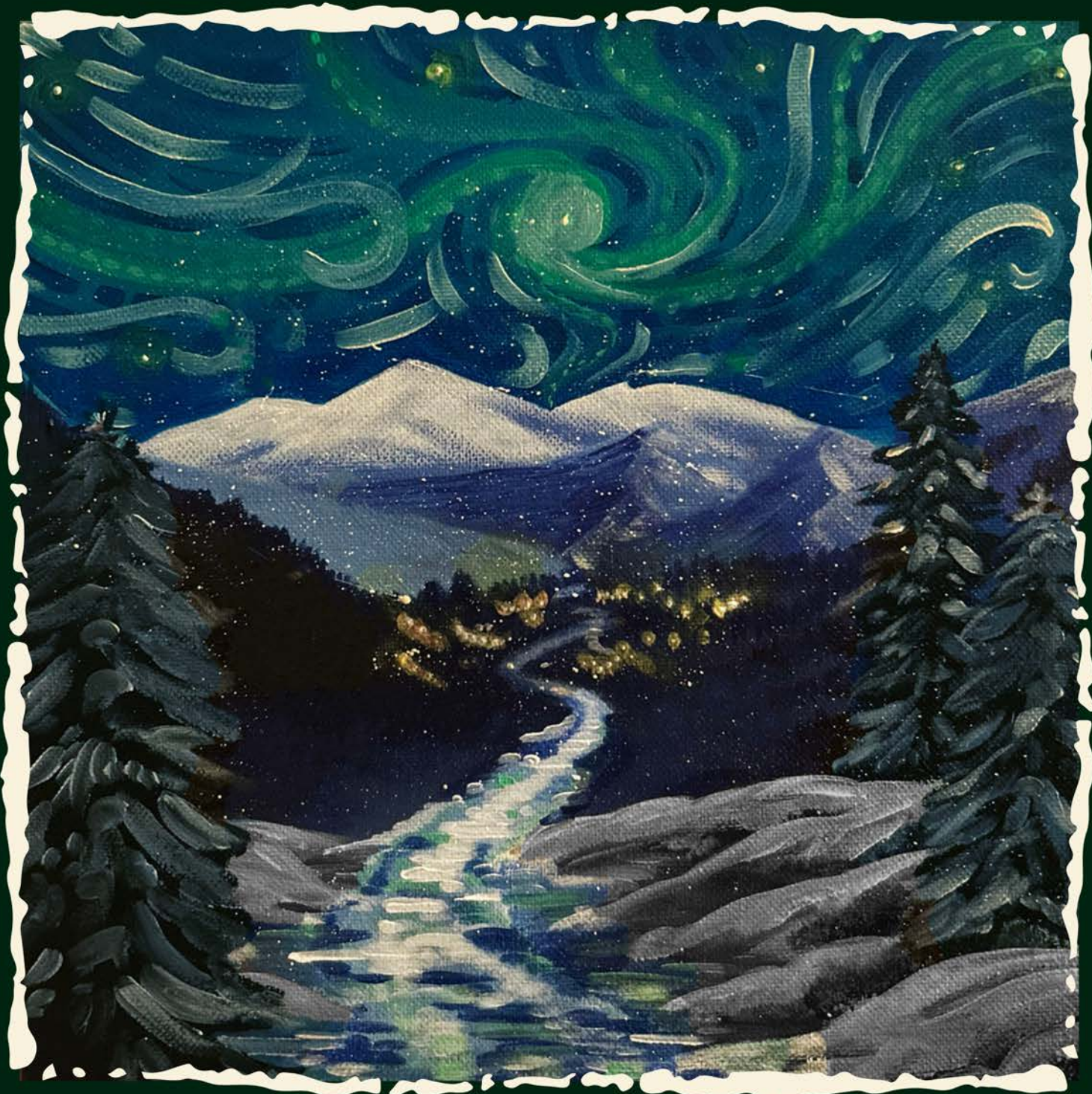
With our holes freshly dug, we now could get to business. We grabbed our poles (which are half the length of regular fishing poles) and we reeled in by pulling the line with our hands, not a reel. We used roe eggs and pieces of shrimp to attract the trout. We pulled the line enough so that it got below the ice surrounding the hole. And then, we waited. Some folks caught their first fish within minutes, whereas others of us waited over an hour before even getting a nibble. After multiple hours standing guard at my ice hole (and with my toes slowly losing sensation due to the cold), I finally caught a rainbow trout.

As exciting as catching a fish was, equally important was meeting other community members. I met a leader from the Department of Conservation, a lifelong fisherwoman from Juneau, and a creative writing grad student from St. Louis. I spent hours standing in the cold listening to their life stories and experiences. Not only was I able to learn how to ice fish, but to built community with folks outside of my cohort. That’s the beautiful part of Alaska. You go into an event to learn a skill, and you exit with a sense of community and a fish!



Winter Lights

by Dannia Andrade



During my 9-month-long fellowship in Fairbanks, Alaska, I had the privilege of working alongside wonderful individuals and got to work on projects that align with my passions and purpose. However, the thing I'm most grateful to come from this experience was that it gave me the opportunity to take a step back and breathe.

For context, for as long as I can remember, I've been a pre-med student driven by a relentless determination to achieve my goal of becoming a doctor. Fueled by that ambition, I finished High School with my Liberal Arts degree and followed that up with an accelerated pathway in college. After finishing my undergraduate degree I realized that I was not in love with school anymore. My end goal of becoming a doctor got blurred by my never ending effort to have the highest grades. I was showing up and performing at top levels, yet, my heart was no longer in it. I found myself disconnected from the person I was and the person I wanted to be. I was so focused on the end goal of becoming a doctor that I forgot the reasons why I wanted to become one in the first place. I became a version of myself who became very cold and clear cut in my vision. The Alaska Fellows Program allowed me to refocus my purpose. The reasons I want to be a doctor and why I will be a great doctor are because of the qualities and traits that already live within me. Qualities that I forgot to keep in touch with. I realized that qualities I already value, empathy, being gentle, and having an artistic flair are not only strengths but are essential to becoming a compassionate and skilled physician. In school, I didn't lean into these strengths as they were often seen as weaknesses in the pre-med environment. As a result of the fellowship, I found space to reconnect with myself again. I volunteered in the community, explored passion projects, and, most importantly, received grace from peers and mentors who saw me for who I am. I was given permission to reconnect with the version of myself I had missed. The one who loves medicine for all the light it brings into the world.

Looking back, it embarrasses me how isolating my undergraduate years were. I studied alone, I ate alone, and I worked towards a newfound version of "success" on my own. I started working towards a goal that drove me to be by myself. It's ironic that I preached having an interest in community health and well-being while I had lost a sense of both. Working at the Alaska Center for Energy and Power (ACEP), I worked on projects with a diverse team of people. During the fellowship, I ate dinner with my newfound family and had deep, late-night conversations with people I learned to care for. I became invested in the relationships around me and created a community from strangers. The fellowship allowed me to rediscover my passion for community and why I want to fight for its well-being so hard.

I decided to make a painting because part of rediscovering who I am and leaning into my passions has rekindled my love for art and creating. Art has always been a part of me, and through this fellowship, I've found the space to embrace it again. The piece is a visual contrast between warmth and coldness. The harsh, frigid landscape surrounds a distant warmth, a glow that symbolizes community, connection, and belonging. At face value, it represents the power of the energy work we do here at ACEP. The painting invites multiple interpretations, but to me, it represents who I am and what I value at my core. I am a woman of science and medicine, worlds often defined by precision, objectivity, and evidence. This is represented by the cold environment. But I am also a woman of faith and resilience, the belief that I can make a difference and do so not only by being strong, but by being warm and gentle. The inviting light that can be seen far off in the distance. In society, medicine can be presented as a clinically sterile, cold entity. However, I would like to bring the warmth and comfort that lives within me. I strive to bring to medicine my love of community and family. And of course, the abstract representation of the northern lights above it all represents the magic of the world. Things that happen that we cannot explain just yet. The faith I hold that everything happens in life for a reason and that in trusting God's plan, we will be carried on our destined pathways. It is a calling I have for medicine that inspires my trust in the chaos of universal plans.

Working at an organization like ACEP allowed me to see my purpose extending beyond the traditional boundaries of the medical field. It revealed to me that my skill set is not only valuable in the office but also in a variety of healthcare settings. I enjoy interdisciplinary work because it forces me to be a well-rounded person who can lean on a variety of my strengths. At the same time though, it forces me to hone in on the skills I do possess that can be utilized in any setting. On the first day of joining ACEP, I was given a strengths assessment task. No one had ever asked me to identify my strengths. I had spent so much of my academic journey focused on my shortcomings, on what needed fixing or improvement, that I never paused to recognize the value of the qualities I already possess. Ironically, focusing on my strengths outside of the medical field revealed that I already have many of the qualities needed to succeed in the medical field. For example, empathy and understanding are essential to being a compassionate member of any team. I saw this clearly at ACEP, where collaboration and kindness were foundational to our work environment. I also see their value in clinical settings when physicians speak with their patients. The ability to truly listen, to connect, and to show care are skills that transcend roles and settings. I saw other examples of transcending skills when I was engaging in the research at ACEP. I was entering a field of research that was entirely new to me.

With a background in Biology, many of the technical energy concepts initially felt foreign and intimidating. Starting a fellowship in a new discipline strengthened my ability to engage with material I didn't fully understand yet. I was training my mind to be better at learning. Approaching learning not as a test of intelligence, but as an opportunity for growth. This mindset will serve me well in medical school, where I know I'll face complex, unfamiliar concepts. Furthermore, I had the opportunity to take on leadership roles in several projects at ACEP, both as a mentor to those younger than me and as a collaborator among peers. These experiences helped me grow into a more confident and compassionate leader. Someone who uses the role of leadership to uplift others. These are qualities that benefit me in both community and clinical settings.

Throughout this fellowship, I've grown both professionally and personally. I'm walking away with a stronger sense of self, a clearer vision of my path, and the confidence that I can thrive in the medical field by embracing the qualities I already possess. I was asked what "success" in this fellowship looked like to me. I answered initially with, "Success looks like being able to explain the purpose of this fellowship and the role I played in the projects I completed." After reflecting on my experiences a lot harder I realized that the greatest success I am taking away from my time at ACEP has been the ability to reconnect with the girl who first dreamed of becoming a doctor, and to remember why I'm such a good fit for this path. In rediscovering my passions, my strengths, and my values, I've realigned with the purpose that initially inspired me to pursue medicine. That, more than anything else, is the success that matters most to me.

I look forward to my next steps. I will start the medical school application process and will continue on my path with a love for medicine, health, and community. I view this painting as a reflection of the person I grew into after this fellowship. In the middle of my soul is a warm inviting community of lived experiences, friends, and a passion for bringing the light to harsher environments. And that is the reflection I will carry with me as I continue my journey.



FBX FUTURES



"I am moving to Cordova to do field research for the summer, then hoping to stay in Alaska doing policy work"

-Liz

"I am planning to extend my fellowship until September, at which point I will begin a master's program in anthropology at UAF"

-Joey

"I will be doing a summer internship with NASA's DEVELOP Program working in remote sensing and geospatial science. Following this opportunity, I hope to continue living in Fairbanks and head to graduate school in the near future"

-Julia



"I plan on retuning to my home on the big island and I am going to take the MCAT in July. I will then spend the rest of the year applying for medical school on Oahu"

-Dannia

"I will be accepting a position with the Alaska Center for Innovation, Commercialization, and Entrepreneurship, and returning to my Fairbanks tiny home"

-Michael

"I'm staying in Fairbanks and continuing to work with CCHRC as a research assistant. I'm also planning to start a Master's in Rural Development at UAF this January"

-Leah



"I will spend the summer with family and transition to a non-profit position in the fall. In the fall 2026, I plan to begin law school"

-Autumn



"I'll be continuing to work at my host org CCHRC!"

-Molly

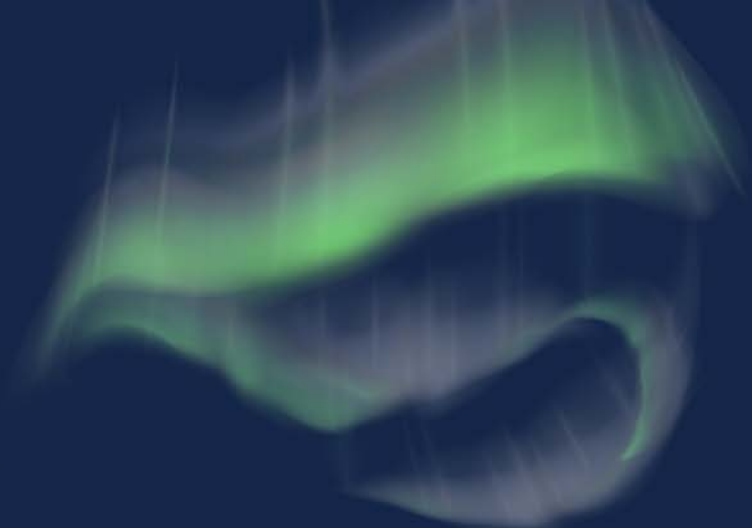
JUNEAU





JUNEAU BINGO

by Charlotte Moore



Drive to the end
of the road

Go ice skating
on Twin Lakes

Go to Juno
Froyo twice in
one week

Attend a former
fellow's themed
party (s/o LT
and Angelica)

Go Aurora
hunting with the
JVs

Sunday morning
Flume trail walk
to the Grind

Get a matching
tattoo

Experiment with
in-house
gardening

Lead a song at
Beer Choir

Learn a new
instrument

Develop a
debilitating
addiction to
KSSBs

Get asked out by
your boss's son



Travel to all 3
other AFP sites

Join a D&D
Campaign

Play Wingspan

Sing
Chappell Roan
at Cherioke

Host Devil's Club
trivia

Go cold-dipping
at Cope Park

Befriend a group
of elderly women
from the local
church

Go to Amalga to
celebrate the
full moon

Participate in a
Bollywood flash
mob

Play "Everything
is Awesome" at
the TouchTunes
in Lucky Lady

Have a close
encounter with
a garbage bear

Become a Costco
Gold Star
member

Natalie's (+ aunts'!) Lebanese Salad!

SOURCE: Auntie Cheryl & Auntie Lee Lee

Makes: Adjust to your ♥'s desire!

INGREDIENTS:

- | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|--|
| * Romaine Lettuce | * Salt | } <u>The</u> <u>Essentials!</u>
Best fresh from an Auntie's Kitchen |
| * Persian Cucumbers | * Pepper | |
| * Garlic cloves | * Dried Mint | |
| * Lemons | * olive oil | |
| * Tomatoes | * Mini bell peppers | |
| * White onion | * Any veg on hand | } optional add-ons! |
- JEDDO'S OLIVE OIL →

INSTRUCTIONS:

- ① Mince your garlic
- ② Juice your lemons → cut & save as much pulp as you can!
- ③ Let garlic & lemon juice (& pulp) infuse. Add fresh olive oil into this mixture until it tastes just right (about a cup of lemon juice to a 1/6 cup of oil) **← ESSENTIAL!**
- ④ Chop your vegetables **(I prefer finely chopped!)**
- ⑤ Toss vegetables → Add dressing in parts, while tossing in-between
- ⑥ Add salt, pepper, & dried mint in parts while tossing
- ⑦ Adjust/add ingredients until the lemon zings! you know

Growing up, I knew I was Lebanese in the same way I knew I had two dimples that creased each cheek when I smiled and long dark-brown hair that people always tried to convince me was black. I knew that we ate Hashweh for Thanksgiving and Christmas and that my Auntie LeeLee and Auntie Cheryl's cooking came from the mouth and fingertips of my Sitto, my great-grandmother.

Sitto was the family's figurehead, a woman sharp in both her features and wit, she ran her kitchen the same way she ran Harry's Fruit Stand—shoulders poised and nose upturned in the air searching for nonsense that would soon fall victim to the wooden spoon in her right hand. Ask any relative, any 5th or 6th cousin, or any Lebanese person you run into in Western Mass, and they'll all tell you the same thing: they never saw Madeline Marrewa eat a bite of what she cooked. She turned produce and stood in the kitchen until sundown, all with that wooden spoon in her right hand and a cup of black coffee in her left. Auntie LeeLee and Auntie Cheryl recount damp summer evenings spent picking the grape leaves that tangled their backyard's rusted metal fence as our fingers move in tandem: rolling, tucking, pinning, and passing dolmas into the same pot that once sat under Sitto's watchful eye in Agawam.

My favorite summers are measured in cherry-stained lips, hydrangea bunches crusted in salt, and nights spent giggling with my cousin Kya under a light-green patchwork quilt. Humid July mornings and evenings started and ended in the kitchen; family legend woven into minced garlic, a morning pour of Jeddo's olive oil, and eggs exclusively salted by the individual shakers that signify Auntie LeeLee and Auntie Cheryl's place at the table. Kya and I sit across from the two staunch pillars of our family, the duo that succeeded Sitto and her sister, Aunt Nellie, and are told to lean in and listen closely, lest the generational footprints of Marrewa women be washed away by fickle tides. We eat and laugh—and then eat some more because, boy, is that Auntie Cheryl persistent—as we plan our next meal.

We always tease Auntie that you never get the chance to be hungry in her house. A Massachusetts summer is full; of joy, of stories, of puzzles, of people, of so much food we fill all four of the house's refrigerators and then still have to visit every Lebanese church in town. In the years and months when we're apart, there is a hollow pocket at the base of my stomach that idly waits to taste mujadara or lebanese salad made whole by Auntie's hands; hands that pause from deftly chopping cucumber, romaine, and tomato to jab me in the ribs when I tease, "I think people will go hungry at dinner."

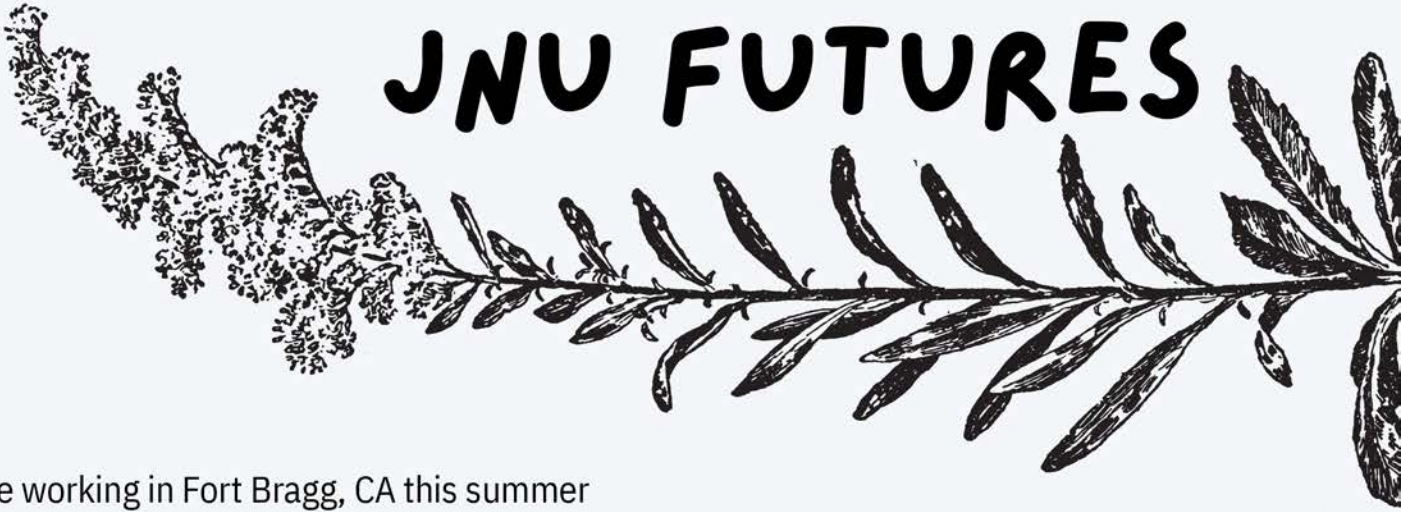
I make Lebanese Salad when the hunger of my middle-eastern stomach becomes a sharp, gnawing pain, when I'm afraid that I can't remember my Aunties' laughs, when I watch olive trees across the world burn. I make lebanese salad when my eyes are already bright and my heart delights at the zing of a perfectly-salted lemon, when I want to laugh in the kitchen with my fellow fellows while Etta James croons about her old flame, when the sun shines on a Juneau day that feels perfectly endless. I chop, slice, and squeeze the care passed on through intertwined hands, hoping it's delivered to the mouths and hearts of the people who make my house feel so full that it's bursting at the seams.

I know that I am Lebanese, the same way I know that overfeeding people as an act of care is a Marrewa matrilineal trait. With permission from the Marrewa women who taught me how to love, we hope you enjoy our Lebanese Salad.

Sincerely,
Natalie

P.S. If instructions are vague, that's because everything is to taste in a Lebanese kitchen. Lead with your heart and, in twenty short minutes, you'll have a delicious side with a little piece of my love <3

JNU FUTURES



"I will be working in Fort Bragg, CA this summer as the Conservation and Trails Management intern at the Mendocino Land Trust"

-Natalie

"Staying in Juneau to keep living with my awesome friends <3"

-Nisha



"Staying in Juneau, working at my host org, Southeast Conference"

-Stephane

"I'll be heading back to DC to work at my hometown summer camp and then I'll be heading on to graduate school for a Masters of Teaching this fall!"

-Sam

"I will be staying in Juneau, working at Sealaska as their Internship Program Coordinator"

-Charlotte

"I was selected to participate in The Fulbright Program as an English Teaching Assistant in Lithuania"

-Alexandra



SITKA





(SOME OF THE) SITKA FELLOWS' FUTURES

“Planning on staying in Sitka and either working full time with a non-profit, or part-timing my way to rent.”

-Marshall

“I’ll be heading to Guatemala as a Fulbright Scholar”

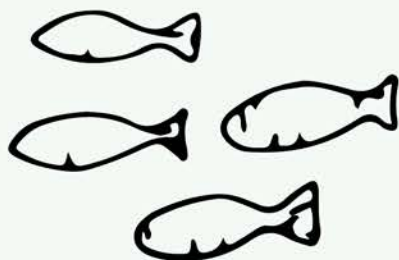
-Will

“I plan to stay in Sitka and continue to explore Alaska!”

-Sadie

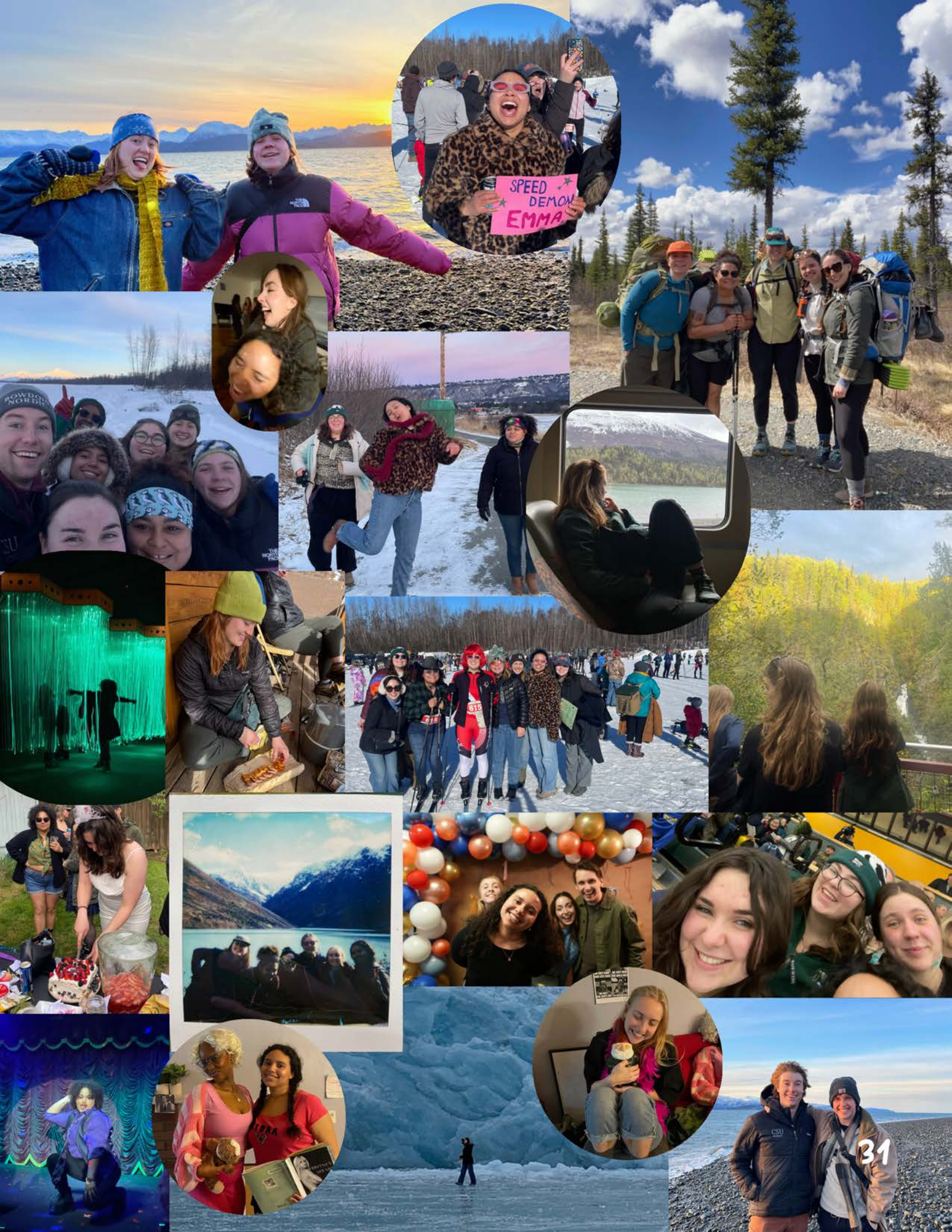
“I’ll be going to law school!”

-Annie



ANCHORAGE





Second Order Change



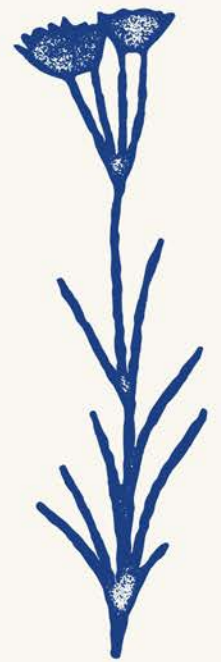
BY CLAIRE WARNCKE



As my fellowship experience moves quickly towards its end, I've reflected on what has been both expected, and unexpected from the past 8 months. While I could expect AFP to bring me close friendships, a fulfilling community, and Alaskan adventures, I had no idea I would find those things in my work life as well. With Big Brothers Big Sisters, I've had the opportunity to go kayaking in ice cold glacial water at Eklutna Lake. I've been able to host (and take myself) caribou tufting and skin sewing workshops with talented Alaska Native artists. And I've joined a community of dedicated youth development professionals working to support all Alaskan youth.

A key moment in discovering this network didn't come until February, a little over halfway into the fellowship. This was the start of Second Order Change, a leadership development series designed to introduce the fundamentals of social and emotional learning (SEL) to youth service providers. Now if you've never heard of social and emotional learning, it's an educational philosophy that envisions "all children and adults as self-aware, caring, responsible, engaged, and lifelong learners who work together to achieve their goals and create a more inclusive, just world" (CASEL). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is the leading organization that promotes and supports SEL in education and schools.





Second Order Change didn't just introduce the CASEL "wheel," it taught us skills to strengthen our own emotional intelligence and self-awareness—the logic being that we can't support youth if we can't practice these skills ourselves. Each session across the 6-week course focused on a different spoke of the wheel: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness. It wasn't just relationship building with other Anchorage professionals that made this experience enriching, but the opportunity to learn from those who've worked in this field for years, much longer than I. Each week, we'd return to the conference room and discuss how we'd implemented the following week's lessons in our work. I learned from people's vulnerability, their successes, and their failures.

In building a supportive learning community, I further developed the skills necessary to help foster that environment for the youth I work with and will work with in the future. Thanks to the Alaska Fellows Program, the community I found in the fellowship echoed the community I found in my professional life and wider Anchorage.

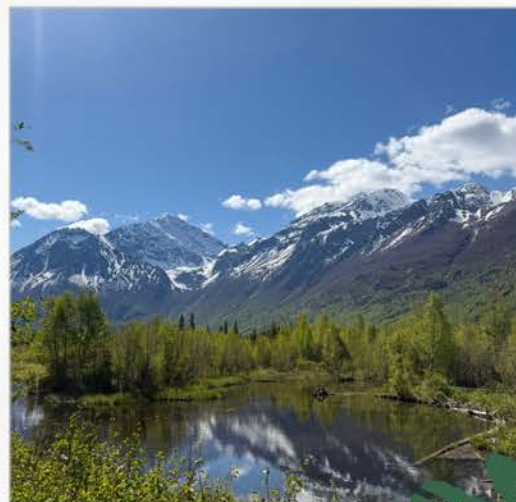


The Best Day Trip & Weekend Destinations from Anchorage

BY FRANCESCA CIAMPA

Eagle River (~25 minutes)

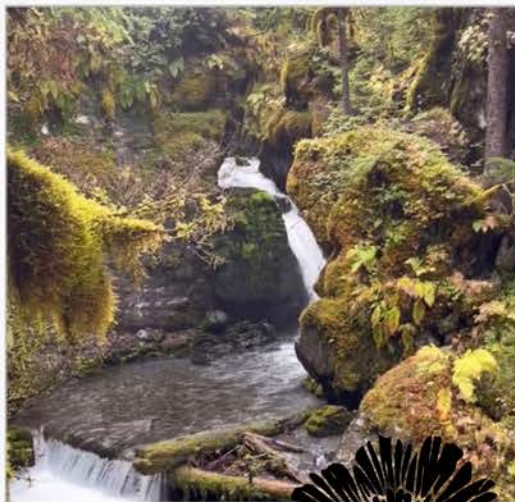
Just north of Anchorage, Eagle River is an amazing short trip. I've even been during the evenings after work. In the woods just outside Eagle River itself, Barbara Falls and Thunderbird Falls are short and easy hikes that lead to incredible waterfalls. The best part is, they freeze over in the winter! The Eagle River Nature Center is also a lovely hiking destination. The city of Eagle River is along the main highway north of Anchorage, so it's relatively clear of snow and ice in the winter. Beware of traffic during rush hour, since a lot of commuters take this route. If you're going hiking outside Eagle River, including to the waterfalls, be aware that you'll need to get off the main highway and take back roads for the last several miles of the drive. I've driven these in the winter and been fine, but they are steep and twisty.



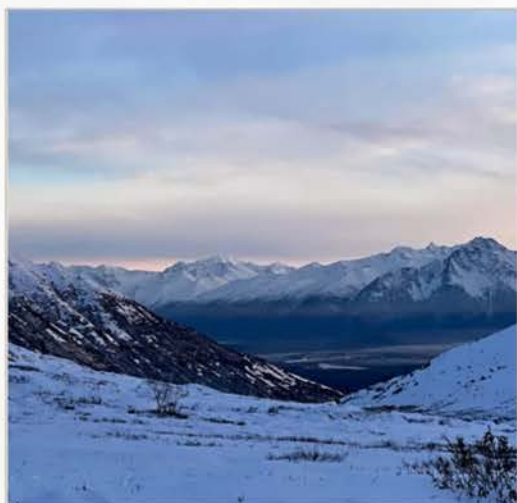
**EAGLE RIVER NATURE
CENTER**

Girdwood (~45 minutes)

Girdwood is a small town on the Seward Highway south of Anchorage. It's famous as a ski resort destination but has much more to offer as well, including a nordic spa, cute gift shops, a great brewery, and live music. I didn't spend a lot of time here during the fellowship because ski and spa days are pricey, but it's a great place to go to treat yourself. Outside of town, there are some good hikes and groomed ski trails in the Girdwood area. Girdwood is just off the main highway south of Anchorage, so the drive there is generally clear of snow and ice in the winter. If you're on your way to Seward or Homer, Girdwood is also a good place to stop in for gas and food.



**VIRGIN
CREEK**



HATCHER PASS MINE

Hatcher Pass (1 hour)

This is one of my favorite places near Anchorage. It's where I cross-country skied for the first time, and it's an incredible destination for a day trip in the winter. There are groomed ski trails winding out into the mountains, including to an old mining town where the original buildings are still (mostly) intact.

There's nothing like the feeling of being up in the mountains, surrounded by feet of snow, gray peaks, and crisp winter air. Close to the mine trailhead, the Hatcher Pass Lodge has a restaurant and also live music on Saturday afternoons. It feels great to kick back there after a long day of skiing. The roads to Hatcher Pass are generally clear, but best to check online in advance of going during the winter since heavy snow and avalanches sometimes block them.

Seward (2.5 hours)

Seward is a small town set on an inlet in the Kenai Peninsula, and the gateway to the Kenai Fjords National Park. Although I was never able to go deep into the park, there are trails 10-15 minutes outside of town that lead to incredible views of the Exit Glacier. Seward itself is compact, picturesque, and a fun place to walk around. My favorite place to spend time there is Resurrection Art and Cafe, an amazing coffee shop that's built into an old church. There are also a couple of thrift shops, a cozy public library, and a street full of gift shops and souvenir stores leading down to the waterfront. The road to Seward is good most of the way, with some bumpier patches towards the end. Definitely doable in the winter. You can drive to Seward and back in one day (we also got to take the train!), but it's best done as a weekend trip.



**KENAI
FJORDS**

Talkeetna (2.5 hours)

Around 2.5 hours north of Anchorage, Talkeetna is a small town with great cross-country skiing and amazing mountain views. In the town itself, there's a cute thrift store and some restaurants, bars, art galleries, and souvenir shops. From the waterfront on a clear day, you can catch a dreamy view of Denali rising up in the distance. Outside of town, there are groomed and ungroomed cross-country ski trails, and it's the site of the Oosik ski race in the spring. I remember the roads there being decent, but I only went towards the end of winter.



MT DENALI



**SUNRISE FROM
THE SPIT**

Homer (4 hours)

Homer is the furthest destination from Anchorage on this list. It's doable to drive to Homer one day and drive back the next, but it's probably best done with two nights in town. Homer is located on the far side of the Kenai Peninsula, beyond Seward. It's a beach destination in the summer, but it's still really fun in the winter. The town itself is perhaps less picturesque than Seward, but it's still enjoyable to walk around. It has an incredible bakery (Two Sisters), a cute vintage store, a great used bookstore, and an assortment of bars and restaurants. The second half of the drive to Homer might be sketchy in the winter depending on snowfall. We went in early February for our site retreat, and given that we didn't have much snow, it was fine.

ANCHORAGE HIGHLIGHT REEL

ON THE DAY THAT YOU WERE BORN...



HOMER WINTER RETREAT



OOSIK RACE
IN TALKEETNA



POLAR
PLUNGE!



Experiencing my First Winter in Alaska on Skis

By **Tamika Harris**



Having spent most of my life in Georgia, I didn't even know that cross-country skiing was a sport before the Alaska Fellows Program. My only experience with skiing was as a frustrated child falling on the bunny

slopes of a German resort. The entire experience of skiing was novel to me. Learning how to cross-country ski satisfied my drive to learn everything I can about something new and work towards a culminating goal: ski 25 kilometers or 15.534 miles. My first time on cross-country ski was quite a journey. I fell 5 times and 3 of those times required help from others to get me off the ground. My mindset going in was to embrace falling to learn how to fall safely.



Emma Hamilton and Ayden Nichol made my experience learning to ski an enjoyable and memorable time. With their expert guidance, I felt comfortable and confident learning something brand new from scratch. I am eternally grateful that these two took so much time to share their experience, humor, and love for the sport. Skiing brought me comfort from a feeling of control and complete immersion.

Finishing the race felt like a symbolic achievement. I endured almost 3 and a half hours of skiing on an actively melting course.



Tour of Anchorage, March 2025

Having learned how to ski in challenging conditions, I felt capable of anything the race could throw at me. I fell face forward skiing up a melting hill. And quickly got up to ski (and fall) some more.



Holding a picture of my mother, Shelly.

I could not have gotten through race day without the support of my friends who were the best teammates, pit crew, and ski buddies anyone could ever ask for.



ANC FUTURES

"I will be spending the summer hanging out with fish as a Media and Communications Intern at the Alaska SeaLife Center in Seward!"

-Kristen

"I'll be joining an Integrated Hydrology lab at the University of South Carolina. My research will use machine learning and satellite imagery to study river ice in Alaska, helping communities with safe travel and flood management while contributing to the first national water quality model for current and future climate scenarios"

-Haven

"This summer I'm contracting with Big Brothers Big Sisters and after that I'll return as a staff member on Semester in the West, a field studies program run through Whitman College"

-Claire

"I'll be pursuing a Master's degree in Society, Communication and Media at Charles University in Prague, Czechia"

-Emma Waters

I am staying in Anchorage Alaska and will continue working in the nonprofit sector!

-Tamika

"I'll be spending the summer in Anchorage leading canoeing, kayaking, backpacking, and biking adventures for 8-14 year olds in

Southcentral AK!"

-Emma Hamilton

"Taking a NOLS mountaineering course, then working with the Nordic Ski Association of Anchorage to expand their community reach"

-Ayden

"I am moving to Washington, D.C. for a mentorship opportunity with Jack Ferguson."

-Ben

"I'll be going to law school in the fall!"

-Samantha

"Taking over Dunkin Donuts with Ben Affleck"

-Hollis

"Professional painter in Chicago"

-Ornella

"I'm hoping to work in policy research and advocacy, along the same lines as what I've been doing in my fellowship role!"

-Francesca



AFP SUPERLATIVES

Most likely to stay in Alaska
for the rest of their life:



Most likely to become an
Iditarod musher:



Chillest person:



Most likely to become a
bestselling smut author:



Most stickerable:



Most likely to go to space:



Most likely to rise up:



Most Improved:



(from city mouse to mountain mama)

Best Sourdough Maker:



Most likely to join a cult:



Most likely to start a cult:



Most likely to fight a bear:



Most Likely to Make a Quesadilla



Most likely to join the Alaska State Legislature:



&



CLOSING RETREAT





FOLK FEST



CROSS-SITE VISITS



FBX IN JNU



JNU IN FBX!







THANK YOU FOR
READING OUR SPRING
2025 NEWSLETTER &
FOLLOWING ALONG
OUR ADVENTURES IN
ALASKA!

-CHARLOTTE & SAMANTHA,
ON BEHALF OF THE 2024-
2025 AFP COHORT



ALASKA
FELLOWS
PROGRAM

Special thank you to Tina Buxbaum for organizing the fellowship, Jeff Samuels for sponsoring sightseeing opportunities for the Anchorage cohort, site coordinators for listening to our drama, and all of our individual contributors for making this newsletter and our fellowship so wonderful.