Candlelight vigils honor life of Kristen Huntington

Events bring awareness to missing and murdered indigenous women, girls

BY SHADY GROVE OLIVER
The Arctic Sounder

In communities across the state last week, people came together to remember a very special woman, Kristen Huntington.

“She was amazing. She loved being a mother. She was a very proud Inupiaq woman. She worked really hard no matter what she was doing and she loved people. She was an

Massive seabird die-off linked to heat wave

Scientists study mystery of ‘blob’ that contributed to deaths of as many as 1.2 million murres

BY MORGAN KRAKOW
Anchorage Daily News

Scientists say they now better understand how a Pacific Ocean heat wave known as “the blob” contributed to huge numbers of common murres dying across a swath of Alaska's coastline in 2015 and 2016.

In 2014, the blob spread through waters up and down the Pacific coastline. The warmer water disrupted the seabirds’ food supply, leading to starvation, according to a new study published Wednesday in the journal PLOS One.

In warm water, the small fish that make up the diving bird’s diet suffered, the study reported. The murres also faced more competition with larger fish that eat the same thing, according to John Piatt, lead author of the study and a research biologist with the U.S. Geological Survey and the Alaska Science Center.

During a period of months in 2015 and 2016, scientists documented around 62,000 murres washed up on beaches from Southern California to the Gulf of Alaska. ‘That’s more than any other die-off, where the numbers have been

Adventure, loss and grit come into focus in memoir

Katherine Keith shares her story of survival in Alaska and beyond

BY SHADY GROVE OLIVER
The Arctic Sounder

Katherine Keith came to Alaska in search of solitude and adventure. She found both, along with love, purpose and great loss. She shares the story of her journey to the Northwest Arctic and how her life has been forever changed by it in her new memoir, “Epic Solitude: A Story of Survival and a Quest for Meaning in the Far North,” which will be released Feb. 4. The Sounder spoke with Keith about her past, her writing and finding beauty in the natural world. This is a

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First baby
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End of the road?
Scientist says landslide will bury part of Denali Park Road sometime this summer.

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Fairbanks man, 39, arrested last week

BY SHADY GROVE OLIVER
The Arctic Sounder

A Fairbanks man has been charged with the murder of Kristen Huntington, 30, whose family is from the Northwest Arctic. Fairbanks police arrested Eric Palmer Rustad, 39, on Jan. 16 on charges of first-degree murder, tampering with physical evidence and misconduct with a corpse.

Rustad has been identified as Huntington’s boyfriend and has a history of domestic violence and assault convictions.

“Domestic violence is, unfortunately, a vicious cycle,” said Huntington was reported missing to police on Jan. 10. According to police, Rustad presented himself to the department on Jan. 11 with self-inflicted wounds. Police searched Rustad and Huntington’s apartment after he made concerning statements, but did not find anything.

However, they did find human remains when they searched a vacant apartment in the same complex the following day. The remains were later identified as those of Huntington.

In the days since, there have been numerous community vigils for Huntington around the state, including in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Selawik, Noorvik and Ambler.

Friends and family remember Huntington as a kind and compassionate woman with a bright smile. If you or anyone you know is experiencing domestic violence or abuse, help is available. You can find more information at the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault at arbanc.org.

You can also call the 24-hour National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233).

In the North Slope, you can contact Arctic Women in Crisis (AWIC) at 907-852-0267 or toll-free at 1-800-478-0267.

You can also reach out to local law enforcement, your local health aide, a hospital or medical center, or trusted family or friends.

State agency to hold public hearing on pipeline sale

The Regulatory Commission of Alaska announced it will hold a hearing on a portion of the BP Alaska-Hilcorp sale, bowing to skeptics of the deal who sought more public input.

The hearing will allow the public to weigh in on the companies’ requests to transfer BP’s 48% stake in the 800-mile trans-Alaska pipeline and other pipeline assets to Hilcorp Alaska. The transaction is a major part of the proposed $5.6 billion sale of BP’s Alaska assets to the privately owned oil company from Houston, Texas.

In comments provided to the agency, the companies said a public hearing is not necessary.

The hearing will be held on Feb. 4 from 3-9 p.m. at the agency’s offices in downtown Anchorage.

The agency received around 200 written comments on the proposal during a comment period that ended in December.

“The comments both supported the transfer of (pipeline assets) to Hilcorp and expressed concerns with the transfer,” the agency’s announcement said.

The commission said it wanted to give the public a chance to provide additional input.

Many written comments said the proposed transaction, the most significant oil field deal in Alaska in a generation, deserves close scrutiny.

“The (hearing) is totally appropriate and commensurate with the public interest,” said Phil Wight, a policy analyst hired by the Alaska Public Interest Research Group to study the deal.

The agency recently announced it will give itself another month, until Feb. 11, to consider Hilcorp’s request to keep its financial records out of the public eye.
Selawik girls claim title on home court

BY TOMMY WELLS
The Arctic Sounder

Selawik notched its biggest win of the round-robin tournament on Friday, dropping eventual runner-up Kiana in the decisive championship game. Skin and Tickett both pumped in key shots in the contest and led the Lady Wolves to a 58-52 decision.

Selawik finished off their run with a 61-54 victory over rival Buckland on Saturday. Kiana, which had bounced Buckland, 65-57, in its opener, bounced back from its setback to Selawik in grand fashion on Saturday. The Lady Lynx nailed down second in the tournament with a 71-40 win over Kivalina.

Skin was named the tournament’s most valuable player. Tickett was one of five players named to the all-tournament squad, including Kiana’s Eva Foster and Courtney Self, Buckland’s Bethany Tickett, and Kivalina’s Sherissa Swann.

The Kivalina girls netted the prestigious Sportsmanship award. The Lady Wolves went on to win the title with the boys’ title. The Lynx, behind the play of Kenneth Walton, went 3-0, including a 72-63 win over rival Buckland in the first round of the tournament. The win helped propel Noatak into the Saturday’s round of the tournament. Walton starred in all of Noatak’s games and was named the boys’ MVP after the event was over.

Noatak’s Amos Sage helped headline the all-tournament squad. He joined Buckland’s Jordan Hanshaw and Selawik’s Chon Hanshaw and Upriver’s duo of Dallas Wells and Bradley Jones on the all-tournament roster.

Bears stay close to Noatak in NWA race

BY TOMMY WELLS
The Arctic Sounder

The latest poll of the top boys’ and girls’ high school teams was released Jan. 13.

The Barrow Whalers, who competed in the Joe T Classic this past weekend, climbed to No. 1 in the Class 3A rankings. The Whalers, off to a 3-1 start, swept a pair of games against rival Eielson last week in front of their home fans.

Barrow edged out Monroe Catholic for the top spot.

Point Hope and Anaktuvuk Pass both held onto the top spots in their classifications. The Harpooners, now 5-2, finished ahead of Cordova and Petersburg in the Class 2A poll. Unbeaten Anaktuvuk Pass was ranked ahead of Lumen Christi and Anaktuvuk in the Class AA poll. Anaktuvuk Pass went into the weekend at 6-0.

The Point Hope Harpoonettes was the only area team making the girls’ poll. They were ranked No. 1 in the Class 4A poll, one spot behind Great Alaska Conference rival Unalakleet.

The No.1-ranked Anaktuvuk Pass flexed their muscle early and often this past weekend as they raced to three North Slope Conference victories in Point Lay.

The Alak Huskies was the only other North Slope squad in action this weekend.

Amaguqs net three wins in Point Lay

BY TOMMY WELLS
The Arctic Sounder

The No.1-ranked Amaguqs netted three wins this weekend in Point Lay.

The Noatak Lynx walked away with the lead in the girls’ division. Both are 2-0.

Kiana and Nome are tied for the second spot. Alaska Catholic is ranked third in the latest girls’ poll.

Norco and Kiana are tied for the top spot in the boys’ division. Both are 3-0.

Alaska Catholic, Nome, and Kiana are tied for the second spot. Alaska Catholic is ranked third in the latest boys’ poll.

North Slope Shootout

The Shootout field will be teams from Alaska Catholic and Nome.

Huskies, Lady Huskies gear up for tournaments

By Tommy Wells
The Arctic Sounder

The Kotzebue High School boys’ and girls’ basketball teams will rack up plenty of time on the hardwood in the next two weekends. Both teams are scheduled to play six games in 10 days, including three this weekend in Bethel.

Coming off an open week, the Kotzebue boys and girls will swing back into play on Thursday when they open play at the 2020 Bethel Invitational. The Huskies and Lady Huskies will face off against Redington in the first round. The teams will play Calena on Friday and then close out the three-day, round-robin event with a matchup with Bethel on Saturday.

The Bethel tournament will be held Jan. 23-25 in the Bethel Regional High School WarriorDome. Following their outing in Bethel, the Kotzebue squads will return home and begin preparations for their home tournament, the Husky Shootout.

The tournament will begin Jan. 30 and run through Feb. 1. Joining Kotzebue in the Shootout field will be teams from Homer, Nome and Nikiski.
Martin Luther King Jr. Day: A reminder of power of voluntarism

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question, ‘What are you doing for others?’” — Martin Luther King Jr.

T
his week, we celebrated Martin Luther King Jr. Day, a day that may have passed largely unnoticed in Alaska, but one that should serve as inspiration for all of us.

King was just 39 when he was assassinated in 1968, cutting short the life of a man who changed the country we live in by dedicating himself to the service of others. While there are many here who are leaders in the civil rights movement for over a decade, fighting against racial inequality with nonviolent resistance marches, he was also concerned about a wide variety of issues, such as poverty and an opposition to the Vietnam War. Had he not been assassinated, it is almost certain that King would have continued his service to others in a multitude of ways.

While King may have been gone before many of us were even born, there are people within our communities who possess the same dedication to their neighbors and their villages. We all know them — they are taking tickets at fund-raisers, posting efforts to collect clothing for the family which just lost their home to a fire, helping with the annual food pantry holiday basket program — they seem to be everywhere doing everything for everyone.

This week, the community that I live in lost one of those heroes. The number of things he was involved in was astounding — he was a volunteer fire fighter, the guy who took your check when you went to get your discounted bloodwork done at the annual health fair, and since he knew how to serve as aan auctioneer, he was involved in just about every fundraiser the community held. He didn’t do it to impress anyone. He didn’t have any more time or money than the rest of us. He just made community service a priority, and he did it all with a smile, a big bear hug and a genuine concern for the people of the community he lived in.

You may not have known this particular man, but you surely know people like him. Most of us can think of someone in our communities as these super-volunteers do. We can’t imagine where we’d find the time or energy. The truth is, however, it’s just a matter of where we devote our resources. Each and every one of us can do more for the communities and generations of the past generation or two ago, it was virtually compulsory to help your neighbors, especially in Alaska. When there was no food stamp program, neighbors made sure the widow down the hill had some food on the table and wood for the winter. But social services and nonprofit agencies have taken over a lot of that independent effort.

In some ways, that is good. It leaves less of a chance someone, especially children and Elders, might fall through the cracks. But in other ways, the change from independent effort to coordinated state and federal programs has made community service more optional for most.

The reality is, though, that our communities need us now more than ever, and we, in turn, need to be reminded of the benefits of participating in the wellbeing of those around us. On a personal level, vol-

unteer efforts to collect cloth

ters which have a wealth of public

diminishing. Even in urban cen-

tative systems, such as the Village

tor leaders in Alaska. But the lag-

two ago, it was virtually

devote our resources. Each and
everyone’s determination that we are all valuable parts of the fabric of our communities will strengthen our own lives and those who live around us.

The budget isn’t the only thing the Legislature should accomplish

It’s a foregone conclusion that the vast majority of the Legislature’s time and energy this year will be consumed by the state operating budget. Alaska is still grappling with a massive budget deficit that threatens its fiscal future if left unaddressed. Since 2015, legislators have failed to close that gap, and Gov. Mike Dunleavy’s proposed budget this year doesn’t try spending out of savings instead.

But that doesn’t excuse the Legislature from dealing with other pressing issues the state faces. Here are a few of the most important items legislators should make time for in addition to the operating budget.

Education

It’s no secret that education is costly in Alaska, but the state still lags behind its peers in many K-12 metrics. The state has historically prioritized education, which is right — and now it can and should do more to make sure priority is given to providing kids who fall behind early the tools they need to catch back up. A bipartisan education bill announced Monday by Gov. Dunleavy and Sen. Tom Begich could be a good focus for legislators this session.

The bill, which is still being drafted, would target early reading skills to better ensure students are reading at grade level by fourth grade. That’s a milestone where Alaska students lag most, and one the governor and his allies have cited most frequently when bemoaning the state’s educational outcomes. That makes it an ideal spot for some bipartisan cooperation with Democrats who have extolled the benefits of early education. If legislators and the governor can find common ground and improve Alaska’s educational outcomes, it will be that rarest of political accomplishments — one where all involved come out ahead.

Rural policing

As the ADN’s investigative reporting in its Lawless series has underscored, Alaska has a major problem in its two-tiered justice system. One in three rural communities have no law enforcement presence whatsoever, and that services gap fuels deep-seated problems such as domestic violence and sexual assault. Federal authorities have declared an emergency (which the state called “long overdue”); the state has not, and has indicated it doesn’t plan to.

It’s time for the state to get seri-

ous. Existing rural law enforce-

tions with others that increase

part because they forge connec-

tections with others that increase

realization that we as individuals

with valuable job experience.

and loneliness and even help peo-

the deferred maintenance back-

are the places where its dollars stretch the

further. But state leaders

shouldn’t pretend that this mini-

level of capital spending is

sufficient for the longer term. It’s no way for the state to grow or

make progress; it won’t even take care of our existing infrastructure.

The deferred maintenance back-
Southcentral needs a robust teacher education program

BY MAX KULLBERG
For the Arctic Sounder

The recent drop in education majors at the University of Alaska Anchorage is bad news for K-12 schools of Southcentral Alaska. The broken pipeline of teachers feeding into schools will result in higher costs and a decline in quality of education.

In 2017, the University of Alaska made the decision to merge the School of Education administration of the University of Alaska Fairbanks, UAA and the University of Alaska Southeast. Coinciding with this merger, the university is in the process of its first licensure programs. Instead of seeking re-accreditation, these education programs were merged into UAF and UAS despite the strong objections of the UAA Faculty Senate, the UAA Chancellor and Anchorage Mayor Ethan Berkowitz.

This is because of declining funding, and the university designed to sputter and fail. Bigger service gaps, fewer boats on the water, an aging fleet of vessels that are being replaced slowly with nearly $2 billion, and a decline in quality of the education.

Dunleavy's plan for the system would be essentially impossible under the current situation. What clearly won't work, the governor said, is to rely on outside investments, and a reduction in the education budget line to $24 million, which is far below the $5.350 million that 10,000 Alaska teachers receive each year.

The state cannot rely on outside funding, and a decline in education dollars. Any new and old education dollars would be unfeasible for all but the wealthiest school districts.

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Ferries

As with rural law enforcement, the ferry system is in a downward spiral born of neglect. Remember that $2 billion deferred maintenance backlog? Ten of millions of dollars is it in ferry repairs for an aging fleet of vessels that speaks to Alaska's boom-and-bust revenue cycle. The Gov. Dunleavy administration, the Dunleavy administration, the Dunleavy administration, is critical to reach the state's vision of what this new industry could mean to the state: jobs and opportunities. In the first year of the Dunleavy administration, the Alaska Development Team, UAS Chancellor and UAA Provost, has been working closely with the Dunleavy administration, the Alaska Development Team, UAS Chancellor and UAA Provost, to reduce costs and retain experienced teachers in the Dunleavy administration, the Alaska Development Team, UAS Chancellor and UAA Provost.

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By Julie Decker
For the Arctic Sounder

was completed and adopted by the state. The goal of the plan is to grow a $100 million-per-year mariculture industry in 20 years. Following his election in 2018, Gov. Mike Dunleavy decided to keep the task force in place, because he recognized the positive work toward economic development that had already been accomplished.

Piatt said. But that number is just a fraction of what scientists estimate is a half-million to $1.2 million murres that died during the marine heat wave, Piatt said. Some birds never made it ashore, dying and sinking at sea, while others were likely scavenged or covered in sand. Plus, a lot of the birds died in winter, when it's hard to survey Alaska beaches.

It was clear that this was a much larger event than any of us had encountered before, Piatt said. At the time, it wasn't clear exactly what was causing it, Piatt said.

The blob seemed to be a likely cause, Piatt said, but how that warmer water led to the murre deaths continued to be a mystery.

Murras must eat a lot to survive — half of their body mass in food every day, Piatt said. If they're not snarling enough fish, according to Piatt, they can start to starve.

Murras "fly" underwater, diving nearly 200 meters deep — as much as two football fields — to catch their prey. But forage fish living in the warm waters ate the forage fish in higher quantities because they needed more food as well, leaving the murras with fewer options, Parrish said.

Finally, because the forage fish were also suffering from the lack of food, they did not satiate the murres as much as they had.

"To make a simplistic analogy, we went from Citl Bar to rice cakes," Parrish said. "So you could eat the same volume, but you wouldn't get as much nutrition." Parrish also runs the Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team, a group made up of volunteers from California, Washington and Alaska to survey beaches for bird carcasses. The new study used the information COASST and similar organizations like the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation, chair of the Alaska Mariculture Task Force and part of a commercial fishing family based in Wrangell, Alaska.

By Hannah Nevins
Alaska Anchorage is bad news for K-12 schools of Southcentral Alaska, we must make progress on several priority issues.

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By the summer of 2020, a landslide will bury a portion of the road within Denali National Park. Cyclists ride an unstable portion of the 92-mile gravel road within Denali National Park.

Mass movements are increasing in frequency and road is likely to see major impacts

By Ned Rozell
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Pretty Rocks.

Robert, who studies geoscienc- es, was one of many thousands of scientists who shared their ideas during the Fall Meeting of the American Geophysical Union, held in San Francisco in December. She looked at some of the more than 150 “active mass movements” along the Denali Park gravel road, including the rock glacier that flows off Polychrome Mountain at a section of the road known as Pretty Rocks. “Mass movements are increas- ing in frequency,” she said. “The Denali Park Road will be majorly impacted in the next few years.”

Park officials issued a press release in December 2019 regarding the Pretty Rocks area, located at mile 454 of the road. They noted that the road was beginning to put there about 2 feet per year in 2004. By 2019, the road was sinking two inches each day. They said an option for keeping the road open may be a reroute if the Pretty Rocks area can’t be stabilized.

By using tools including dating the lichens on rocks, Robert and her colleagues found that landslides and other downhill flow of some hillsides have happened for thousands of years. They are trying to find out how this warmer climate will affect the permafrost-rich Denali Park Road. “All that movement that’s happen- ing now isn’t unusual,” Robert said. “It’s a recurrence of what happened in the past.”

Alaska white spruce tell a tale of a cold summer

White spruce trees from Alaska seem to have recorded in their cells a great volcanic eruption in Iceland from the 1700s.

Julie Edwards, a graduate stu- dent at the University of Arizona, presented her research supporting the notion of Alaska’s Year Without A Summer at the San Francisco conference. In 1783, Laki volcano spewed sulfur-rich gases that reflected sunlight all over the world. Scientists from Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory in New York once wrote a paper on a disaster for northwest Alaskans caused by cold temperatures that followed the Laki eruption. Citing Native legends, the scientists said it was possible that rivers and lakes that had recently thawed in midsum- mer 1783 might have refrozen shortly after, due to the volcano reflecting the sun’s warmth back to space.

The Laki eruption started June 8, 1783 and continued until Feb. 7, 1784. The eruption killed 60% of the livestock on Iceland due to animals ingesting fluorine the vul- cano emitted. Twenty percent of Icelanders died in the famine that followed. Edwards looked at core samples from white spruce trees living in the wilds of Mancha Creek, which flows into the Firth River near the Alaska/Yukon border, and grow- ing on the Flanks of Sukakpak Mountain, near Coldfoot. She examined rings from trees that were alive in 1783 and are still alive, as well as buried wood from trees that are no longer alive.

“1783 looks weird,” she said in San Francisco. The early-season growth of the trees seemed nor- mal, but Edwards noticed the trees did not produce a thick cell wall at the end of the growing season, as they did in every other year. “That might be because of a temperature decrease and a dimm- ing of the light,” she said of the late summer of 1783. “The trees might have thought the growing season was over.”

The birds are all right

Bird biologist Susan Sharbaugh contacted me about the column I wrote about the platform. Lots of birds have been caching since August,” she said. “They have lots of stored food to get them by. The redpolls are liv- ing in a birch- and spruce pantry. Lots of food available. And they have wings. They will go to where there is food, either your neighbor’s feeder or where the condi- tions are better.”

Frank Greene was a science writer with the Geophysical Institute at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

MEMORIAL
From Page 1

Frank “Obbie” Greene, of Kotzebue, Alaska passed away on Friday, Jan. 10, 2020 at the age of 74. He graduated from Mt. Edgecumbe High School in 1964 and the University of Alaska Fairbanks, where he earned his associates degree in electronics in 1966. After completing his associates degree at UAF, he enlist- ed in the United States Navy where he served as Petty Officer, Second Class, ETR 2 from 1966 to 1973. While in the USA, he met his wife, Linda Backford, in San Francisco at Treasure Island, at the time he was studying electrical drafting. Together, he and Linda had four children, two boys and twin girls, George, Andrew, Cathlynn, and Andrea. They raised their family in Kotzebue. Frank’s talents were many, he was known for his dedication as a public servant and his work as a civil servant of the United States Air Force on the White Alice’s sites. Mayor of Kotzebue, Manager of Lands at NANA Regional Corporation, President of Kikiktagruk Inupiat Corporation, Board President and Member of Kotzebue Electric Association, Kotzebue City Council Member, and Northwest Arctic Borough Assembly Member. Frank was a beloved husband, father, broth- er, grandfather, uncle, cousin, and friend. He was passionate about commercial and subsistence hunting and fishing, flying as a student bushpilot, camping, berry picking, and gospel songs - especially those sung by Johnson Stalker and Robert Sheldon. He is preceded in death by his grandparents, mother, father, siblings, aunts, and uncle. He is survived by his wife of 47 years; his siblings; children, 13 grandchildren, four great grandchildren - one on the way, two aunts, and numerous cousins. Funeral services will be held at 1:00pm Friday, Jan. 17, 2020 at the Anchorage Friends Church 4607 E. 6th and 11:00am Monday, Jan. 20, 2020 at the Kotzebue Friends Church.

Q: The concept of adventure comes up a lot in your book. Adventure for you seems to have held some really hard times as well as some really rewarding times. Can you talk about how these two things can often go...
January 23, 2020

North Slope Borough residents –

The end of 2019 marked five years since the formation of Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat (VOICE), a nonprofit organization established to give Arctic residents a seat at the table when making decisions affecting their communities and aspirations. Enacting positive change requires bringing people together, and last year VOICE reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening unity amongst North Slope entities and speaking in solidarity on issues important to our region.

Part of what makes this organization unique is its diverse membership – Tribal councils, Native regional and village corporations, regional nonprofits and for-profits, health care and educational institutions, and others such as the North Slope Borough. In 2019, VOICE was proud to welcome the City of Kaktovik and the North Slope Borough School District Board of Education as members, further expanding its representation.

Since its formation, Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat has listened to the challenges and aspirations brought forth by its member communities and pursued dozens of efforts to address and pursue them. 2019 was a busy year, and we’d like to highlight for you a handful of the important issues we engaged in and that we will continue to work towards in 2020.

TOWN HALL MEETINGS

As an organization committed to bringing the region together and advocating in the best interests of its people, VOICE pledged to hold Town Hall meetings in each of the eight North Slope communities to listen to concerns and priority issues. Last year, in addition to routine travel to villages across the Slope, we held meetings in Wainwright, Atqasuk, Anaktuvuk Pass and Point Lay. Town Hall meetings in the remaining communities are planned for 2020, starting with Point Hope this month.

A crucial component of the Town Hall’s is VOICE’s annual survey, which asks residents how they feel about critical issues such as subsistence, education, cultural sustainability, employment and the economy – both across the region and within their respective villages. In 2019, a separate Youth survey was also introduced in order to include the views and feedback from our young people. Results compiled from the surveys help our members identify the unique challenges facing the region so we can be effective in our education and advocacy efforts.

The Town Hall meetings, as well as the surveys, also served as the catalyst for VOICE’s recent publishing of a comprehensive Resource Book – a guide to North Slope-specific materials and resources on topics ranging from climate change and housing to Arctic policy, research and more.

RISE UP INITIATIVE

Some of the priority issues identified through VOICE’s community outreach include the need to address social struggles facing our villages, among them alcohol and substance misuse. Borne out of this need is the Rise-Up campaign, which is scheduled to debut in first quarter 2020. Rise Up is a Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat initiative to improve the mental and physical well-being of North Slope residents and their families. By raising awareness, changing perceptions and providing the resources necessary to encourage people to seek and receive help, it aims to make a positive difference in people’s lives across the Arctic.

Rise Up consists of a compelling video and corresponding engagement initiative focused on addiction. The video will be featured throughout the North Slope Borough on television and social media outlets, provided to clinics and health organizations, presented at Town Hall meetings across the region and made available on the VOICE website and other outlets.

VOICE has also established a Rise Up Ambassador program with the goal of carrying the message to each of our villages and providing support. We have begun identifying village-specific representatives who will assist in presenting the video in schools, at community meetings, to service providers and other entities throughout the region, and will serve as the point of contact for anyone seeking help with alcohol and substance misuse.

AIR CARRIERS WORKSHOP

Predictable air passenger and timely freight and mail delivery service to North Slope communities has been a critical and persistent challenge for many years. Balancing the travel needs of airline passengers against the necessity for vital mail and cargo delivery with limited resources is difficult, and it often results in significant delays for both.

In October, Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat, the State of Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Alaska Air Carriers Association held a workshop convening air carriers with the goal of developing a unified plan to promote improvements. The workshop involved facilitated discussions around the components of air transportation, freight and bypass mail and also included representatives from the United States Postal Service (USPS).

VOICE will continue to work with all stakeholders to formulate solutions that improve services, beginning with the USPS in January followed by another inclusive Air Carriers Workshop later this year.

WALRUS IVORY ROUNDTABLE

As many of you know, federal elephant ivory bans put in place back in 2016 have significantly impacted Alaska Native artists and their ability to sell handwork from legally obtained walrus, mammoth and mastodon ivory. Since that well-intentioned federal legislation – enacted to save endangered African elephants – six U.S. states have enacted broad bans on all commercial ivory because it’s easier and less expensive to enforce an outrageous ban than to determine the ivory’s origin.

In 2019, as part of its ongoing effort to inform lawmakers about the regulation’s unintended consequences and reinforce the rights of Alaska Natives under the Marine Mammals Protection Act, VOICE participated in a roundtable discussion in Washington D.C. The Walrus Ivory Roundtable was attended by U.S. Senator Dan Sullivan, congressional staff and other government representatives, as well as e-commerce giants eBay, Facebook, Oracle and T-Mobile, who hoped to gain an understanding of the political obstacles and learn how e-commerce might help bring customers directly to the artists.

At the state level, VOICE has prepared an informational campaign scheduled for Spring 2020 to help provide clarity on legal ivory sales to outsiders visiting Alaska. It will also be meeting with key tourism organizations in an effort to educate communities on the difference between elephant and walrus ivory as we work to protect the market for Alaska Native ivory artwork.

NPR-A IMPACT FUND WORKING GROUP

Last year, VOICE continued its work on the State of Alaska-administered NPR-A Impact Mitigation Grant Program – a grant available to National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska municipalities that is funded from the sale of leases and royalty payments in the NPR-A. VOICE created a working group to develop recommendations on how the application and administration process of the grant can be improved and simplified. The group, comprised of members from NPR-A villages, also worked to educate communities on how to successfully receive funding through the program. Through the working group, VOICE will bring our recommendations for improvement back to State of Alaska grant administrators.

In the face of uncertainty over State of Alaska budget decisions, VOICE also advocated to protect the grant program to keep the money available to eligible communities.

OUR VOICE, OUR VISION

Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat works collectively toward improving the lives of community members through engagement in local, state, national and international arenas and operates off the core belief that local people should have the greatest say in issues that affect the Arctic.

Last year, our membership worked with the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission to address federal issues affecting subsistence hunters and to improve co-management; created a working group on the Arctic Coast Port Access Route Study to ensure agencies held public meetings in coastal communities; assisted the Native Village of Kaktovik to effectively participate in the ANWR NEPA process to amplify local voices; identified needs and provided tools for regional challenges such as housing shortages, wildlife management, indoor air quality, climate change adaptation, and much more.

As stewards of our land, water and resources for thousands of years, the Arctic people should be fully integrated into any decisions which affect our region, our culture and the economic stability of our communities. By bringing together a diverse group of organizations that share common responsibilities and a unified purpose, we have the opportunity to realize the bright future we envision for the North Slope. We have the strength and ability to be involved, speak as one and make a difference in the lives of our people for generations to come.

Quyanaapak, Speaker, State House of Representatives

Sayers Tuzroyluk

President, Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat

voiceofthearticoptiniupiat.org
MEMOIR
From Page 6

hand in hand?

A: “Adventures are inherently complex because you’re out there for the enjoyment and the beauty of nature and being out in the wilderness, but they’re never simple or easy. They’re always going to be challenging and complicated and you’re testing yourself. Oftentimes, you’re working to survive and that’s where that component comes in. You need to get to the other side of the adventure. You need strength, determination, courage, that heart to make it through.”

I’ve always sought out those adventures because I needed that grit in order to help ensure I’m always fully engaged with life, physically, mentally, emotionally, and I wanted to be alive in the fullest sense of the word.

The adventures in the wilderness settings of Alaska — the beauty is just intense. The mountains and alpine environments are intense and awe-inspiring. It’s just such a real and amazing place to be. Those adventures allow you to generate grit, which will lead to this successful beauty, both in the moment when you’re out there and then which carries over to your life at large. But they are never easy. If you’re doing it right, they’re never easy, but they should always be extraordinarily rewarding and lead you to extreme fulfillment.”

Q: I wanted to talk to you a little bit about some of the loss in your book. When we experience these incredible losses, we often wonder later on, per haps when they will work their lives and how things will look different on the other side. How has your life changed since the loss of your daughter, Madi, and your husband, Dave?

A: “I can say without any hesitation that I am not the same person I was. Never. I am intrinsically changed from that day on. There is no way — there is nothing going back. People say there is nothing like the loss of losing a child. Every loss is very hard and difficult. But I think it’s the way we are wired. You can be healthy and you can do all of the work but it does absolutely change your personality.

That being said, there are some ways that I’ve worked hard to strengthen myself in areas that were weak before. I’ve worked hard to build myself to be a much better person than I think I could have been otherwise. I could have been complacent. I could have been a complacent person and I think those losses forced me to deep processing and pondering different things. That’s a wonderful way to help (me think about) what was I doing just doing outside or working on and helping me put that down into the context of the universe.

The other thing is just being out-doors in nature. It’s healing in itself. There’s so many ways in which just being outside is so healing and rejuvenating. It’s a miracle drug. It’s scientifically proven that spending time in nature improves your health. I’ve spent a couple hours a day writing different and beautiful things. Being able to come back and write is really great. It’s an amazing thing to do inside. To relive those moments that were the darkest in your life — it was very hard. It was quite painful for me. I am not sure people get out more. We were a lot of those moments in this book. It was difficult writing. Also, despite being a writer and a lifetime person who journals, it’s very difficult from having to write dialogue and having to perfect a piece of creative writing, which I had never done before. The challenge of this type of writing was also very difficult. It was much more of a challenge than I had expected.”

Q: When you’re going through your life and the adventures that you set out on, do you have to do some things that are really hard to build yourself to be a much better person than you think you could have been otherwise? For example, did that carry over to your life and the adventure that you set out on to keep yourself grounded and focused? What’s going on internally for you?

A: Well, the one thing that grounds me the most is my daughter Amelia. She helps me tremen dously to focus on what’s important. It would be easy to get very overly excited and to want all the wonderful things that can be done in the world, but Amelia is always there to remind me that she is the most important person in the world. She’s the one that I can always be there to focus on. I can always come home to.

The second thing is my writing. I write a lot, even now. I spend a couple hours a day writing different things. Being able to come back and write is really great for me. It’s an amazing thing to do.

Q: For some who may be going through a hard time themselves and is reading your book, what would you like to say to them or what would you like them to keep in mind?

A: “Search out their own answers. Somebody reading my book would see that I took a certain path, but they should seek out their own path. And you have to seek one out. You have to find one. Your life really does depend on it. On a deep level, your soul knows what’s true for you. Contentment is hard to find. You have to be authentic and find that. It’s one message that I would like to pass on. They have to seek out their own answers.”

Q: I know you get interviewed a lot and have had a lot of stories written about you. What was it like to write your own story this time and tell it in your own words?

A: “Moving forward from here, one thing I’m working on is I’m going to start offering these “Find Wilderness, Find Wellness” workshops. I want to start connecting people with nature through adventure for increased wellness. I don’t think people are getting outside enough. Through all the research I’ve been doing, it’s so critical that people get outside. For physical health, for mental health, for creativity, for memory, for every 120 minutes per week is what people need to spend outside. It’s something that I’m working on and I’m very passionate about that.”

Q: You can find out more about Katherine Keith’s book, “Epic Solitude: A Story of Survival and a Quest for Meaning in the Far North,” on her website, kather inekeith.com. That’s also where you can find out more about her new wellness and wilderness workshops.

Shady Creek Oliver can be reached at sgwrest@gmail.com.
The North Slope Borough is seeking proposals for design services for the Alak School in Wainwright, Alaska. The work includes providing design, bidding, and construction administration services. The project is known as the Alak School Renovation & Upgrades - Design, CIP # 06-203. Deadline for proposal submittal is on or before February 13, 2020 at 3:30 p.m. Proposals will be opened and publicly read aloud at 4:00 p.m. at the upstairs CIPM conference room at 1689 Okpik Street, Utqiagvik, AK. The project title/CIP number, your vendor/firm’s name, the words “Proposal Enclosed”, bid date and name of Project Administrator must appear on the outside envelope of all proposals. Proposers are responsible for the timely delivery of proposals to Sophia Amling, Contract Administrator, PO Box 571, Anchor Point, AK 99566. Early submittals are encouraged. Proposers are responsible for advising their courier companies of the instruction above to avoid misplacement of their proposal submission. Delays due to weather, airline schedules or other unknown variables will not be considered an exception to the deadline requirements. Proposals are received when date stamped and time marked on your submission by the Contract Administrator or designee. Proposals are received at 9:00 a.m. at the Physical Address: 1689 Okpik Street, Utqiagvik, AK 99723, addressed to the North Slope Borough Dept. of CIPM attention to the Contract Administrator, with the sealed proposal envelope inside of the mailing envelope. However, you are still responsible for ensuring your proposal is timely received at the physical address. Proposals received after the time announced for the bid closing, unless otherwise specified, will not be considered. Interested parties can view and download the Request for Proposal for this project at no cost from the North Slope Procurement Website at http://www.north-slope-procurement.com. Questions are to be emailed to the CIP Project Administrator Sean Guesco at sean.guesco@north-slope.org. The final day for submittal of questions is February 4, 2020 at 12:00 p.m. local time. The Borough reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and to waive irregularities or irregularities in any of the proposals. Bids may be awarded in accordance with the Borough’s preference policy, a copy of which is available upon request. Each proposal shall be submitted only on the prescribed proposal forms included with the contract documents.
THEME: THE OSCARS

ACROSS
1. Cracked open
5. Prolong
6. “Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood” supporting nominee
12. Eggnog time, traditionally
13. Pol request
14. Capital of Senegal
15. “Jo Van Fleet won for her role in “East of...”
16. Augmented
17. Shoemaker without shoes, e.g.
18. Ones full of desire
20. VSCO girl’s shoes
21. New Zealand native
22. “The Nutcracker” step
23. Boiled bread product, pl.
26. Guarapo de jagua fruit
30. Edith Wharton’s “The... of Innocence”
31. “____ ’er ____!”
34. 1935 Best Picture nominee “A... of Two Cities”
35. Plant a.k.a. golden buttons
37. “Dustin Hoffman was nominated for role in __ the Dog”
38. “Friends” favorite spot?
40. Brunch drink
43. 10-sided polygon
45. Qatar native
47. Greek R
48. “The Marriage Story” nominee
49. Narrative poem
50. “The first to refuse his award, for “Patton”
51. Oscars de... pl.
52. Uses a paring knife
53. Not in action
54. Skunk’s defense
55. Tire measurement
56. Twelfth month of Jewish civil year
57. Whirlpool
59. The first to refuse his award, for “Patton”
60. He was nominated for “Lost in Translation”
61. Sunburn aid
62. Negative contraction
63. Chi precursor
64. “The Marriage Story” nominee

DOWN
1. Reply to a captain
2. Renée Zellweger’s role
3. Away from wind
4. Dub again
5. “Movie with most 2020 Oscar nominations
6. First cradles
7. Movie with most 2020 Oscar nominations
8. “South Korean black comedy thriller
9. Image in an Orthodox church
10. Soaks in rays
11. The old college one
13. With numerous veins
14. Backless sofa
15. Campaign trail gathering
16. Coach’s talk
17. Diminished
18. Open-mouthed
19. Relating to a gene
20. Garbage in, garbage out
21. Primo, on Italian menu
22. Coach’s talk
23. Diminishing
24. Open-mouthed
25. Sudden increase in wind
26. Garbage in, garbage out
27. Primo, on Italian menu
28. What tailor shops do
29. “He won an Oscar for role in a Scorsese movie
30. Oscar-winning writer Julius Epstein to Os-
car-winning writer Philip Epstein
31. Eve’s mate
32. She’s nominated in 2020... twice
33. Civil rights org.
34. Jersey call
35. Egyptian ape
36. “Whoopi Goldberg scored an Oscar for this movie
37. “Phantom...”
38. Civil rights org.
39. Narrative poem
40. Jersey call
41. Sudden increase in wind
42. Gumshoe
43. 10-sided polygon
44. Whoopi Goldberg scored an Oscar for this movie
45. Qatar native
46. Mailman de... pl.
47. Locomotive hair
48. Round openings
49. Jersey call
50. Cul de... pl.
51. “Meryl Streep won for...”
52. Mortgage, e.g.
53. Not in action
54. Skunk’s defense
55. Tire measurement
56. Japanese capital

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Alaska has about 6,640 miles of general
costline, which is more than the other
49 states combined. Including islands,
Alaska has 33,904 miles of tidal shoreline.

Do you have a fun fact? Email them to jhansen@reportalaska.com

Did you know?

Alaska has about 6,640 miles of general
costline, which is more than the other
49 states combined. Including islands,
Alaska has 33,904 miles of tidal shoreline.

That’s A Good One!

My friend is getting rich by taking pictures of salmon dressed in
human clothes.
It’s like shooting fish in apparel.

Do you have a fun fact? Email them to jhansen@reportalaska.com

Answers. No cheating!
VIGILS
From Page 1

amazing people person. People were attracted to her because of her smile and her laughter. She always took a moment to see how you were doing and checked in with her friends and family. She just glowed in so many ways. She was a really amazing person," said Adrienne Blatchford, who had known Huntington for about 11 years.

Huntington, 30, was found dead in an abandoned Fairbanks apartment earlier this month. A man, identified as her boyfriend, has been taken into custody and charged with her murder.

“Kristen initially was reported missing and her ex-husband’s father wanted to do a search,” Blatchford recalled. “We’re from the village, so we immediately, when somebody goes missing, we get together and create a plan and initialize a search and rescue group.”

They came together at night and the next morning, were told by police to call off the search. A body had been found and was later identified.

Behind this story of a woman with a family, who experienced domestic violence and was killed, is the story of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls (MMIWG). It’s a story that’s carried with it about inaccessibility and the stigma that is expected to consume their attention this year.

The legislative session begins Tuesday, lawmakers are expected to struggle to balance the state budget, which contains a $1.5 billion deficit if legislators and Gov. Mike Dunleavy don’t raise taxes, cut state services or cut the Permanent Fund dividend.

The “Bicameral Permanent Fund Working Group” was created in 2019 to provide policy recommendations to the wider Legislature, and its members are appointed to a “microcosm” of the Alaska Legislature’s 60 members, said its chairs, Rep. Jennifer Johnston, R-Anchorage, and Sen. Click Bishop, R-Fairbanks.

In seven months of meetings, the working group agreed on only one recommendation, which was finalized Monday: The Legislature should not violate a Permanent Fund spending cap approved in 2018.

If followed, that could deny any supplemental Permanent Fund dividend payments, such as those proposed by the governor last year. Sen. Shelley Hughes, R-Palmer, and a member of the working group, said she doesn’t believe the recommendation completely excludes the possibility.

There was no agreement on whether the traditional Permanent Fund dividend formula should change, and if so, how. In failing to reach consensus, the working group’s actions, as well as its membership, are a microcosm of the Legislature.

“Unfortunately, I would agree with that,” said Rep. Kelly Merrick, R-Eagle River, one of the working group’s members, when asked whether its failure to reach agreement is emblematic of the Legislature as a whole.

Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, D-Sitka, said he felt the workgroup limited itself and that its work isn’t a failure.

“It was my perspective that our scope of work was somewhat restrained, so it never felt that we never threw ourselves headlong into looking at new dividend formulas,” he said.

Two years ago, lawmakers capped the amount of money that may be transferred each year from the Permanent Fund to the treasury but didn’t say how much of that transfer should be reserved for dividends and how much should be used to pay for state services.

The capped transfer is not large enough to pay for both government services and a Permanent Fund dividend under the traditional formula used since 1982. But legislators do not agree on a solution. Some prefer to cut services in order to sustain the traditional formula, which they see as different from other expenses.

Some contend that taxes must be raised. Others prefer to simply cut the dividend to preserve services while balancing the books. Arguments over the appropriate size of the dividend have taken place each year since 2016, when then-Gov. Bill Walker vetoed half of it. Hughes said she expects similar arguments this year, but with a different flavor.

“Last year, it was pretty much over budget amount and PFDs. This year, you’re going to hear a lot more about revenues,” Hughes said, adding that debates over a higher gas tax and a school tax are possible.

Further complicating matters is the fact that the 2018 cap can be bypassed if a majority of the House, Senate and the governor agree. That means there will always be pressure to increase the dividend at the expense of the Permanent Fund’s long-term earnings.

“So long as the dividend formula is unresolved, there is going to be political risk to the Permanent Fund,” Kreiss-Tomkins said.
If you or anyone you know is experiencing domestic violence or abuse, help is available. You can find more information at the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault at andvsa.org.

You can also call the 24-hour National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233). In the North Slope, you can contact Arctic Women in Crisis (AWIC) at 907-852-0267 or toll-free at 1-800-478-0267.

In the Northwest Arctic, you can contact the Maniilaq Family Crisis Center (MFCC) at 907-442-3969.

The narrative around missing and murdered indigenous women has a complicated history. Media outlets have contributed to dangerous and destructive portrayals of victims and perpetrators and law enforcement has often been called out for not paying enough attention to these types of incidents.

Now, organizers hope vigils like these will help reshape the narrative into one that can help the issue move forward. First, they ask that people stop using the word ‘epidemic’ to describe it; it’s not a communicable disease spread among a community. Organizers also want it to be known that this is an indigenous-led response and that it’s taking a healing-centered approach.

“In order to move this issue forward, to create action, to create change, and to demand justice in the way we are, we have to do the healing part of the work, too,” said Apok. “The vigil is very much an example of that healing-centered way that we take the time to recognize and to honor and to come together and to create spaces of healing for our people at the same time as demanding systemic change.”

A candlelight vigil is a visible, community-based way to highlight someone’s story, she said. It’s a way of being present and it can’t be ignored.

“I believe in protests, I believe in demonstrations and having that visibility. There’s a lot of criticism that people say that that doesn’t do anything, but it does,” Apok said. “When we empower people to have their voices be heard, action is a result of that. So, maybe they vote, maybe they speak to their legislators or other representatives. Also, on a broader narrative, the people who are supposed to be representing us, or the people who need to hold more accountability within the system, see that we’re talking to one another, that we have a shared common goal, that we have everyone on the same page of what we’re asking for. The awareness is there. And it does put pressure on them to reexamine those systems and their part in it.”

A lot of people who do this work have been personally affected by it, Apok said.

“My cousin was Samantha Koenig, the barista that had been kidnapped and murdered. So, this is really near and dear to me,” she said. “I’ve been a long-time advocate for women. I’ve worked in domestic violence and sexual assault for a long, long time.”

So, while this is a widespread issue, it’s one that is built upon countless individual stories of women with families and friends and lives of their own. It’s important to remember that and hold space for healing from their loss, along with change.

And so, last week, while dozens of people stood outside in the winter cold and snow and lit a candle for the thousands of women who have been affected by this issue, they took a moment to remember one woman — Kristen Huntington — as she was, as a mother and friend and someone who didn’t give up hope for a better future.

This is not the end of Kristen’s story, Blatchford said.

“When I continue fighting, I’ll always talk about Kristen, how our communities come together, the strength that we see, the need that we feel for change to come. She’s got children. She has a legacy she left,” she said. “I think a lot of that is just moving forward and teaching so the next seven generations to come don’t carry this trauma, they don’t carry this sadness and sorrow and grief. They feel joy from knowing that people fought for change and that safe place. We used to uplift our women in so many different ways and this oppression that we have — even lateral oppression that we see amongst our own people — is a fight. Changing the language, the actions we take in our communities, that’s a part of her story. She would want it. She would want people to keep fighting.”

Shady Grove Oliver can be reached at sgolive@gmail.com.

Anchorage locals hold a candlelight vigil to remember Kristen Huntington, who was found dead in Fairbanks earlier this month.