

2026 Annual Convention Agenda

Thursday, October 22 – Morning Session

8:30 a.m. Dene Eslaanh'

9:00 a.m. Call to Order & Safety Moment
Gayla Hoseth and Joe Nelson, Co-Chairs, AFN

Posting of the Colors - Mt. Susitna Drum and Alaska Native Veterans Council (State Flag Song and Veterans' Song)

National Anthem – Buz Daney

Invocation – Alaska Native Veterans Council

Welcome Remarks from Dena'ina Leaders
Aaron Leggett, Chief and President, Native Village of Eklutna
Michael Curry, Board President & Chair, Eklutna, Inc.

Welcome from the City of Anchorage
Mayor Suzanne LaFrance

Recognition of Major Sponsors
Gayla Hoseth and Joe Nelson, Co-Chairs, AFN

9:45 a.m. Keynote Address
Dr. Rosita Worl

10:15 a.m. President's Report
Ben Mallott, AFN President

10:45 a.m. Billy Kirkland, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior

11:00 a.m. U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski

11:30 a.m. Denali and Citizen of the Year Awards

12:00 p.m. LUNCH BREAK

Thursday, October 22 – Afternoon Session

12:30 p.m. Tikigaq Traditional Dance Group

1:00 p.m. Call to Order
Gayla Hoseth and Joe Nelson, Co-Chairs, AFN

Preliminary Credentials Report – Nikki Stoops, AFN Vice President of Engagement

1:05 p.m. Mark Cruz, IHS Director – introduced by Thom Engels, Administrator Health Resources and Services Administration
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

1:20 p.m. Supreme Court Justice Jude Pate

1:35 p.m. Tapping into the Independent Travel Market

Today's independent travelers want more than a vacation—they want authentic connections. Visitors want to learn about subsistence, listen to stories, create art, and experience our traditions firsthand. Many community members want to meet this demand by creating tourism experiences but simply do not know where to start.

This panel bridges that gap. Hear from three industry leaders who have successfully navigated the market. They will share actionable insights on how to build a business from the ground up, protect your cultural intellectual property, capture the independent travel market, and access key resources for technical and marketing support.

To turn these insights into action, this panel will be followed by two opportunities to attend a workshop to map out your business, from ideation to budgeting, pricing, packaging, and marketing.

Moderator

Alexis Bunten Naficy, Ph.D. and CEO WAQAA

Panelists

Jillian Simpson, President and CEO, ATIA (Alaska Tourism Industry Association); Joe Williams, CEO, Where the Eagle Walks LLC and Tribal President for the Organized Village of Saxman; Camille Ferguson, Owner of Cultural Tourism Development (CTD) Consulting

2:00 p.m. U.S. Senator Dan Sullivan

- 2:20 p.m. U.S. Representative Nick Begich**
- 2:40 p.m. Chairman John Lowery, Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina**
- 3:00 p.m. 60 Years: The Decisions That Shaped AFN**
Julie Kitka, Ana Hoffman, Nelson Angapak, Emil Notti, and Willie Hensley
- 3:45 p.m. Justice and Public Safety Initiatives in Alaska: Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons, VAWA^(OBJ) Related/Violent Crimes, and Drug Trafficking**
Michael Heyman, United States Attorney for the District of Alaska, and Ingrid Goodyear, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP) Great Plains and Alaska Regional Coordinator in the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Alaska
- 4:15 p.m. No on 2 Presentation**
Nicole Borromeo
- 4:30 p.m. ARTIC Project Update**
Sarah Lukin
- 5:00 p.m. RECESS**

Friday, October 23 – Morning Session

- 8:30 a.m. Qasgirmiut**
- 9:00 a.m. Call to Order**
Gayla Hoseth and Joe Nelson, Co-Chairs, AFN
- Recognition of Major Sponsors**
Gayla Hoseth and Joe Nelson, Co-Chairs, AFN
- Invocation - Louise Leonard and David Chanar**
- Hymn for Halong – Introduced by Nicholai Joekay, board resolution presentation**
- 9:15 a.m. Co-Chair Candidate Presentations**
- 9:30 a.m. Bush Caucus Update**
- 10:00 a.m. 2026 President's Awards**
Moderated by Tabetha Toloff, Convention Committee Chair
- 11:30 a.m. One People, One Voice: Standing Up for Alaska's Salmon & Our Way of Life**

12:00 p.m. LUNCH BREAK

Friday, October 23 — AFTERNOON SESSION

12:30 p.m. Naqragmiut Dancers

1:00 p.m. Call to Order
Gayla Hoseth and Joe Nelson, Co-Chairs, AFN

1:05 p.m. Candidates Forum - Welcome & Ground Rules

4:30 p.m. Chief Chuck Hoskin, Jr., Cherokee Nation

5:00 p.m. RECESS

Saturday, October 24 – Morning Session

9:00 a.m. Call to Order
Gayla Hoseth and Joe Nelson, Co-Chairs, AFN

Invocation

Recognition of Major Sponsors
Gayla Hoseth and Joe Nelson, Co-Chairs, AFN

Final Credentials Report

9:05 a.m. Section 29 Report, Alyeska Pipeline Services Company

9:15 a.m. When Tribes Lead, Youth Rise: Self-Determined Pathways to Native Youth Wellbeing - Native Children's Commission Way Forward Report

In 2024, the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children delivered The Way Forward, a report built on what Tribes, families, Elders, and youth shared in listening sessions and site visits across Alaska, Hawai'i, and the rest of the country. Its message is clear: Native communities already hold the solutions for their children, and those solutions are strongest when Tribes lead. That same year, AFN delegates affirmed the report's 29 recommendations through Resolution 24-06, recognizing that what is designed, implemented, and controlled by Tribes and Tribal organizations works best for Native children and youth, and calling on federal agencies, Congress, and the State of Alaska to act. This panel explores how those recommendations are moving from vision to policy and practice, and how tribally led approaches can strengthen the wellness of Native youth,

including efforts to prevent suicide and nurture the connection, culture, and belonging that protect young lives.

Panelists:

Gloria O'Neill, CITC President and CEO; Mark Cruz, IHS Director; Dr. Tina Woods, CITC Chief Clinical Officer; and Amber Ebarb, Staff Director, SCIA

- 9:45 a.m. 2026 Elders and Youth Conference Report**
Roy Agloinga, President, First Alaskans Institute
- 10:00 a.m. 2025 Resolutions Update**
- 10:05 a.m. Consideration of 2026 AFN Convention Resolutions & Announcement of Co-Chair Election**
Moderated by Jodi Mitchell, AFN Resolutions Committee Chair
- 12:00 p.m. LUNCH BREAK**

Saturday, October 24 – Afternoon Session

- 12:30 p.m. Chevak Tanqik Dancers**
- 1:00 p.m. Call to Order**
Gayla Hoseth and Joe Nelson, Co-Chairs, AFN
- 1:05 p.m. The Next 60 Years**
Tayler Higgins, Moses Wiseman, and Sam Schimmel
- 1:30 p.m. OMB's Proposed Uniform Guidance Overhaul: What Tribal Nations need to know—and how to prepare**
Craig Jacobson, Hobbs Straus Dean & Walker
- 2:00 p.m. Lieutenant General Robert Davis, Commander, Alaskan NORAD Region, Alaskan Command, and Eleventh Air Force**
- 2:15 p.m. Alaska's Existing Subsistence Framework**
Jaeleen Kookesh
- 2:45 p.m. Recognition of Joe Nelson**
- Announcement & Welcome of AFN Co-Chair and Village Representatives**
- 3:00 p.m. Adjournment**
Gayla Hoseth and Joe Nelson, AFN Co-Chairs

