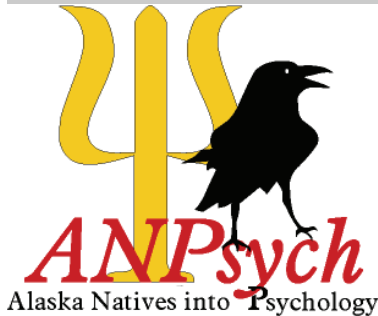


# Alaska Natives Into Psychology

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## Rita Pitka-Blumenstein Living & Learning Community at UAA



In fall 2006, University of Alaska Anchorage Residence Life, ANPsych, and the Psychology Department opened the Rita Pitka-Blumenstein Psychology Community in West Hall of the Residence Life campus. The Residential Community provides a sense of place and belonging for students interested in Psychology and focuses on academic support, while enhancing cultural awareness, emotional development, and the well-being of all students in the community. Students are connected to UAA faculty and community resources through activities, programs, and other special events. UAA students are encouraged to utilize the

Psychology Community classroom, located within the Community, for presentations, lectures, classroom activities, guest speakers, viewing movies, discussions, study groups, potlucks, etc. UAA faculty are encouraged to connect with the students by utilizing the Community classroom to lead discussions on psychology related topics, research projects, and current trends. Additionally, if faculty members have hobbies, interests, personal passions that they would like to share with UAA students in inmate or more public settings, the Rita Pitka-Blumenstein Psychology Community provides the venue to encourage gatherings of all types.



## Director's Corner

Boozhoo Anishinaabedog! I hope this newsletter finds everyone well. ANPsych is in a transition period and I would like to share some news with you all. First, we are transitioning in terms of leadership. Dr Pam Deters has left UAF and Alaska and is now a clinical research psychologist at the Mercy Family Center in New Orleans, LA doing work with the victims of hurricane Katrina. I want to personally thank Pam for her leadership over the last four years. ANPsych was very successful during her leadership because of her passion and ability to connect with Native students. We will miss very much. I am very honored to be able to direct this program. As a Native psychologist who benefited from the mother program INPSYDE at North Dakota, it is very important to give back in this way to the next generation of Native students in psychology. Next, we are moving toward training doctoral level psychologist with the inception of the PhD Psychology Program in Alaska. I am very excited and honored to introduce our four Native graduate students in the program. They are the future of Native psychology in Alaska and I anticipate great success from each of them. Finally, I want to thank all the people who continue to support ANPsych, with a special Miigwech to my colleagues in both psychology departments at UAA and UAF.  
- John Gonzalez

## Meeting Dr. Eduardo Duran by Sandra Soren

On March 30<sup>th</sup> I traveled with Dr. John Gonzalez to meet and hear a presentation given by Dr. Duran at the University of Alaska Anchorage campus. Dr. Duran, a Native American psychologist, authored the book, *Healing the Soul Wound: Counseling with American Indians and other Native Peoples*, and is the Director of Health and Wellness for the United Auburn Indian Community in Northern California. Dr. Duran discussed his book and answered questions presented by the grad students at both the Fairbanks and Anchorage campuses. Dr. Duran shared two messages with those participating.

The first message is that psychology as a profession has gotten it wrong so far in working with Native American people. There is a need for psychologists to think different about the terms, language and process we use in working with Native people and in Native Communities. Second, if we plan to be a psychologist, it is of vital importance that we are aware of our own history and the history of the people you are working with. This creates a solid understanding of our individual theory on human behaviors and change; we must examine and define our own theory of healing to help heal others.

Dr. Duran encourages honoring our individual and community history's reminding us that although it may still be undiscovered we each have one to share.



John Gonzalez, Eduardo Duran, Sandra Soren, and Tonie Quaintance



## Introducing our Doctoral Students



Tara, husband Ryan, and son Riley with the children.

My name is **Tara Ford**. I am the daughter of Ace A. & Pamela Fields, granddaughter of Athell & Bernice Fields, and great-granddaughter of George & Birdie Hudson. I'm a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma tribe. I was raised in a small town in Kansas. I spent summers in the scorching heat of Southern Oklahoma with my Grandparents.

My husband, Ryan Ford, and I have lived in Alaska since 1997. We moved up from Oregon. We lived in Dutch Harbor for just under a year before moving to Anchorage. We are new residents of Fairbanks. We have a 9-year-old son, Riley, who is a constant joy to our lives. He reminds me to include play in each day. We enjoy traveling around this amazing state.

I have a B.A. in Psychology from UAA. I have worked in the Anchorage community with youth from McLaughlin, Covenant House, and Mountain View Boys & Girls Club byway of running workshops to help youth gain employment. I have volunteered with a home-based program working with Autistic children where I would conduct two-hour teaching sessions

I am pursuing a Joint Ph.D. in Clinical-Community Psychology with an emphasis on indigenous populations and rural communities at UAF. As my assistantship, I am working as the UAF Campus Coordinator for the ANPsych program. Some of my research interests include the utility of storytelling in deterring risky behaviors and how technology is impacting storytelling. Furthermore, I'm interested in cultural identity and acculturation with regards to healthy lifestyles.



My name is **Tonie Marie Quaintance** and I am a member of the Turtle Clan of the Oneida Tribe in Wisconsin. My Indian name is Yetunahn-lats (Lives her life strong) I am married to Bryan Protzman, (Inupiat) and we have a five-year old daughter, Paisley.

I earned a B.A. in Justice, with a Minor in Psychology, and was the first Native American student accepted in the University of Alaska Joint PhD Program in Clinical-Community Psychology with a rural and indigenous emphasis, last year. In my first year, I worked as the UAA Campus Coordinator for ANPsych.

My current research interests include traditional healing, spirituality, and social justice. I have a passionate life-long commitment for quality health care, education, and cultural sovereignty through language retention, renewal and maintenance of spirituality and mental health for all Alaska Natives and American Indians.

I enjoy being very active in the Alaska Native community, as a Court Appointed Advocate (CASA) and represents Alaska Native Children in the child welfare system, and volunteering with Southcentral Foundation's Elders Program.

I am member of the American Psychological Association (APA) Division 45, Alaska Psychological Association, Dinlishla, American Indian Graduate Center, Alaska Native Professional Association, Native Research Network, and Society of Indian Psychologist. I was honored to be selected as a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, United National Indian Tribal Youth Scholar (2006); and an Indian Health Service Spirit of Eagles Scholars (2007).



Tonie and her daughter Paisley



# Introducing our Doctoral Students



**Matt Sena**

My name is **Matt Sena**, and I am originally from Denver Colorado. My family roots are in southern Colorado (Trinidad) and northern New Mexico (Taos). I am a first year doctoral student in the PhD Program at UAA. I love to have fun, and some of the things he enjoys include being out in nature, traveling, listening to music, and, in some weird way, teaching. For the past seven years, I have been working to promote the importance of Fathers, and to encourage their connections among children—much of this involves working with family relationships too. Recently, I have been involved in organizing these initiatives among the Chugachmiut: The indigenous Alu’utiq, Aleut, Sugpiak and Eyak, sometimes referred to as Chugach Eskimos. I am extremely interested in working with fathers and promoting their prosocial involvement in children and family. I would like to conduct research on the process of fathers' identity formation and related role transitions in graduate school and the future.

I am also very much interested in group counseling, therapy and educational techniques. Though I have had dyadic clinical experiences, the group context seems most attractive to me as an interventionist.

For my five-year outlook, I plan to continue serving and learning. I envision conducting consultation work for grant writing and program design, as I have been building skills in these areas, through professional experience, over the past 10 years. Currently,

through my job, I have established trust and therapeutic rapport with Natives of the Chugach region. I hope that I can remain true to the mission of learning "rural indigenous clinical community psychology." Finally, I hope that I may complete my clinical practicum in a primarily Native, rural community.



Hi my name is **Tina Marie Woods**, I am half Aleut originally from St. Paul Island, AK and half Guamanian from Guam. My mother was Maria Shaishnikoff and my father was Juan Leon-Guerrero. I am married to a wonderful husband Daniel Woods, Athabaskan from Rampart, AK and I have an incredible seven year old daughter Jasmine Nicole. In 1999, I received my BA in Psychology, since then I have worked predominantly with AK Native people and particularly youth. I was the Wellness Program Director for my native agency Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association for the last five years. This was an incredible part of my career to be able to work with the Aleut people of the Aleutians and Pribilof Islands.

I have been greatly involved with Juvenile Justice as a member of the Alaska Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee appointed by the Governor from 2002 to present & I am the alternate member of the SAMSHA tribal advisory committee on behalf of Alaska. Some of my accomplishments include: completion of the Executive Leadership Training through Indian Health Services in 2005 and my most significant training was in 2002 in conducting peacemaking/healing "circles" through my Tlingit teachers Harold and Phil Gatensby of Carcross, Canada. This past summer 2007, I was humbly honored by the request of the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium cancer program to facilitate healing circles for Camp Coho, a day camp for children that have lost a loved one due to cancer.



**Tina Marie Woods**

This fall, I am a first year student with the Joint Clinical-Community Ph.D. program with a Rural Indigenous Emphasis at UAA. My goals upon completion will be to promote a holistic approach to wellness & I hope to ultimately make a difference and help countless communities within our State to become healthier for themselves and their future generations. I am presently the AK Natives into Psychology Coordinator on the UAA campus. The mission of this program is to promote more Native students into studying psychology and other related behavioral health programs, ultimately to recruit and retain Native students into obtaining their Ph.D.

## Recent Graduates



My name is **Stephanie Sweetsir**. I am Koyukon Athabaskan from the rural Alaskan village of Galena. I was a 2002 graduate of Galena High School, graduating at the top of my class as Valedictorian. I am happy to announce my graduation from UAF with a BA in Psychology.

The inspiration to attend college came from my mother. Growing up, she always inspired me to do my best in school and to never settle for less than I deserve. She always told me that I was going to go to college and this helped me to start preparing early. I am the first in my family to have received a complete college education. To help me to attain my degree, I have joined and utilized services throughout the university to help me succeed.

The spring semester of 2004, I took the opportunity to join the Alaska Natives into Psychology program. So far, the program has influenced me in several ways. It has helped me to establish contacts with my peers who have similar career interests, and it has also set me up with a mentor to help steer me in the right direction academically. I have been presented with opportunities to interact with high school students at career fairs and in the classroom, as well as talking to a panel of PhD students. In the spring semester of 2006, I took the opportunity to join the ANPsych Research Team, which was developed for undergraduate students to gain valuable research experience. I have also been offering tutoring to psychology students for the past two years. I truly value the experiences that ANPsych has offered to me over the years.

My goal for the future is to attend graduate school. I'm unsure at the moment where at or in what field, but I plan on taking a year or two off from school while I figure out what it is that I have a true passion for. Until then, I plan on gaining experience in the behavioral health field to get a feel for what area I will benefit from most and which area I will be most useful in.

My name is **Sandra Soren** and I am an Athabaskan Indian from the village of Tanacross. My mother and father are Margie and Clarence Sparks and my maternal grandparents are Annie and Tom Denny. In 1989 I married my husband, Ed Soren, who is originally from Brazil. I have a multicultural family, my father who is Irish/Scottish, my mother who is Athabaskan, children that are Athabaskan/Aleut and a husband that is Brazilian.

December 30, 2003, my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, became a day of reflection and personal inventory, reigniting dreams I thought long forgotten and buried. When I graduated from Tok High School in May of 1972 it was my dream to get a degree in Psychology. It was either a degree in Psychology, become a beautician, or a flight attendant. While I had no true desire or talent to become a beautician or flight attendant I had true desire to learn. Instead I married, had children, worked, built a house, gardened, volunteered and read everything I could put my hands on. Always in the back of my mind was the unfinished dream of a college education. On my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday in the dead of winter I decided it was time. I began the 2004 summer session signing up for 21 credits. I loved it! Everyday was a new adventure, everyday was exciting. I was scared, excited, confused, thrilled, overwhelmed but most of all I was sure. I was sure I was in the right place, that my age didn't matter. I was doing exactly what I was supposed to do; I kept walking forward, showed up for my classes and trusted the journey. That summer I heard that UAF had an ANPsych program and joined ANPsych in the fall of 2005. I have been with the program since then. When I became a part of the ANPsych program I became part of a family; a family made up of students and professors. The ANPsych faculty and staff are committed to supporting Alaska Native students. My successes are theirs, my goals theirs, my fears and doubts eased by them. This summer I graduated with a degree in Psychology. It was scary to begin this journey and just as scary to be completing it. I know the ANPsych program is there for support. The time, encouragement and guidance Drs. Pam Deters and John Gonzalez contribute to the

success of the ANPsych program and ANPsych students remind me that we are family. If you think it is too late for your dreams, it isn't...it really isn't.



My name is **Heather Scales**, and I graduated in December 2006 with her Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology, I now living in Alexandria, Virginia with my husband George. Originally I am from Galena,

Alaska where I graduated in 2002 as Salutatorian, before attending UAA and UAF. Currently, I am working as Pension Payment Analyst I, at the Plumbers and Pipe Fitters National Pension Fund. I am thankful for the support received from ANPsych over the years and am honored to have been able to network with other students and professors. Graduate school is in the future for me when I decide what area I wants to specialize in.



My name is **Jolene Firmin** originally from Fort Yukon, Alaska but have been living in Anchorage for the past 5 years. Since I moved to Anchorage and started attending UAA I began

participated in various aspects of the community both as a student and staff member. Through programs like ANPsych, Residence Life, Raven's Quest, Vox, and others I had a more personal experience at UAA by being an active member of my community. I have been given the opportunity to travel throughout Alaska and out of state for leadership and employment development, participated in Anchorage events as a representative of UAA, and been a part of developments on campus. Thanks to programs here and the support of the faculty and staff I am very happy to announce that I graduated Spring 2007 with her B.A. in Psychology and will also be receiving a Certificate in Mental Health Services and Leadership Honors. Though I do not have a detailed plan for future endeavors, I have set new challenges for myself and in the end would like to take my education and experiences to serve the people of rural Alaska.