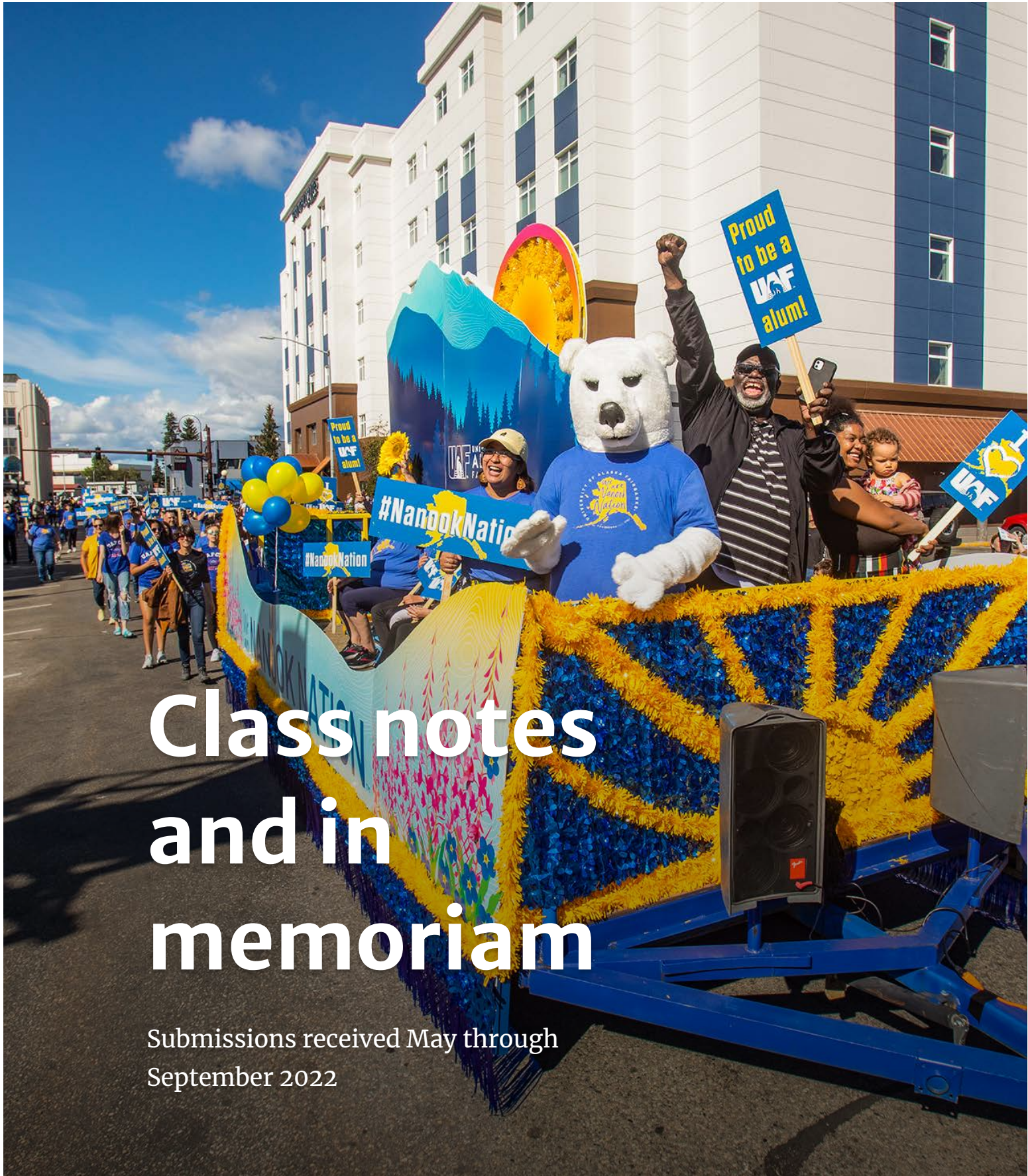


# AURORA

A large, colorful parade float is moving down a city street. On the float, a person in a large white polar bear mascot suit is wearing a blue t-shirt with the 'Nanook Nation' logo. Next to them, a man in a black jacket and sunglasses is cheering with his fist raised, holding a blue sign that says 'Proud to be a UCF alum!'. A woman in a blue shirt is also on the float, holding a sign that says '#NanookNation'. The float is decorated with blue and yellow balloons and a large blue and yellow tinsel garland. In the background, a tall white building with blue accents is visible under a clear blue sky. Other people are walking along the parade route.

## Class notes and in memoriam

Submissions received May through  
September 2022

*Above: Nook is flanked by alumni Ray Alda '21, left, and Darryl Lewis '88, right, while waving at spectators from UAF's parade float during the 2022 Golden Days celebration. UAF photo by Eric Engman. Photos below provided by alumni unless otherwise noted.*



*Deanna Dieringer*

**Deanna Dieringer '87** retired after 33 years with UAF at the end of May. Deanna served as the director of the Office of Financial Aid for the last 14 years, leading the office in disbursing over half a billion dollars in aid to assist students with their educational goals. She is proud to be a fifth generation Alaskan who attended Denali Elementary, Ryan Jr. High and Lathrop High School. She began at UAF as a student-athlete on the women's basketball team in 1983. She

graduated with her bachelor's in business administration in 1987 and joined the staff at the Office of Admissions and Records in 1989. She can still be found cheering on the Nanooks at the Patty Center.



*Rep. Scott Kawasaki '06, right, presents Alaska Native Language Center director **Walkie Charles '88, '12**, center, and **Charlene Stern '18**, vice chancellor for rural, community and Native education, left, with a legislative proclamation honoring the Alaska Native Language Center as it celebrates its 50th anniversary in the Wood Center on Tuesday, Oct. 4, 2022. UAF photo by Eric Engman.*

**Walkie Charles '88, '12** is the director of the Alaska Native Language Center and is the first Alaska Native to hold the position in the center's 50-year history.

“My role is to emphasize that we serve our communities by keeping our culture and languages alive,” Walkie said. “ANLC has the responsibility of documenting, promoting, cultivating and revitalizing Alaska Native languages and cultures.”

“I want to make our people in Alaska know that ANLC is a space that is accessible for learning more about the languages of our past elders,” he said.

Walkie grew up in Emmonak, a village in western Alaska, and learned two Yup’ik dialects from birth. He was one of the first from his village to attend college. He first earned a bachelor’s degree in education at UAF. He then attended the University of Massachusetts Amherst and received a Master of Education in 1994. Walkie completed his Ph.D. work in linguistics at UAF.

[Read more](#)



*Dee Dee Ivanoff*

**Dee Dee Ivanoff '91** is the St. Mary's School District superintendent and a leader in community organizing. This summer she spent many hours [working to support the fire crews](#) who were on scene in the southwestern Alaska village to battle the tundra fires. She's been liaising between the community and the different responding organizations, overseeing donations and helping with evacuation plans. She's also helped agencies rent trucks from locals who evacuated.

Dee Dee is the first Yup'ik superintendent of the St. Mary's School District. She's from the village and moved back during the pandemic to help her aging parents. When the former superintendent left, the district asked Ivanoff to take the job.



*Mary Ehrlander (third from right) joins a group of Alaskans who helped bring about the Walter Harper statue in downtown Fairbanks. Sculptor Gary Lee Price stands at far right. UAF photo by Sam Bishop.*

**Mary Ehrlander '92, '93** and several other UAF alumni were among those who gathered July 19 as Alaskans celebrated the installation of a statue memorializing the first person to set foot on the top of Denali — the young Athabascan man Walter Harper.

Mary, a UAF professor emeritus of history, joined the effort to erect the statue after she

wrote the biography “Walter Harper: Alaska Native Son,” published in 2017.

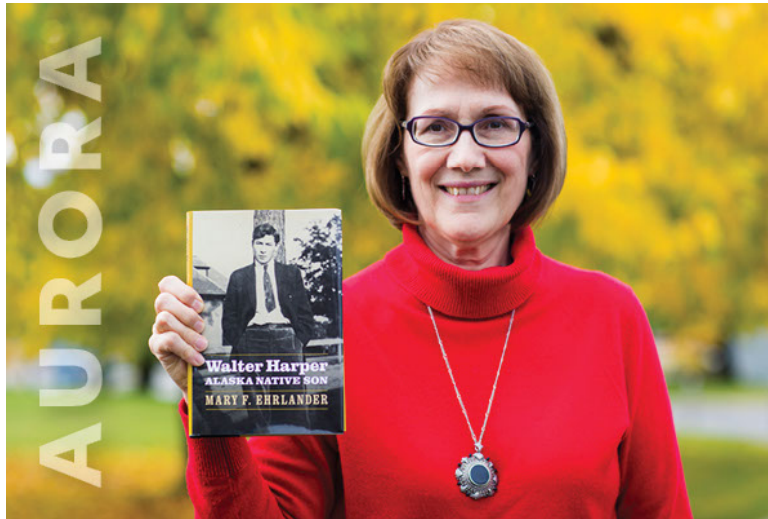
Harper climbed Denali with Episcopal Archdeacon Hudson Stuck, Harry Karstens and Robert Tatum in June 1913. John Fredson and Esaias George, also young Athabascan men, took care of the base camp and sled dog team while the climbers headed for the summit.

Mary, who now lives in Washington state, joined the memorial project team with Harper’s grandnephew and grandniece, Mike and **Johanna Harper ’76** of Anchorage. Other team members include Fairbanksans **Diana Campbell ’93, ’18**, who is Fredson's granddaughter and communications director for the Fairbanks Native Association; Bill Gordon III, a businessman whose father served Alaska as an Episcopal deacon and bishop from 1943 to 1974; Tanya Kaquatosh, Doyon Ltd.’s senior vice president of administration; **Darlene Bishop ’85**, a retired Fairbanks teacher; and **Angela Linn ’99**, senior collections manager at the UA Museum of the North.

The team commissioned Gary Lee Price, of Utah, to create the statue.

The project organizers had raised more than \$225,000 as of July 2022. They continue efforts to spread Harper’s story, in part by making

Mary's book available to teachers in Alaska schools. Read more about the book and Walter Harper in the [fall 2020 edition](#) of Aurora magazine.

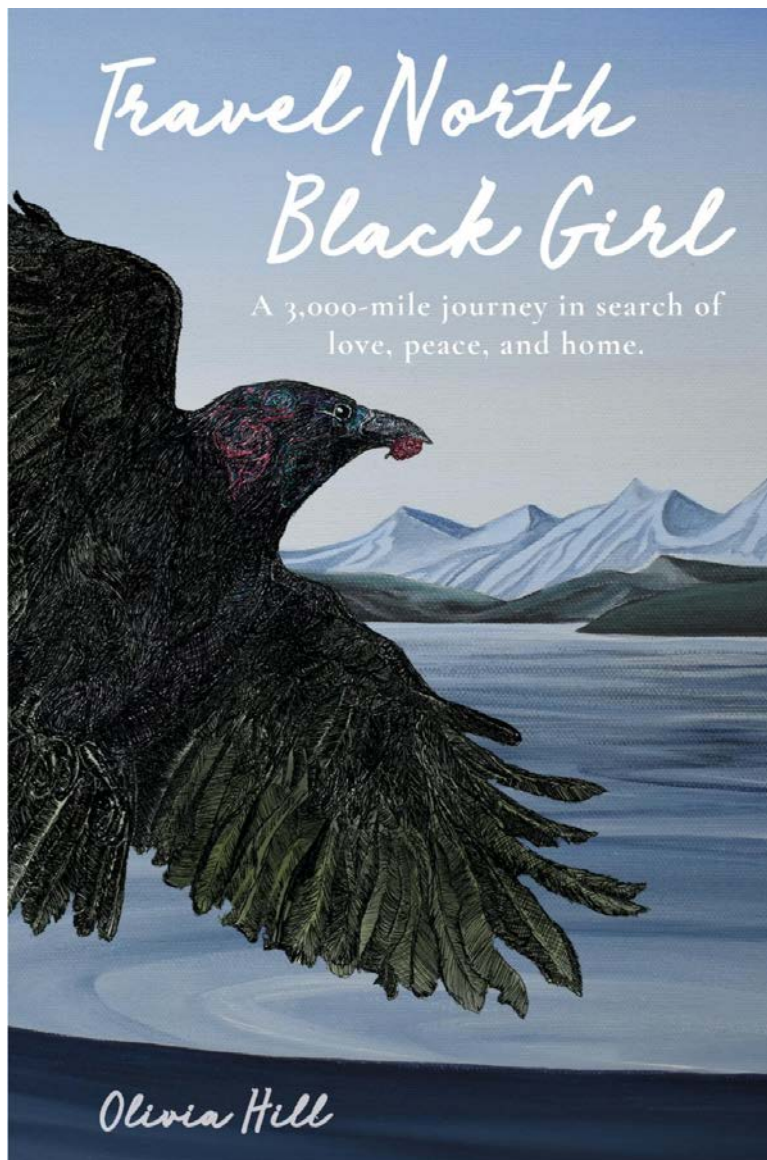


*Mary Ehrlander holds her book, "Walter Harper: Alaska Native Son." UAF photo by JR Ancheta.*



*Olivia Hill*

**Olivia Hill '94** is a playwright from Kansas City. She published a new memoir, “Travel North Black Girl,” at the end of May. The story switches back and forth between her Kansas City childhood and her move to a small village in Alaska as a newly married young woman.



*The cover of Olivia Hill's new book features a background painting by Fairbanks artist Klara Maisch '12 and a pen-and-ink sketch of a crow by Olivia.*

Olivia's story starts with the journey north from Kansas City to Alaska in the early 1980s and follows the difficulties of not knowing the culture and living in poverty. She sees the experience as one of healing.

Although the book only discusses her first year living in Alaska, Olivia stayed there for many years, earning a degree in theater from UAF. That's where she found her way into theater and storytelling.

[Read more](#)



*Tania Clucas*

**Tania Clucas '95, '08** is the new executive director of the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center in Fairbanks.

In that role, Tania manages and promotes the use of the building and oversees the development of fundraising opportunities to sustain and maintain the facilities and grounds of the center, named for the former CEO of Doyon Ltd. Since 2008, the building has hosted the visitor information center for Explore Fairbanks and the Interior branch of the Alaska Public Lands Information Center, as well as its own year-round exhibits, open to the public free of charge.

Tania comes to the position after most recently serving as legislative staff. Previously, she was a research program manager at UAF, where she earned degrees in geography and science management. Additionally, she is well known in the Interior as both a volunteer and volunteer recruiter.



*Brian Ridley*

**Brian Ridley '96** has been [appointed as the new chief and chairman of the Tanana Chiefs Conference](#). After earning his finance degree at UAF, he held various positions in the field of banking before serving as the chief financial officer for Tanana Chiefs Conference from 2008 to 2021.



*Brian Ridley is appointed as the new chief and chairman of the Tanana Chiefs Conference at the annual meeting in March 2022.*

Brian was a youth delegate at the Denakkanaaga Elders and Youth Conference and hopes that his position will inspire today's youth in the villages. During the conference, he faced the audience in the village of Tanana, as he shared what he felt during that time. "I think all I did was introduce myself, but I was so nervous," he said. "I always think back and try to tell our youth that kid, as a teenager, never could have imagined ending up running the company — so just trying to get the kids in our villages to realize that truly anything is possible."



*Nikoosh Carlo*

**Nikoosh Carlo '02** has been [appointed to the United States Arctic Research Commission](#) by President Joe Biden. The commission is an independent federal agency that advises the president and Congress on Arctic research.

“United States Arctic Research Commission is well known as a leader and partner on Arctic research policy and priorities,” said Nikoosh. “I look forward to working with the other commissioners to help build a long-term, action-oriented vision for Arctic research that is driven by community priorities and supports a healthy environment and regenerative economy.”

Nikoosh, who received a Ph.D. in neuroscience from the University of California San Diego and a B.S. in psychology from UAF, is the founder and chief strategist at CNC North Consulting.



*Suzzuk Mary Huntington*

Suzzuk Mary Huntington '02, '10 is the new Mt. Edgecumbe High School superintendent. Attending Mt. Edgecumbe as a student in the early '90s, Suzzuk began her path toward educational leadership. She remembered a project in her social studies class, where they had to propose a “community improvement project” to their legislators, budget and all.

Her experiences at Mt. Edgecumbe, and her passion for learning about other cultures, also showed her how integral it was to a person's education and sense of self.

After graduating, she moved back to Shishmaref and split her time between her own cultural education and remotely attending UAF. She eventually attended in person on campus and became involved with Rural Student Services.

"I was very shocked to discover that UAF, where all the village kids that I know attend as a first-choice school, had no Native dance group," she said. "And so I found some friends and got all the paperwork together and created the student club. And so the Iñu-Yupiaq Dance Group is still going strong."

She earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees in education and returned to Shishmaref to teach.

She held various roles in administration in Shishmaref and Koyuk before being promoted to the coordinator of cultural programs for the Bering Strait School District.

Culturally responsive education will be at the forefront of Suzzuk's work at Mt. Edgecumbe High School. She said it's usually misunderstood as cultural heritage or language courses, but for education to be "culturally responsive" goes beyond that.

"Culturally responsive education includes teaching math in a way that allows a student to reach their full potential because you know enough about the student, and their identity, and their heritage, and how that all fits in together," Suzzuk said. "I think being more visible and more intentional with our heritage and identity will allow us to be much more quickly successful with the academic content all across the board."

[Read more](#)



*Pearl Brower*

**Pearl Brower '04, '10, '16** has been [promoted to Ukpeaġvik Iñupiat Corp. president and CEO](#) after having served on the board since June 2021. In the past year she was the senior advisor to the UA system, focusing on Alaska Native success, institution diversity and student engagement.

Pearl received her Ph.D. in Indigenous studies with an emphasis in Indigenous leadership from UAF in 2016. She has a master's degree in Alaska Native and rural development from UAF and obtained a double bachelor's degree in anthropology and Alaska Native studies from UAF. Pearl also received an associate of arts degree in Iñupiaq studies from Iḷisaḡvik College in 2018, while she was working at Alaska's only tribal college in Utqiagvik. Between 2007 and 2020, Pearl was president of Iḷisaḡvik College for eight of those years.



*Soren Butler*

**Soren Butler '16, '17** has been [named head coach of Georgia Southern University's rifle team](#). A two-time All-American at UAF, Soren has

coached at West Virginia University for the past five seasons, with his team finishing fourth in 2021 and sixth this past season at the NCAA championships. He is looking forward to fulfilling his dream of leading a college rifle team.

A four-year letter winner at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Soren was a two-time NRA All-American with the Nanooks. He shot at the 2016 and 2017 NCAA championships, where he tied for eighth overall in smallbore (582) and air rifle (592). Soren also claimed the Patriot Rifle Conference Championship smallbore title as a senior, shooting a career-high 589.

The 2016-2017 team co-captain and MVP won the Nanooks' Joe Tremarello Sportsmanship Award in consecutive seasons (2015-2016 and 2016-2017). He finished his collegiate shooting career with highs of 594 in air rifle and 589 in smallbore.

Soren earned his bachelor's degree in general business in May 2016 and his MBA in May 2017, both from UAF. He earned a master's degree in sport management from West Virginia University in May 2019.



*Sagen Maddalena*

**Sagen Maddalena '18** [earned two gold medals](#) at USA Shooting's 2022 Rifle National Championships in June. The former Nanook and U.S. Olympian is a soldier who serves with the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit.

Sagen, pictured below in 2017 at UAF's shooting range in the Patty Center, was a member of the Nanooks rifle team from 2013 to 2018. Read more about her and the team in the [fall 2021 edition of Aurora](#).



*UAF photo by JR Ancheta.*





# In memoriam

[View a list of alumni and friends whose passage has been shared with us since the previous issue of Aurora.](#)







[Aurora home](#)