OLLI Winter Lectures

The first Fridays of December, January and February
3:00 – 4:30 pm in the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center Theatre
FREE and open to the public—registration is not required. Invite a potential new member!

December 6, 2019
Digging Dinosaurs in Alaska: the Pleasures and Pitfalls of Fossil Collecting in the Far North
by Patrick Druckenmiller
Alaska is home to amazing fossils, including the northernmost dinosaurs that ever lived. Safely accessing and collecting those fossils in Alaska presents unique challenges, but also opportunities. In this talk, paleontologist Dr. Patrick Druckenmiller describes what it takes to reach remote field sites and dig up those fossils, and how these hard-earned finds contribute amazing new information about life in ancient Alaska.

Patrick Druckenmiller is Director of the University of Alaska Museum and Professor of Geology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. He received his BA at the University of Wisconsin Madison, his MS at Montana State University Bozeman, and his PhD at the University of Calgary, Alberta. Pat’s research focuses on Mesozoic marine reptiles and dinosaurs, particularly those from high latitudes. He oversees numerous field-based projects across Alaska, particularly on Arctic dinosaurs from the North Slope and in Denali National Park and Preserve. He is also a collaborator on several marine reptile projects at various international sites, including Svalbard, Norway and, more recently, China. In 2018, Pat took on directorship of the UA Museum, which hosts ten diverse research collections, provides important educational opportunities, and welcomes nearly 90,000 visitors annually.

January 3, 2020
Transformed by Reindeer
by Jane Atkinson
One never knows what life will throw at you! When my daughter insisted on getting reindeer and did all the work to make that happen I had no idea what was in store for my life. A little side business during the midst of a career change completely transformed my life and allowed me to reach many dreams I never knew were possible. Come listen to my story about how reindeer transformed my life. As a friend told me, “See what happens when you won’t let your daughter have a pony!”

Jane Atkinson is a life-long Alaskan with many career paths, including teacher, nurse, mother, and entrepreneur. Always a lover of all things living, she has found her calling working with reindeer. As part of that she has even made peace with petunias, her least favorite flower.

February 7, 2020
An Interdependent People: Community, Conflict, and Change in Alaska
by Rev. Leslie Ahuvah Fails
Alaskans are a people with an independent streak like none other. Hundreds of thousands of Americans tune into reality programs showcasing our ability to “do it ourselves,” off the grid, in spite of extreme cold and isolation. Yet—as anyone who has ever stood in front of an eerily vacant dairy case at the store after a delayed grocery shipment can testify—to live in Alaska means to be uniquely dependent upon the functioning of infrastructure and the well-being of one’s community. What does it mean to be an interdependent people? What wisdom do we have to offer ourselves that will strengthen our minds and hearts in the years ahead?

Rev. Leslie Ahuvah Fails is the minister of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Fairbanks. She earned her Masters of Divinity (M. Div) from the Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley, California, and served as a trauma response chaplain at the University of Virginia Medical Center in Charlottesville, Virginia. The focus of her ministry is fostering resilience in the face of trauma, crisis, and uncertainty. She lives in Fairbanks with her husband and daughter.