

Annual Atuŕ Forever Newsletter

2022 TO 2023



PAGE 1

BOARD MEMBERS

Founding Board Members in 2022 and to our Board Members that are with us at the end of 2022.

PAGE 3

ANCESTRAL STOLEN REMAINS

We had a meeting with the Smithsonian, US Fish & Wildlife, National Park Service and with the Village of Atka.

PAGE 4

GRANTS & SUPPORT

We received two important grants this year that helps our mission. We are planning a lot for 2023.

PAGE 5

LEADERSHIP

To help achieve the mission and goals of the Saskinaŕ, Helena Schmitz humbly took the title Ilaaŕunaaŕ.



CULTURAL ASPECTS PAGE 6

Saskinaŕ is our word for our people, which represents those who come from the 5 islands: Atuŕ, Angatuŕ, Ayavaŕ, Alaid, & Samiya. Saskinaŕ means outsiders because we were a different culture because of our environment and location.

BOARD MEMBERS

Founding Board Members

We began our 2022 quietly like many just exiting the pandemic. We were originally founded in 2019 right before the pandemic. Thus, we started back up slowly in 2021 to 2022. We had our first two Founding Board Members, Damon Howell & James Pete Guyaushk join us in the beginning.

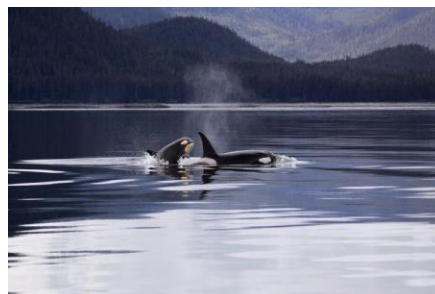


Damon was our first Founding Member who brought a background in from the US Air Force. He helped us with our policies and did extensive research. He helped design our two current logos. Mr. James Pete was our second Founding Board Member who helped interview and onboard our current Board Members. We had pleasure working with both of them; however, they both had to resign due to career and family situations.

BOARD MEMBERS

CURRENT BOARD MEMBERS

We welcomed four new Board Members during 2022! All bring a diverse and vast background to the team. We have been so grateful for such a wonderful and amazing team. We couldn't be where we are today without them! From left to right is Lauren Peters, Tobi Halliday, John Halliday ~Ağaġiyaġ, & Leon Reval. You can find more information about their backgrounds at <https://atuxforever.org/board-members/>



OTHER STAFF

Meet our Team



Our Co-Founder Theresa Deal is a passionate person who has such a great sense of humor. She makes everyone laugh during our meetings. Theresa is very supportive of our efforts. Theresa keeps the foundation of this organization strong and sturdy. Her leadership is really appreciated and her Ancestors, including her mother Marina Hodikoff are smiling down on her.



Dr. Nancy Billica is our Founding Adviser. She has heard of Saskinaġ, Attuans due to the founder, Helena, reaching out to her when she was a young student trying to find her place in the world and has helped her student since. Nancy Billica is a political scientist who has been part of the teaching faculty at the University of Colorado Boulder since 1998. She has an extensive record working as a researcher, writer, and consultant with several public policy and nonprofit organizations related to environmental, human rights, and social policy issues. We are so thankful that she is part of our team.

ANCESTRAL STOLEN REMAINS

From the Smithsonian

Our non-profit, Atuġ Forever, has been working on returning our Saskinaġ (Attuan) Ancestral Stolen Remains from the Smithsonian since 2018. This last March of 2022 we met with the Smithsonian, the Village of Atka, the National Park Service and with the US Fish & Wildlife to create a plan in regard to returning the remains that Anthropologist Ales Hrdlicka stole in 1936 while a Smithsonian employee. There is a total of 108 Saskinaġ, with 8 Saskinaġ specifically from Atuġ, currently in the basement holdings of the Smithsonian. We are planning on bringing these 8 remains home to Atuġ (Attu) in the Summer of 2023.

Forty-one people of Attu were taken prisoners in WWII by the Japanese. After the war, the American government refused to return the 20 survivors to Atuġ, instead offering a permanent settlement on Atka. Some accepted the offer, and others remained at large in Seattle and other places. When ANSCA passed in 1972, the Attu villagers were not federally recognized because they didn't live on their ancestral lands. So, while the Saskinaġ remains are set to be returned, the Smithsonian will only pay for the remains to be returned to Atka, the closest federally recognized Unangaġ village. The Smithsonian will not pay for these remains to be returned to Atuġ, our final destination for our relatives. Thus, Atuġ Forever sought funds to return our loved ones rightfully home. The Alaska Maritime Refuge Manager at that time, Steve Delehanty, gracefully made an in-kind donation of \$90,258, which includes the US Fish and Wildlife Service crew in their research vessel, Tiġlaġ, to help Saskinaġ (Attuans) to travel from Adak to Atuġ to be part of the ceremony. It costs \$12,894 per day to run the Tiġlaġ. The current plan is travel with the remains to Adak, and from there take them aboard the Tiġlaġ to Atuġ in August of 2023.

Atuġ Forever successfully sought funds for travel expenses (airplane, hotel, stipend) for Saskinaġ to fly from Anchorage to board the Tiġlaġ on Adak. We are pleased to announce that the Alaska

Community Foundation grant will help pay for 4-6 Saskinax to travel from Anchorage to Adak. If you are interested in participating, please reach out to us! The founder's email, Helena Schmitz is attuanjustice@gmail.com.

GRANTS & SUPPORTERS

Grantors & Organizations

As mentioned above, the Alaska Community Foundation has funded our organization through their Social Justice grants in both 2021 and 2022. We are thrilled to receive a grant under the First Nations Development Institute that began in 2022 and will be completed by 2023. This grant is helping us become culturally affiliated with our islands as well as becoming Stewards of our lands and oceans. Altogether, these grants are helping us become more established and become part of our community and larger Indigenous community.



The
Alaska Community
Foundation



FIRST NATIONS
DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

We have other supporters as well. We have a strong partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Alaska Maritime Wildlife Refuge. We were able to visit their Refuge Center in Homer, Alaska from November 30th to December 3rd, 2022. They explained what their agency oversees and what their goals are. One of their main goals is to protect seabirds for many reasons. Culturally, Saskinax were intertwined with all of the seabirds. Atux Forever and their refuge have similar goals and aspirations for Atux. We are excited about what the future holds with this partnership. Another partnership we have one is with the Japanese American Memorial Pilgrimages (<https://www.jampilgrimages.com/>), which is the red logo below.



We were first introduced to their organization when they hosted a virtual Pilgrimage in 2021 and a sub-story was titled "Unangaax Pilgrimages & Oral Histories." Feel free to watch this video at: <https://youtu.be/Fbs8KMLmyN8>.

Our organization wants to honor and recognize others that experienced their human rights being turned aside and ignored during WWII. Their mission is: "...is to provide a centralized resource for promoting pilgrimages and educating people about the World War II Japanese-American incarceration camps." When we work together to ensure these rights are returned to our people

collectively our reconciliation is more complete. We are so thankful for all our grantors and supporters. We look forward to creating many more.

LEADERSHIP

HELENA ANGELINE PAGANO SCHMITZ

Aang, I am the daughter of Ralph and Mary Pagano, Granddaughter of Angeline Hodikoff, and the Great Granddaughter of Michael Hodikoff. Ilaagunaaĥ means Chief of Angatuĥ and Atuĥ. I humbly have taken the step forward to be the leader of the Saskinaĥ. Our Ancestors have waited for our family to step forward to help our people and this is our time. It is my honor to be able to help the Saskinaĥ for our past, current, and future generations. I understand I need to sacrifice many things in life to be this person. I will lead the Hodikoff family with strength and wisdom. I am sent to this world to tell the world of our people and our family's stories so we will never be forgotten. We were recognized as a tribe before WWII, and we are over due to be recognized. Our dignity and existence need to be acknowledged. As an organization we had our first resolution recognizing this leadership role in May of 2022.



This is the potluck that was held in 2022 to honor our family and my stepping forward for our family. I wore the Yup'ik headdress in honor of my Cousin Dajan who made this for me, which is made from sea otter and wolf. My whole life I have been guided by the wolf. The wolf is very loyal as I am. One thing I like about this photo is that my family is in front of me and beside me. It is a wonderful feeling that we are a loving and caring pack.

CULTURAL ASPECT

History and Identity

Saskinaġ is our word for our people, which represents those who come from the 5 islands: Atuġ, Angatuġ, Ayavaġ, Alaid, & Samiya. Saskinaġ means outsiders because we were a different culture because of our environment and location. These islands in English are known as the Near Islands. Atuġ (Attu) is 240 miles away from Copper Island, Russian and Buldir Island is 65 miles away from Shemya. The Saskinaġ were aware of these islands and their neighbors that lived there.

Isolated islands created a beautiful culture of people, Saskinaġ, just like the endemic birds that reside there. Endemic means they only exist in a certain place. These birds only live in the Near Islands and a few examples are the Red Leg Kittiwake, the Whisker Auklet, and the Rock Ptarmigan. The Near Island Sparrow is the largest in the world. Hundreds of seabird species call these 5 islands home. Samiya alone has 145 species of 27 families of birds. There are 25 terrestrial passerines and large birds of prey that are year-round residents. There are five islands and Atuġ is the largest island of all five. Below is a table of the acreage and shoreline of each island.

Island	Acreage	Shoreline in miles
Atuġ	223,812	152.6
Angatuġ	55,353	70.5
Ayavaġ	1,707	11.8
Alaid	1,468	9.4
Samiya	3,520	13.4

Atuġ has rugged mountains and U-shaped glacial valleys. Angatuġ has rolling hills and terraces. The 3 smaller islands are low and flat. Alaid has some hills. Samiya has some high sea cliffs and 15 lakes. Alaid and Ayavaġ has a sandbar as wide as 50 meters which is exposed at low tide. Words cannot truly demonstrate to any reader how amazing these islands are. But one thing is for sure, current Saskinaġ deserve to see, touch, feel, and experience these islands. Prior to contact, there were about 115 villages and cultural sites within these islands. The main inhabited island was Angatuġ, probably for many reasons. One of them, was winters were harsh on Atuġ. Saskinaġ travelled away from Atuġ and harvested during wintertime up until WWII.

The Near Islands year-round marine mammal residents were: Pacific white-sided dolphins, Dall & Harbor porpoise, Orcas, Beaked Whales (Cuviers, Bairds, Stejnegers), and Sperm Whales. There are about nine rookeries for Stellar sea lions in this area. There are of course sea otters. Seasonal animals were Blue, Fin, Sei, Minke whales, and fur seals. These islands are rich in fish as well. Every stream on Atuġ supports runs of pink salmon and similarly on the other islands. Angatuġ had a lot of silver salmon. There are halibut, cod, and freshwater fish such as the Dolly Carden char. There is more and much marine abundance in these islands that sustained a way of life for thousands of years. Not even mentioning the abundance of plants and berries that also were an integral part of daily life. The Saskinaġ had the healthiest diet on this planet rich in fish, marine mammals, and berries. Each newsletter will have a clip into our culture's history that will help us understand who we are and where we come from.

Topographic Map of Region



IN MEMORY JUNE 3RD 1947 TO MAY 18TH 2022

Mary Charlotte Riley Pagano

We would like to honor our SASKINAÅ Elder Mary Charlotte Riley Pagano born on June 3, 1947, two years after WWII to her mother Angeline Riley. She was the Eldest of 8 children. Her Mother Angeline was a survivor from the Japanese imprisonment. Angeline experienced and witnessed many war crimes. Her first was watching her first husband and baby die then watching her father be medically

experimented on. She experienced both physical and sexual assault from the Japanese. You have to understand these SASKINAÅ were isolated and innocent people. They would have contact with outsiders from time to time, but they never knew truly what the world could do to innocent people. As a result of three years of trauma, Angeline struggled to say the least to find her sense of the world again. Mary, as the eldest, was the direct recipient of this legacy of trauma caused by the Japanese. She was so strong and tried her best to reduce this trauma to her siblings by taking care of them. As a result, she had to grow up fast and leave her childhood behind. Mary grew up in Dillingham, Alaska and eventually left for college to attend Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado. After college she returned to Anchorage, Alaska and met and fell in love with Ralph Pagano in 1969. Ralph and Mary had two children, Theodore and Helena (Founder). She was always caring and attentive to her children. She has five grandchildren. She is holding her fourth grandchild, Brad Lorenzo Schmitz when he was only 6 days old. Mary was trying to show Brad a Broncos game. Her love of football was a funny characteristic about her - she had to make sure her



new grandchild was watching. Hearing her laughter will be missed. One thing she would always tell people was that she was Aleut. She was very proud of where her family comes from even though she did not get an opportunity to see Atux in her lifetime. Atux Forever's mission is in part in dedication to her and her grandchildren.





Items from Atux (rocks, seashells, sea urchin, bones)