

SERVING RURAL ALASKA  
With a suite of customized financial solutions

Bering Straits Regional Housing Authority (BSRHA) President and CEO Jolene Lyon credits a large portion of the organization’s success to the networks they have built over the years. “We have strong relationships with the companies and people who help us move materials, and we’re building more connections every day.”

Her bankers at First National are a crucial part of that network. “First National is there for us when we need them,” Lyon said. “When I call or email our bankers, they respond right away.”

Lyon relies on First National’s One Solution suite of financial services to meet all of their banking needs. “First National helps us leverage our funding so we can spend it most effectively,” said Lyon.



Lyon appreciates that BSRHA and First National share the same values of being dedicated to the communities they serve and helping fellow Alaskans in need.

RELATIONSHIP BANKING

Banking with a local team saves Lyon the headache of explaining the challenges of doing business in Alaska. “Through our banking relationships, we learn about our customers’ needs and industries, because we are invested in the success of Alaska communities across the state,” said Kuskokwim Branch Manager Nili Sundown.

Sundown, who lives in Bethel, knows the obstacles Lyon faces firsthand. “Whatever rain falls on them, the same rain is falling on me. I know what they’re going through,” Sundown said. “When BSRHA is experiencing a challenge, whether importing materials or a local emergency, First National is ready to help.” Whenever Lyon needs support, Sundown is just a phone call away.

By striving to understand its customers’ cultures and challenges, First National forms unique banking relationships and offers customized solutions, even in Alaska’s most remote communities.

“Whether they’re a direct beneficiary or not,” Sundown explained, “Jolene’s goals positively affect every single member of their region.”

REMOTE DEPOSIT CAPTURE

“Being able to bank digitally makes not having a branch in Nome a nonfactor,” Lyon said. First National’s online and mobile banking tools enable secure, fast decisions that help Lyon’s team bank anytime from anywhere. One of those tools is First National’s Remote Deposit Capture, allowing BSRHA to scan and send images of their checks to First National to deposit directly into the organization’s business accounts.

FRAUD PREVENTION SOLUTIONS

Minimizing fraud is essential to organizations like BSRHA, which needs to make the most of the limited funding it receives. Treasury Management Consultant Sherilee Keopuhiwa worked with the BSHRA team to identify warning signs and help protect their organization from fraud in the future. “First National’s fraud prevention tools raise red flags so our team can review the suspicious transactions,” Lyon said. “They help us not only prevent check fraud but streamline our business.”

It’s a task that First National’s entire banking team takes seriously.

ONE SOLUTION LENDING

When Lyon asked about refinancing some existing debt, Sundown took advantage of the bank’s One Solution model to provide a better lending option. Since BSRHA has an investment portfolio with First National’s Wealth Management and Trust department, Sundown could offer an investment-collateralized loan. This loan type offers a simpler lending model than a real-estate loan and more flexibility since it is secured by the borrower’s own assets.

“This exemplifies the benefits of building a 360-degree financial partnership with our customers,” said Sundown. “Because of our relationship, we were able to positively impact the mission of the Bering Straits Regional Housing Authority.”

“Whatever rain falls on them, the same rain is falling on me.”

NILI SUNDOWN  
MANAGER  
KUSKOKWIM BRANCH

Locations

Statewide . . . . . 1-800-856-4362

ANCHORAGE BRANCHES

. . . . . 907-777-4362

Dimond Branch  
Eastchester Branch  
Metro Branch  
Muldoon Branch  
North Star Branch  
Northern Lights Branch  
South Center Branch  
U-Med Branch

BETHEL

Kuskokwim Branch . . . . . 907-543-7650

CORDOVA

Cordova Branch . . . . . 907-424-6700

EAGLE RIVER

Eagle River Branch . . . . . 907-689-5200

FAIRBANKS

Golden Valley Branch . . . . . 907-459-7100  
Johansen Branch . . . . . 907-450-7300

GLENNALLEN

Glennallen Branch . . . . . 907-822-7350

HAINES

Haines Branch . . . . . 907-766-6100

HEALY

Healy Branch . . . . . 907-683-7750

HOMER

Homer Branch . . . . . 907-235-5800

JUNEAU

Juneau Regional Branch . . . 907-586-5400  
Valley Centre Branch . . . . . 907-790-8000

KENAI

Kenai Branch . . . . . 907-283-6800

KETCHIKAN

Loan Production Office . . . . 907-777-3426

KODIAK

Kodiak Branch . . . . . 907-486-7900

PALMER

Palmer Branch . . . . . 907-746-8900

SEWARD

Seward Branch . . . . . 907-224-4200

SITKA

Sitka Branch . . . . . 907-747-7000

SOLDOTNA

Soldotna Branch . . . . . 907-260-6000

VALDEZ

Valdez Branch . . . . . 907-834-4800

WASILLA

Wasilla Branch . . . . . 907-352-5900

FIRST NATIONAL BANK ALASKA’S

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JOLENE LYON | PRESIDENT AND CEO  
BERING STRAITS REGIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

BUILDING COMMUNITIES  
One home at a time

Bering Straits Regional Housing Authority’s (BSRHA) goal is anything but simple: *provide affordable, decent, sanitary and safe housing opportunities to low-income families in the villages throughout the Bering Straits Region.* It’s no small feat. The organization serves 17 villages across 23,000 square miles, an area where a small home can cost up to a million dollars to build.

Raised in Nome, BSRHA President and CEO Jolene Lyon, knows firsthand how tough it can be to find and maintain affordable housing in the region. Every day, she juggles logistics and funding needs to overcome limited resources in the remote communities BSRHA serves. To accomplish their mission, Lyon relies on community partnerships and relationships with experts in business and banking.

“First National has been with us the whole time... they take the time to know our business.”

JOLENE LYON  
PRESIDENT AND CEO  
BERING STRAITS REGIONAL  
HOUSING AUTHORITY

BSRHA, based in Nome, provides housing opportunities to low-income families throughout the Bering Straits Region.



THE MILLION-DOLLAR HOME

Alaska’s short construction season and the high cost of labor are two reasons why it’s difficult to build affordable housing in the Bering Straits region. Many skilled tradespeople must be contracted from out of state. “An electrician in the Lower 48 may not want to take a job in Alaska when they have another opportunity closer to home,” Lyon explained.

Another obstacle is the ever-increasing cost of materials. “Prices have increased almost 50% in recent years. What used to be a \$35 sheet of plywood is now \$60 and that’s not including remote shipping fees or the cost of installation.”

It was difficult to get BSRHA’s former, non-Alaska bank to understand such a large price tag, said Lyon – and that was before they knew it was for a modest home with no garage and no landscaping. It was clear that their large national bank was unfamiliar with rural Alaska’s unique challenges. She began to wonder what other options were available.

LOCAL SOLUTIONS REQUIRE LOCAL EXPERTISE

The answer found her when Lyon received a handwritten holiday card from a banker at First National Bank Alaska. They hardly knew one another, but Lyon was touched that First National had taken the time to write to her personally, so she responded.

“Not only did First National listen to my concerns, they booked a flight to Nome to come speak with me face to face.” After one lunch, Lyon knew she had found a bank that understood the unique housing challenges of rural Alaska.

Today, Lyon sees her First National bankers, Treasury Management Consultant Sherilee Keopuhiwa and Kuskokwim Branch Manager Nili Sundown, as valuable members of BSRHA’s finance team.

“Nili and Sherilee help us secure financing and invest our assets, so we can focus on following the guidelines for the grants and federal funds we receive,” Lyon explained.

PROVIDING MORE THAN HOMES

BSRHA has helped provide more than 400 safe and affordable housing opportunities to low-income families throughout the Bering Straits Region, as well as employment opportunities, training and education. They show no signs of stopping. Today, Lyon is focused on providing reliable housing to the residents of Teller, Alaska, who have to relocate because of significant flooding and erosion of their townsite.

Lyon relied on her strong relationships to foster consensus around the new townsite. After a community member told BSRHA that the best place to build would be across from the airport, Lyon did what she does best; she brought all stakeholders – the Native Village of Teller, Native Village of Mary’s Igloo, City of Teller and Teller Native Corporation – together. “In the end, we were in agreement.”

“First National has been with us the whole time,” said Lyon. “Sherilee and Nili have both visited Teller with me. Sherilee went first when it was raw land, and then Nili went to see the foundational pad. They take the time to know our business.”

From finding the right loan program, whether it be Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), HUD Section 184, Title 6, or conventional, to driving on the 72-mile stretch of dirt road from Nome to Teller, Kuskokwim Branch Manager Nili Sundown loves connecting with Lyon about the communities they both serve. “I’m just so proud that BSRHA trusts us to provide the right banking services to help them develop much-needed affordable housing across the region.”

BSRHA is helping relocate residents of Teller, Alaska, because of significant flooding and erosion at their current townsite.



AT YOUR DOORSTEP

Treasury Management Consultant Sherilee Keopuhiwa applies her 20 years of banking experience to provide the right solutions to help her customers thrive. She is passionate about providing the absolute best customer service, even when that means jumping on a plane to Nome.

“When our customers call, we’re there for them,” Keopuhiwa said. “It’s one way we show our commitment to providing personalized banking service to rural communities and villages.”

Kuskokwim Branch Manager Nili Sundown couldn’t agree more. She’s called Bethel home for more than 26 years and is driven to help her friends and neighbors succeed. “I want the residents of rural Alaska communities to know we’re here to meet all their financial needs,” Sundown said.

Connect with your local banker at [FNBAlaska.com](https://fnb.alaska.com)



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