



News Release

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Alaska Railroad releases 2024 official print

ARRC conductor's artwork celebrates the all-women, Athabascan crew of section hands near Cantwell in the 1940s

ANCHORAGE, Alaska - The Alaska Railroad announces the release and print signing dates for *Women on the Railroad*, celebrating the all-women, Athabascan crew of section hands who worked near Cantwell in 1945. Artist and ARRC conductor Riana Sather was the Alaska Railroad's 2024 selected winning artist. The public can meet Riana at print signing events scheduled for Fairbanks and Anchorage in January 2024.

Entitled *Women on the Railroad*, the Alaska Railroad's 2024 artwork celebrates the nine women who worked the Cantwell rail section from 1945 to the early 1950's. When the 714th Railway Battalion departed Cantwell in 1945 after two years of working the area, it left the Alaska Railroad in dire need of workers to maintain the section's track.

Alice Norton and three other women - Lucille Tyone, Yetta Stickivan and Mary Stickivan were initially hired on a trial basis to perform the heavy, manual labor associated with section maintenance. Over the course of the next several summers, a crew of Athabascan women drove spikes, lined track and laid ties along the Cantwell section - an area that became well known for its meticulous maintenance under their stewardship. The 2024 artwork celebrates the Athabascan women who left an enduring legacy of grit and determination ensuring that passengers and freight could continue to move along the rail during Alaska's territorial days.



ALASKA
RAILROAD

Women on the Railroad, by artist Riana Sather for Alaska Railroad's 2024 Art Print Program

Maggie Oliver, daughter of Alice Norton, shared that her mother’s work for the railroad was undertaken to support her family, saying “they were used to hard work” adding that her mother and the other women had worked in gold mining operations. Oliver described her mother’s rail work as extremely physically demanding, but despite her 5-foot tall frame, Norton could outwork just about anyone. Oliver and her family have a long connection to the Alaska



An all-women, Athabascan section crew working near Cantwell. Alice Norton (center) swinging spike maul. Women who worked the Cantwell section included Alice Norton, Yetta Stickivan, Mary Stickivan, Helen Stickivan, Grace Secondchief, Jane Tansey, Lucille Tyone, Olga Tyone, and Valdez Tyone.

Photo courtesy: Alaska Railroad

Railroad, with her father, uncle, brother and husband, Thomas Oliver (a Roadmaster), all having worked for the Alaska Railroad. When asked what she thought of her mother and the Cantwell crew being celebrated in the 2024 art print program, she said “I think it’s wonderful” later going on to describe her mother’s keen sight and the ability to accurately swing a nine pound hammer.

Determination and resilience is a sentiment shared by artist Riana Sather, as the women’s legacy was an inspiration for this piece. Working as a conductor for the railroad, Sather related to the demanding nature of the work, writing “I was inspired by these women. Creating this artwork with dry pastel and acrylic paint helped solidify a connection with them. It filled a part of my soul as I considered their grit and bravery.”

Sather was born and raised as a “fiery and ambitious Texas gal” and has loved making art for as long as she can remember. When she was seventeen and still in high school, she had an opportunity to move to Alaska. A move she made on her own. She began preliminary studies in college with her first two years paid through art scholarships. In 2021, Sather graduated with honors from the University of Alaska Anchorage and acquired a Bachelor of Fine Arts.



Artist Riana Sather. Photo courtesy: Riana Sather

Sather worked on the railroad for five years as a cook, server and bartender. It was during this time that she developed a heartfelt sentiment for trains. She found

herself star struck by the inspirational train conductors, so much so that she decided to work towards her very own license and hat. Sather's love for art and the railroad has led her on incredible journeys all around the state. Inspired by its beauty and rail that runs through its core, Sather made submissions to the Alaska Railroad's art competition. Sather says she is grateful for the opportunities life has afforded her, but nothing compares to the chance to connect with people. People love to share their stories as she serves them aboard her trains, one that even inspired creating *Women on the Railroad*.

The public can meet artist Riana Sather at two sign-and-sale events scheduled for January 2024:

- **FAIRBANKS:** Saturday, Jan. 13, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Fairbanks Depot (1031 Alaska Railroad Depot Road, Fairbanks)
- **ANCHORAGE:** Saturday, Jan. 20, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Anchorage Historic Depot (411 W. 1st Avenue, Anchorage)

Like wheels against the rail, Sather leaves sparks of creativity in multiple galleries and gift shops across the railbelt. More of Riana's artwork can be found at:

- <https://www.instagram.com/artsyrere/>
- <https://www.artsyrere.com/>

ARRC's art print program began 44 years ago, when renowned artist John Van Zyle was commissioned. Since that 1979 beginning, the annual tradition (except in 1984, when no painting was released) has evolved into a popular collector's item. Find more information, including history and images of past prints on www.AlaskaRailroad.com/Corporate > [IN THE COMMUNITY](#) > [Annual Print Contest](#).

The Alaska Railroad is a state-owned corporation providing year-round inter-city public rail transportation and freight service from Seward to Anchorage to Fairbanks. Moving over 450,000 passengers and 3.7 million tons of freight annually - safety, service excellence, integrity, teamwork and sustainability are at the core of its operations.

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The ARRC is an Equal Opportunity Corporation. If you need special assistance (including language) in order to participate in any ARRC service, program, or activity, please contact the Alaska Railroad Corporation; P.O. Box 107500; Anchorage, AK 99510; Attention: Legal Department, zappasj@akrr.com, (907) 265-2461; via Alaska Relay Service for hearing impaired - dial 7 11 anywhere inside Alaska, OR dial toll-free from anywhere outside the state 1-800-770-8255 (voice); 1-800 770-8973 (TTY). Upon request, printed materials can be made available in alternate formats.