



## Kenaitze Indian Tribe 2011 Annual Report

*To assure Kahitnuht'ana Dena'ina thrive forever*

## Meet the Kenaitze Indian Tribe Executive Council!

Seven council members, who are elected at our annual meeting, govern the Tribe in accordance with our constitution, by-laws, ordinances and resolutions.



Rosalie Tepp  
Tribal Chair



MaryAnn Mills  
Vice Chair



James Segura  
Secretary



Mary Lou Bottorff  
Treasurer



Bob Fulton  
Council Member



Jonathan Ross  
Council Member



Wayne Wilson  
Council Member

## Our Purpose

To assure Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina thrive forever

## Our Vision

By 2025, Dena'ina are prosperous, healthy and culturally strong.

- We will work toward united effort with Native organizations and other governments that impact our people.
- We will develop and implement a Tribal education system.
- We will live out our traditional values and practices.
- We will empower our sovereignty.
- We will achieve having enough to take care of ourselves and share with others and being resilient.
- We will strive for excellence in all of our programs.
- We will elevate the wellness of our people.

## Our Values

- Family - honoring and sustaining health and happiness of family as a first responsibility.
- Stewardship - respectful use of land, resources and all creations.
- Spiritual Beliefs - acknowledging the existence of a higher power and respecting spiritual beliefs.
- Education - passing down cultural knowledge and traditions and supporting formal education.

## *Yaghalí 'du!*

As temperatures begin to drop, leaves turn to bold shades of red and yellow, and the first snow is spotted in the mountains – I find this season the perfect time for reflection.

What an incredible year it has been for the Kenaitze Indian Tribe! 2011 has been marked by tremendous growth and change as we continue to build the infrastructure needed to prepare for our future. We have made significant long-term investments to improve facilities, equipment and technology, which will help sustain and grow our programs to meet the needs of our people in the best possible way.

Over the past five years, our operating budget has either increased or remained stable, despite challenging economic conditions. Our strong financial position has allowed us to provide a balanced budget to deliver over \$12 million in programs and services this year in our area. This means that Tribal members continue to have greater access now and in the future to an increasing number of health, social, justice, educational and employment services and opportunities.

This year, our Tribal Council and staff have focused on several priority projects, including fundraising for and finalizing the conceptual design of the new Dena'ina Wellness Center. This facility will integrate all of our health services in one location – providing greater access and improved continuity of care to the over 5,000 individuals whom we now serve.

Part of our effort to build infrastructure includes an investment in our workforce through increased training and education opportunities, the implementation of a new compensation system and enhanced employee recognition. Today, we employ over 190 people within our programs. More than half of our staff have college degrees or specialized certifications, and many more have attended college classes or are enrolled in education programs. We are committed in the next year to providing educational opportunities and support for Tribal members and staff in alignment with our purpose statement. We will focus on increasing awareness of Dena'ina culture and language, as well as offering support and guidance in connecting people to training and education in anticipation of the employment opportunities at the new Dena'ina Wellness Center. We will also plan for improving primary education through curriculum development that is based on Dena'ina knowledge, culture and values that includes a feasibility study for a potential new Tribal charter school.

As I reflect on this year, I remember our Elders who have come before us, and the leadership that has set much of the foundation for where we are today. I think about the strength they had as they navigated an ever-changing social and political climate, while steadfastly moving forward to provide greater opportunities for generations to come. As I look back at all that has happened in 2011, it is obvious that their sacrifice and efforts live on.

Chiqinik, thank you, for all you do to help ensure Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina thrive forever!



Jaylene Peterson-Nyren  
Executive Director



# *Housing and the Environment*

Ensuring available and safe housing for our people is an important part of reaching our vision. Kenaitze Indian Tribe operates a variety of programs to: address health and safety issues in homes; provide temporary financial assistance for individuals moving toward self-sufficiency; assist individuals and families throughout the home-buying process; and, provide snow plowing and sanding services for Elders and people with handicaps.

The Ames Road Project is a special initiative that aims to further promote Tribal beliefs and ways by bringing Elders and new families together in a community much like our traditional villages. This setting will allow young families to benefit from the Elders' experience and wisdom, while helping Elders to feel they are still significant and needed.

For a list and description of all our housing projects, visit <http://www.kenaitze-nsn.gov/housing>.

It is our strong belief that we are each responsible to be stewards of our land and resources. This year the Environmental Program accomplished several environmental protection goals. We completed a Wetlands Protection grant from the Environmental Protection Agency, which incorporated Tribal field workers attending live fish traps of juvenile salmon, culvert assessments and observations of these potential salmon streams. We located and added 20 new miles of salmon streams, which will now be protected habitat.

The 2011 Wildwood Project consisted of two primary goals: 1) remove the concrete debris from the Building 100 demolition project that took place in 2010, and 2) characterize the extent of the hydrocarbon soil contamination at the High Frequency Site. The crew spent June and July digging through the underground portion of the site digging up more concrete supports and underground utilities, including a section of piping containing asbestos material. During the 2009 season, the crew discovered contaminated soil while removing a concrete pump house. This summer, Cook Inlet Environmental assisted the crew in performing a site characterization. The test results showed approximately 200 cubic yards of contaminated soil at the site. The environmental consultant and the Wildwood crew are in the process of removing the soil from the ground and transporting it to Anchorage where it will be burned and recycled.

## *2011 Highlights:*

- We have improved the homes of 14 Tribal families with the addition of new roofs, energy-efficient heating systems, handicap accessibility upgrades, and many new doors and windows.
- Our Housing Crew works to make sure every home we work in has working smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors and energy-efficient light bulbs before the job is finished.





# Health and Wellness

Kenaitze Indian Tribe understands and values a holistic, person-centered approach to Wellness. The Tribe's health system consists of medical, behavioral health, chemical dependency, dental and wellness programs, and recognizes the need for all of these programs to work together on behalf of our customers. We believe our health is largely determined by the balance we are able to achieve between our physical, spiritual, emotional and social lives.

Currently, primary care medical services are offered through Dena'ina Health Clinic and include primary care teams consisting of physicians, advanced nurse practitioners, certified physician assistants, an RN case manager and medical assistants. These teams are supported by a robust wellness department offering diabetes prevention, lifestyle coaching, nutritional assessment, tobacco cessation, fitness evaluation, digital storytelling and activity programs. Our in-house laboratory and digital radiology capabilities provide essential diagnostic resources. We provide care coordination with specialty services offered through the Alaska Native Medical Center and local hospital.

Nakenu Family Center is a comprehensive behavioral health and chemical dependency treatment facility offering individual and family therapy. Specialty services are offered for individuals, families and children in the areas of crisis intervention, chemical dependency, domestic violence prevention and family support. Individual skill providers work with school-aged children to help them succeed and continue their support through summer programs.

Dena'ina Dental Clinic provides primary dental services. The Dental Clinic provides a wide range of general dentistry needs and provides assistance with referrals to the Alaska Native Medical Center as needed. Emphasis is placed on prevention and education to reduce the amount of dental decay and dental emergencies.

## 2011 Highlights:

- We received an Indian Health Service Joint Venture Award, one of three in the nation for 2011, to construct a new integrated health facility.
- We expanded our chemical dependency program and successfully decreased wait times for services.
- We increased revenue growth, which provides sustainability for all Tribal programs.
- We expanded Dental Services.

For additional information please visit:

<http://www.kenaitze-nsn.gov/clinic>

<http://www.kenaitze-nsn.gov/health/nakenu>

<http://www.kenaitze-nsn.gov/health/dental>

# Individual and Family Services

Honor and respect for our Elders is an important part of Dena'ina culture. The Kenaitze Indian Tribe's Elder Service Program, called Tyotkas, aims to prevent isolation, provide healthy activities, provide healthy choices and ensure independent living for Elders. This program also provides information to family members who care for parents, grandparents or older relatives. Elder luncheons, transportation services and personal visits are just a few of the services provided by Tyotkas.

We strive to create a community that supports and cares for one another. Kenaitze Indian Tribe has set up a network of individual and family service programs that offer financial assistance to Tribal members working toward self-sufficiency. These programs include: general assistance to help offset monthly expenses for food, clothing, shelter and utilities; burial and funeral assistance; emergency assistance in the event of a disaster such as fire or flood; and energy assistance to help offset home heating or electric expenses. Additional emergency services include our Food Bank and the Moose Road Kill Program. It is our priority to provide food to those in need, and we keep as much emergency food provisions on hand as possible. We work with various community partners to provide opportunities for families and individuals in need to take part in the Moose Road Kill Program. For more information on how to sign up, please contact us.

## 2011 Highlights:

- The Tyotkas Program currently provides services to 125 Elders.
- The Food Bank and the Moose Road Kill Program help to meet the needs of the growing number of individuals and families using our services.





# *Cultural and Educational Programs*

Today's children are tomorrow's leaders. Getting our children off to a good start is important for preserving the future of our people. The Kenaitze Indian Tribe's Early Childhood Center offers a Head Start program, which uses our own locally developed curriculum that integrates the Dena'ina language into our classrooms. In collaboration with its community partners, The Early Childhood Center provides dental and health screenings, nutrition services, daily physical activity and programs for children with special needs.

To ensure the longevity of Kenaitze Indian Tribe's traditions and culture, we provide opportunities for Tribal youth to experience events in traditional ways. The Kenaitze Indian Tribe's Educational Fishery teaches the importance of preserving the cultural and traditional subsistence way of life established by the early Dena'ina. All our Tribal programs now conduct Fish Camps as part of their educational curriculum, where youth, Elders and guests learn traditional methods of setting the net, identifying salmon species, cleaning fish and preserving them for winter.

Yaghanen Youth Programs, which means "Good Place, a Safe Place for the Heart," strive to provide a safe and positive atmosphere. We strongly encourage education and community services to develop academic achievement, respect for all people and cultures, and life skills. Yaghanen includes dance groups, a Native Youth Olympics team and a drum group – all which emphasize personal development and mutual respect.

Youth Camps are another way Kenaitze Indian Tribe reaches out to youth. Camps provide an opportunity to expand and highlight the positive choices offered to our youth during after-school programs with a focus on cultural preservation, subsistence and traditional practices, and healthy life skills.

We have also developed programs to help individuals achieve success in the academic environment. Our Career and Education Programs offer a full range of services designed to strengthen the economic well-being of our Tribal members by creating jobs, skill education and training to achieve financial self-sufficiency. For more information on education assistance, visit <http://www.kenaitze-nsn.gov/cne/education>.

## **2011 Highlights:**

- This year's Yaghanen program incorporates a strong outreach to local schools and other youth programs and agencies.
- We have enhanced our education assistance programs to help meet demand for better choices in educational opportunities.
- We are exploring new opportunities for technology resources for learning Dena'ina language.



# Tribal Justice System

Dena'ina Athabascan people have historically resolved dispute and conflict, maintained community peace and delivered justice among each other using our traditional Athabascan laws, customs and practices.

Written Tribal codes give authority and jurisdiction to hear and adjudicate matters concerning child protection, voluntary relinquishment and involuntary termination of parental rights, Tribal adoption, child custody, domestic violence, marriage, divorce and annulments, protection for Elders and vulnerable adults, and conservatorship and guardianship. Cases are assigned by the Chief Judge. Visit <http://www.kenaitze.org/tribal/codes> to access Tribal Court codes.

Today, the Nitghu k't'uch' qenashen Tribal Court – meaning “One Who Talks for Equity” – aims to acknowledge and honor our traditional customs for the purpose of preserving, strengthening and continuing the Tribal Court into the future. We thank our Tribal Judges – Chief Judge MaryAnn Mills, Judge Rusty Swan, Judge Susan Wells, Judge Bob Fulton and Judge Kimberley Franke – for their commitment to our children and our families.

The Tribal Youth Justice Program serves Alaska Native and American Indian youth dealing with issues that have led to delinquency, or that threaten to do so. The program provides Talking Circles where – in an atmosphere of respect, honesty, responsibility and honor – youth can join family and community members in dialogues to better understand their situation, work to improve relationships and work toward resolution.

As part of our effort to advocate for youth in the court system, Kenaitze Indian Tribe has also partnered with CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) to empower and educate people to speak for our children in the strength and understanding of our culture and traditions. We will accomplish this through recruitment, screening, cross-cultural training and supervision of CASA volunteers serving as independent third-party officers of the court, advocating for the best interests of our children. For more information on CASA, visit [www.CASAforChildren.org](http://www.CASAforChildren.org).

## 2011 Highlights

- We currently have four CASA volunteers advocating for our children.
- Today, there are 30 active court cases in Tribal Court.
- Kenaitze Indian Tribe's CASA Program is now nationally recognized and being contracted to help start up other Tribal programs.
- A new agreement with partner agencies has allowed for an expansion of programs in our service area.

## A Look Ahead

Kenaitze Indian Tribe programs have expanded greatly over the past five years – and we are pleased to report a healthy forecast for our future!

We have worked hard to build the necessary infrastructure to support the growth and sustainability of our programs and services. A consistent, strong financial position allows us to continue to develop this capacity.

With stable infrastructure in place, we can focus on making progress on priority projects such as the Ames Road Housing Development, the Dena'ina Wellness Center, health services integration, implementing a Tribal education system, strengthening our sovereignty and partnering with others to strengthen family wellness.

### *In 2012:*

- We will continue to make progress on the Dena'ina Wellness Center. A groundbreaking is scheduled next spring for the new facility, which will integrate primary care, dental, chemical dependency, behavioral health and other wellness programs.
- We will begin to plan for a Tribal education system based on Dena'ina cultures and values.
- We plan to hold a series of informational gatherings for Tribal members to learn about and understand our sovereignty.
- We will continue our efforts to bring about and sustain family wellness and better understand our story as Alaska Native people – and the resiliency that has brought us this far.
- We will begin to form an economic development plan for the future.
- We will work on our Vision for 2025 to define the specific components of what it means to be prosperous, healthy and culturally strong.

As we make progress on these initiatives in 2012, we are committed to working together to ensure a thriving future for our people, our families and our communities!







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