Tribe launches new business venture

The Kenaitze Indian Tribe’s new Kahtnuht’ana Development Corporation held its first board meeting on May 10 at the Tribe’s administration building in Kenai.

The board, comprised of Chairperson Wayne Wilson, Vice Chairperson Jon Ross, Secretary Gabe Julussen, Treasurer Katrina (Dolchok) Jacuk, and Bruce Gabriel, are in the process of hiring a director.

“This has been a goal of the Tribe for many years,” Chairperson Wayne Wilson said.

“The board is very excited about the potential future success of the new corporation,” Wilson said.

The goal of KDC is to provide more support for underfunded programs and to increase self-sufficiency overall,” KIT Executive Director Jaylene Peterson-Nyren said.

CIRI President and Chief Executive Officer Sophie Minich and Kenaitze Indian Tribe Council Chairperson Rose Tepp talk as Council Treasurer Mary Lou Bottoff, Secretary James Segura and Council member Liisia Blizzard look at a check for $50,000 that Minich presented to the Tribe in support of the Dena’ina Wellness Center during CIRI’s shareholder meeting in April at Kenai Central High School.

Several organizations have recently stepped up to stand behind the Dena’ina Wellness Center.

CIRI presented gifts and praise in person at their Kenai Peninsula shareholder meeting held at Kenai Central High School on April 27.

Sophie Minich, CIRI President and Chief Executive Officer, called members of the KIT Tribal Council to the front of the gym where Minich made her presentation.

“CIRI supports the new Dena’ina Wellness Center and the innovative, patient-focused healthcare that it will deliver,” Minich said as she presented the Council with a poster-size check for $50,000.

“This is the first installment of a contribution that will total $75,000,” Minich said.

“Well this is very, very special for us at the Kenaitze Indian Tribe,” Jon Ross said to the audience as he joined the Council members at the front of the room.

“On behalf of the Kenaitze Tribe, I would like to thank the shareholders, the board and everybody behind this,” Council Chairperson Rose Tepp said.

In mid-May, the M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust awarded the Tribe a grant of $250,000 to use toward dental furniture, fixtures and equipment.

Project draws more support
Dena’ina Wellness Center receives praise, gifts, grants

Important notice

Tribal members who wish to change their address or have their names removed from the mailing list that will be made available to candidates for Tribal Council need to contact Tribal Operations/Enrollment Assistant Elsie Kanayurak by phone at (907)335-7202 or by email at ekanayurak@kenaitze.org before July 15.

For further questions, contact Alexandra “Sasha” Lindgren at (907)335-7211 or by email at alindgren@kenaitze.org.
NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Yaghali Du?
Greetings to all Kenaitze Indian Tribal Members! I hope that summer is off to a great start for you! This is the May/June issue of the Tribal Courier, representing our commitment to you and to your request for more news and information that impacts Kenaitze Indian Tribal Members directly. Our other publication, the Kenaitze Counting Cord, shares news and events that affect not only Tribal Members but all of those in the Kenai Peninsula community that we serve. I hope you find this informative and a joy to read.

In the past two months, our fundraising efforts for the new Dena’ina Wellness Center have been joined by the Murdock Charitable Trust with a grant in the amount of $250,000, a grant from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority in the amount of $75,000 and a generous gift of $50,000 from Cook Inlet Region, Inc. We are deeply grateful for not only the show of financial support, but also for the alliance of goodwill and belief in the wellness-based system of care that we will be providing in the new facility. We are a short 10 months away from ribbon cutting and hosting a grand opening in the new facility — please watch for future news and a ‘Save the Date’ notice for when we plan our celebration!

Our staff are working diligently on how we will fully integrate all of our healthcare programs into a single facility, and have recently had the opportunity to set foot inside — being able to walk through and visualize the space has greatly inspired many, as you can see and read about in this issue. We can’t thank our staff enough for their hard work and dedication in seeing this through!

We are also deeply committed in this year to hearing feedback on how we are doing — please do not hesitate to provide complaints, comments and compliments on how we are delivering our programs and services to you — it is only with these communications that we know where we need to improve or where we are doing well! Your comments and feedback go a long way in providing guidance not only for our staff but for our Council in determining how we move forward now and in the future. Please take a moment to complete the enclosed survey, or if you prefer, you can fill it out online at www.surveymonkey.com/ss/trialmember. If you have thoughts, questions or suggestions, you can also email me at jaylene@kenaitze.org.

We have also recently traveled to Anchorage and Washington state to provide an update and overview on the newly adopted Election Ordinance and to provide information and a presentation on the new draft of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe Constitution. The new ordinance, in response to feedback at the last Annual General Council meeting, provides opportunity for Tribal members who live outside of the Kenai area or who are unable otherwise to attend the meeting, to participate in electing members to the Tribal Council. It also provides another way for Tribal Members to feedback at the last Annual General Council meeting, to participate in electing members to the Tribal Council. It also provides another way for Tribal Members to participate in electing members to the Tribal Council.

Program closures
All Tribal programs and offices will be closed all day July 4 for the holiday, and from 1 to 5 p.m. on August 16 for an all-staff activity.

From the editor’s desk
The Tribal Courier is published several times a year for members of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe. A similar publication, The Counting Cord, is also distributed several times a year to Tribal members and KIT customers.

For story suggestions or questions about content, contact editor M. Scott Moon, Communications Specialist, at (907)335-7237 or by email at smoon@kenaitze.org.

Yaghanen camp dates
Yaghanen is the prevention and early intervention program of the Tribe. Yaghanen strives to present youth with programs and services that encourage them to develop academic achievement, respect for all people and cultures, and life skills in a safe and positive atmosphere. Programs are free and open to youth of all cultures and run throughout the year.

Yaghanen offers camps that emphasize cultural preservation, subsistence, traditional practices, and healthy life skills. Contact staff at (907)335-7290 or visit http://kenaitze.org/index.php/yaghanen for more information.

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Indian Health Service negotiations
Above, Council Chairperson Rose Tepp gestures in May as she speaks to officials from the Indian Health Service during the Alaska Tribal Health Compact FY2014 Indian Health Service/Tribal Negotiations in Anchorage. Tepp, and Natasha Singh, right, general counsel for Tanana chiefs, were named tribal co-chair and co-lead negotiators to provide guidance and support during the negotiations.

At right, Executive Director Jaylene Peterson-Nyren questions Indian Health Service officials with Director of Financial Services Stan Mishin.

SUPPORT, from p. 1
equipment. Their Program Director Jan Kennedy toured the building in March as crews were pouring cement with nothing but plastic sheeting to keep out the cold. Kennedy said then that she was truly impressed with the level of commitment to the project.

Also in mid-May, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority trustees approved the Tribe’s request for furniture, fixture and equipment funds at a meeting in Fairbanks. They gave the Tribe a grant award for $75,000 effective July 1.

The Tribe isn’t resting on its recent successes, though.

“We expect to continue to fund raise through the completion of the project and beyond to continue to offset the cost of financing,” KIT Executive Director Jaylene Peterson-Nyren said.
The Tribal Council held two meetings this spring to share Tribal news with members living outside the Kenai area.

The first meeting was in Lynnwood, Wash. It was the first time the Tribal leadership ever met in the Pacific Northwest.

Most of the discussion was centered around proposed changes to the Tribe’s Constitution. Members were told how leadership has been working on revising the Constitution for more than a year.

The Council wanted an opportunity to discuss the revisions with members who were not able to attend meetings held earlier this year in Kenai.

Many of the Tribal members came to the Kenatize meeting after attending CIRI’s annual Pacific Northwest shareholder meeting nearby.

KIT council Marissa Flannery gave presentations at both locations.

At the conclusion of the Lynnwood meeting, Jerry Brown, of Everett, Wash., stood to thank KIT leadership for hosting the gathering.

In Anchorage, the Council met with members at Southcentral Foundation’s Gathering Room.

The Council talked to members about the Constitution, but changes to the election ordinance dominated the discussion.

One of the highlights of the Anchorage meeting was when Robert Fulton, a longtime Council member and one of the Tribe’s most senior Elders, arrived.

Current Council members spent time catching up with Fulton. During a break, Council Treasurer Mary Lou Bottorff showed Fulton a banner that highlights the new Dena’ina Wellness Center. Fulton was impressed with the progress the Tribe has made toward the healthcare of its membership.

At far left, Jerry Brown of Everett, Wash., gestures as he thanks KIT leadership for hosting the meeting in Lynnwood.

At far left, Council Secretary James Segura talks in Anchorage.

At left, KIT council Marissa Flannery gives a presentation about proposed changes to the Tribe’s Constitution to Pacific Northwest Tribal members during the Lynnwood meeting. She also spoke at the Anchorage meeting.
Tribe gathers for annual Net Opening

This year’s Opening of the Net on May 1 was blessed with sunny weather, drumming, singing, dancing and a lot of really good food.

No one seemed to mind that the fish missed this year’s celebration. However, as of the first week of June, the fish were returning to the Tribal Net again.

Dave Segura, Director of Community Programs, spent several days at the end of April clearing late-thawing snow from the beach so that the Opening could proceed. Weather forecasters were threatening more snow on May 1, but the weather cleared.

After Father Thomas Andrew gave the blessing, Tribal members were treated to drumming by the Del Dumi youth drum group and the Heartbeat of Mother Earth adult drum. The Jabila’ina Dance Group performed, as well.

Many people brought food. Fisheries staff, program directors, Executive Assistant Tona Bravo and others volunteered to cook and serve the meat, which included salmon, burgers and hot dogs.

Bonnie Juliussen and crew kept the fry bread coming as people listened to a concert from musicians gathered by Haley Trefon. (See related story, at right.)

Tribal member Bunny Swan Gease was among the additional musicians on stage. Swan Gease has been working hard to promote her music and art through a new website (www.bunnyswan.com).

The first red salmon gave itself to the Net on May 7. Over the next month, another 435 reds and ten kings came in, as well as 5,500 hooligan. Many of the hooligan were distributed to Elders.

There are still some times available for Tribal members interested in fishing the Net. Contact Kate Schadle at (907)335-7200 for details.

Project is music to the ears

Haley Trefon used a school project and her knowledge of the Tribe to enhance this year’s Opening.

Trefon, a freshman at Skyview High School, won fifth place in the Caring For the Kenai contest. Part of her project involved performing at the Net opening and arranging other musicians to join her at the annual Tribal gathering.

The competition is an environmental contest that challenges high school students to answer the question “what can I do, invent, or create to better care for the environment on the Kenai Peninsula, or to help improve the area’s preparedness for a natural disaster,” according to the contest’s website.

Trefon’s project retold the Tribe’s story of the Sparrow Song and used science to connect the return of the Golden Crowned Sparrow to annual fish returns.

“It made me realize that everything in the environment is connected and everything we do changes it,” Trefon said.

She said her school received money from her win and it helped her, too.

“I don’t like talking but it forced me to talk to a lot of people,” she said.

Haley Trefon displays the information board that was part of her winning Caring for the Kenai contest entry.
Health staff tours new building

Health workers from the Tribe’s three facilities joined together for several hours in early May to tour the new Dena’ina Wellness Center they will soon call home.

The experience started with a joint staff meeting during lunch at Paradisos restaurant. They heard construction and integration updates from Director of Operations Faith Allard.

They also heard a report from Judi Andrijanoff, of Arcadis, a firm that is working with KIT and the construction contractors to ensure a smooth transition into the new structure.

The highlight of the afternoon was the tour. Few of the roughly 50 employees had set foot in the building.

“It was a good experience to see in front of you what we’ve only seen on paper,” Nurse Practitioner Erika Soderman said.

“You had to use your imagination a bit to see walls, skylights and finishing structures,” but she said that it was nice to get a sense of how big the building is.

“I think that the tour was informative and also created a sense of community, to have us all go through together. All of us being excited together and walking through was kind of neat. Of course, lunch was delicious.”

Wellness Manager Deb Nyquist had similar sentiments.

“It was good to finally have a visual of what it is going to be like even though there’s a lot of work left,” Nyquist said.

“I’m feeling better because I know more now. It was also fun to be with all the other staff. I’m looking forward to the integrated process where we can work in care teams.”

Currently, the health systems staff work out of three different buildings that the Tribe has to rent. When the Dena’ina Wellness Center opens, all health staff will work under one roof that the Tribe will own. This will enhance both the convenience and continuity of care for customers.

Construction of the facility is proceeding on schedule. In late spring, crews poured the concrete flooring for the building. In early April, steel workers completed their portion of the job. Much of the glass for the building’s exterior has been installed. Now work is advancing on the interior. The Arts and Interiors Committee is continuing their work.

A Grand Opening date has not been set but should be sometime next spring.

“It was also fun to be with all the other staff. I’m looking forward to the integrated process where we can work in care teams.”

– Deb Nyquist, Wellness Manager

Call for Art

The Arts and Interiors Committee is currently seeking artwork to hang from the center of the Oculus. Prospective art can weigh no more than 500 pounds and must address the theme, “Kahnrnu’ana Dena’ina people throughout time.”

Submit proposals for art by mail to: Kenaitze Indian Tribe Attn: Timothy Butler, Procurement Specialist P.O. Box 988 Kenai, AK, 99611 or by email to: tbutler@kenaitze.org.

Health systems employees look at the Oculus structure that rises from the center’s gathering room.

Phil Young, of Arcadis, talks about the sound-dampening walls that are being installed at the Dena’ina Wellness Center during a tour for health systems workers in May.

Health employees donned hard hats for the tour after they received updates on integration and construction.
Nursing graduate grateful to Tribe

Tribal member already planning future career and education goals

Devan Paxton is happy to be, in her own words, “a part of something great.”

The Kenaitze Indian Tribal member graduated this spring with a bachelor of science in nursing from Washington State University’s College of Nursing.

“Graduating nursing school was a huge accomplishment for me and my family,” she wrote.

“I could not have done it without scholarships from the Tribe.”

Paxton wrote in an email that she has received Kenaitze scholarships during the last two semesters of her program.

“I am so proud to be a part of and represent the Kenaitze Tribe here in Washington! During my graduation, I was recognized as a Native American student and given the challenge to move on and complete a graduate program in nursing.

“As of right now there are only about seven Native American individuals that have a Masters or a Doctorate in Nursing.

“I plan to represent Kenaitze as I move forward in my career and in school,” she wrote.

Paxton wrote that family helped make her graduation special.

“My grandfather, Dennis Davidson, was able to attend my graduation in Spokane and witness me walk across the stage with my diploma.

“It was a very exciting day for the both of us and I am beyond happy that he was able to be there.”

Paxton again thanked the Tribe for its support.

“I am so proud to be an Alaskan Native and call myself a Tribal member.”

Little folks turn words to action

Youngsters from the Early Childhood Center’s after-school program pose with the bikes they earned through their participation in the 100 Books for a Bike Challenge. The children were told in September that if they could read 100 books by May they would receive a bike. “I’m extremely proud of our little ones,” Alaska Native Education Coordinator Charmaine Lundy said. “Not all adults can set a goal in September and have the payoff in May.” Lundy said she was thankful for the support of the Tribal Council, Mary Lou Bottoff, and Jason and Agnes Nunn for purchasing the bikes.

Kenaitze Indian Tribe has a variety of programs to help individuals achieve success in the academic and work environments. These programs offer a full range of services designed to strengthen the economic wellbeing of our Tribal members and our community through the creation of jobs, education and training opportunities. For more information, read links found on the Education Services page on the Tribe’s website at: http://kenaitze.org/index.php/social-services.
Tribal enrollment critical for insurance coverage

Beginning January 1, 2014, every American must demonstrate health care coverage under the Affordable Care Act. This means if you do not already have coverage (e.g., Medicaid, Medicare, Denali KidCare or private insurance) you will be required to purchase health insurance or face a penalty when filing your taxes. The tax penalty could be as much as $695 per adult and $347.50 per child.

Alaska Native and American Indian people are exempt from the requirement to purchase insurance if they can show evidence of:

a) Enrollment in a federally recognized tribe, or
b) Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) shareholder status

Even with this exemption, Alaska Native and American Indian people may choose to purchase insurance. Alaskans will have a new option of purchasing health insurance through the federal marketplace as early as October 2013 for plan coverage effective January 1, 2014. Some Alaskans will qualify for premium subsidies based on income. For instance, an individual earning up to $57,400 or a family of four earning up to $117,760 may receive financial assistance when purchasing insurance.

Here are some frequently asked questions about the Affordable Care Act and how it applies to Alaska Native people:

Q: How do I enroll in Kenaitze Indian Tribe? A: Applicants will need to fill out a KIT Tribal Enrollment Application, attach a birth certificate and family tree, and submit the information to the Tribe’s enrollment office.

Q: Does my Certificate of Indian Blood (CIB), issued by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), count? A: While the CIB is an important document, you will still need to show proof of Tribal enrollment to qualify for the exemption from the tax penalty.

Q: Does it have to be a card or can it be a letter? A: Tribes may choose to issue a card or provide a letter that verifies Tribal status. KIT issues cards and will issue letters on request.

Q: Do I have to establish blood quantum? A: Some Tribes may require a minimum blood quantum. KIT does not, however there are federal programs that do require quantum cards.

For more information regarding KIT enrollment, contact:
Alexandra “Sasha” Lindgren at (907)335-7211 or by email at alindgren@kenaitze.org or Elsie Kanayurak at (907)335-7202 or by email at ekanayurak@kenaitze.org.

For more information on the Affordable Care Act, visit www.healthcare.gov.

ANTHC and the Southcentral Foundation contributed to this article.
The Big Picture

Our Mission
To assure Kahtnuht’ana Dena’ina thrive forever.

Our Values
These are the beliefs and principles that define our people and will assure our future as a Tribe:

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

Our Vision
By 2025, the Kahtnuht’ana Dena’ina have enhanced and strengthened the prosperity, health and culture of their people and Tribe.

- 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 our traditional values and practices.
- We will empower our sovereignty.
- We will achieve having enough to take care of ourselves, share with others and be resilient.
- We will strive for excellence in all of our programs.
- We will elevate the wellness of our people.

Addresses and phone numbers

Administration Building
150 N. Willow St., Kenai
(907)335-7200

Early Childhood Center
130 N. Willow St., Kenai
(907)335-7260

Tyotkas Elders Center
1000 Mission Ave., Kenai
(907)335-7280

Yaghanen Youth Programs
35105 K-B Dr., Soldotna
(907)335-7290

Environmental Program
35105 K-B Dr., Soldotna
(907)335-7287

Dena’ina Health Clinic
416 Frontage Rd., Kenai
(907)335-7300

Dena’ina Dental Clinic
412 Frontage Rd., Kenai
(907)335-7350

Nakenu Family Center
110 N. Willow St., Kenai
(907)335-7370

Na’ini Social Services
150 N. Willow St., Kenai
(907)335-7252

Tribal Court
150 N. Willow St., Kenai
(907)335-7217

On the Web: http://kenaitze.org