Land and assets ordinance approved

Special Meeting clarifies Council’s authority to finance purchases

Members of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe voted 22-17 to approve Ordinance 2014-1 on Saturday, May 17, during a special meeting called by the Tribal Council to address the management of newly acquired tribal lands and assets.

The purpose of the ordinance is to give authorization to the Tribal Council to encumber newly acquired Tribal lands and assets when it is necessary to finance a new purchase.

The ordinance does not allow the Tribal Council to encumber assets the Tribe already owns.

An apartment complex across the street from the Dena’ina Wellness Center that the Tribe is interested in purchasing was used as an example.

If the Tribe were to take out a

Net opens with sun and song

A beautiful, unseasonably warm day set the stage for the annual Opening of the Net celebration and potluck at the waterfront fishery on Cook Inlet on May 1.

The Tribal Council joined youth from the Jabila’ina dance group to sing in Dena’ina Peter Kalifornsky’s song, “Potlatch Song for a Lonely Man.”

George Holly; George Holly, Sr; and Paul Gray of the Trickle Down Creek Band also performed, including a spirited version of “Happy Birthday” for Elder Betty Porter.

Father Thomas Andrew of the Holy Assumption of the Virgin Mary Russian Orthodox Church offered a blessing before food was served.

While several flounder came to the net, it was still early for salmon. See more about the tribal fishery on pages 4 and 5.

We are listening

Customer service program sees growth

It has always been the tribe’s goal to provide friendly, supportive and caring service to our customers. Recent changes to how comments are received, along with a newly created staff position and training, are helping with that goal.

Earlier this year, the tribe started using a computer database to enter customer comments. Having a record of the comment helps the tribe’s leadership to make sure that concerns are addressed in a timely manner. It also helps leaders identify areas that are going well and areas that may need additional attention.

Youngsters pull in the tribal net during the May 1 opening.
NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Yaghali du! We hope this edition of the Tribal Courier finds you in good health and enjoying the beautiful spring and soon to be summer days.

We have had an extremely busy year to date and are currently preparing for the long awaited Grand Opening Ceremony for the Denaina Wellness Center. We are planning for three days of celebration to honor those who have contributed to making this dream a reality.

Please look to Page 7 for more information on our fundraising and for the schedule of events. We are grateful for their support.

We have recently hired a Quality Systems Manager to help the Tribe create a system for quality improvement. Michael Cruz is also helping us grow our customer service program. Read more about his valuable role in the story that begins on Page 1.

We continue to hire new positions for our health systems as part of the growth made possible by the Denaina Wellness Center. Please look to our website to learn more about the many employment opportunities that are available here at the Tribe.

This coming year will mark new opportuni-ties for the Tribe as we plan for meeting the educational, training, health and wellness needs, and other basic needs of our tribal families and youth.

I look forward to hearing from you with any comments and questions you may have on the programs and services offered by the Tribe.

It is a time for change and growth not only for programs and services but also with the state and federal laws that impact us as a people.

We recently received notice for comment in response to a federal proposal to allow lands to be placed into trust for Alaska Native people and tribes in the state of Alaska. This proposed law may seem straightforward at first glance, but there are many underlying issues and concerns that it may raise for us as Native people.

At the June 20 Tribal Council meeting, there will be time set aside for Council to hear questions and comments on this and other important issues.

Chiqiunik. I look forward to seeing you at the long awaited celebration on June 12, 13 and 14!

— Jaylene Peterson-Nyen Executive Director, Kenaitze Indian Tribe

NOTE FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON

On May 17, the Tribal Council held a Special Meeting to take comments both for and against Ordinance 2014-1 “Management of Tribal Lands and Assets.”

Following discussion, the membership voted in favor of the ordinance. It authorizes the Council to encumber property it may wish to purchase in the future.

We have listed out questions and concerns that were brought up during discussion before the vote, and will take these items up at the next Council meeting.

On June 20, the Council will set aside time for public comments on upcoming position papers the Council will be working on, including a response to the lands-into-trust issue. More details on the comment period will be published on the Calendar of Events on the Tribe’s website.

At the Council meeting on May 16, the Council restructured. The following are the results of the restructuring: I am the Chairperson. Rosalie Tepp is Vice Chairperson. Lisa Blizzard is Secretary. Audre Gifford is Treasurer.

I would like to acknowledge and thank Mary Ann Mills and Susan Wells for their recent service in the roles of Chairperson and Secretary.

— Jennifer Showalter Yeoman Chairperson Kenaitze Indian Tribe

Moving soon? Please keep in touch

Please keep your contact information current so you don’t miss important mailings from the tribe.

Send updates to:
Kenaitze Indian Tribe
Attn: Elsie Maudelle
P.O. Box 988
Kenai, AK 99611
email: elsie@kenaitze.org

or a suggestion into the system by talking to any staff member. “Chiqiunik” thank-you cards are also available at any of the tribe’s locations. They are used to jot down a quick “thanks” for exceptional service.

Michael Cruz was hired at the beginning of the year to serve as the tribe’s new Quality Systems Manager. “I am a welcoming person and open to good, honest commu-nication,” Cruz said. “I need to hear from our customers and want to do my part to improve our services.”

In addition to leading the tribe’s customer service program, Cruz will also be responsible for helping the tribe meet future accreditation standards at the Denaina Wellness Center. (See related story, Page 7)

Earlier this year, customer service specialist Petra Marquart offered two days of training to Kenaitze employees.

Marquart, author of the book, “The Power of Service;” used a mix of humor, role playing and focused lectures to drive home the importance of exceptional customer service. The tribe cares about those it serves and strives to build trusting relationships, understand individual needs and meet expectations.

Of the fourteen traditional values encompassed in the tribe’s Traditional Values Circle, employees are taught that five values should be exhibited as part of providing exceptional customer service:

• Hema (Work, Job, Task) Cooperation, Helpfulness, Willingness to Work
• Ada (Care, Concern, Tenderness) Love, Sharing, Humanity
• Q’uun’uch (The Right Way, The Truth) Forgiveness, Openness, Honesty, Trust
• Vin’uhq’u’utsh (Our Spirit) Respect for Yourself
• Nagn’u’dna’ina (Our Neighbors) Respect our Neighbors and Others

Please take the time to give feedback on your next visit to a tribal office.

From the editor’s desk

The Tribal Courier is a publication for members of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe. A similar publication, The Counting Cood, is distributed to tribal members and Kenaitze Indian Tribe customers.

Not only, but also distributed to the tribe’s website at kenaitze.org and like us on Facebook at Facebook.com/kenaitze.

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

Committee positions now available

The Executive Council is accepting letters of interest from people interested in serving on the Finance and Audit Committees.

Address letters to: Kenaitze Indian Tribe
Attn: Tribal Council Chairperson
P.O. Box 988
Kenai, AK 99611

Member comment period planned

The Executive Council will set aside time at its June 20 meeting to take comments on upcoming position papers the Council will be working on, including a response to the lands-into-trust issue.

More details on the comment period will be published on the tribe’s Calendar of Events page on the tribe’s website.

New volunteers sworn in

At left, Tribal Court Judge Rusty Swan administers an oath to four new volunteer Court Appointee Special Advocates during a joint ceremony between the Kenaitze and state courts. CASA volunteers advocate for children in state and tribal court. State Superior Court Judge Charles Huegulet, right, administered the oath for the state. Above, Tribal Council member Lisa Blizzard, CASA Program Coordinator Joy Petr, volunteer Melinda Cox, Superior Court Judge Charles Huegulet, volunteer Tuckerman Babcock, volunteer Sharon Tyone, volunteer Shelli Elliott, Tribal Court Judge Rusty Swan and CASA Assistant Tyler Nichols pose for a group photo following the joint ceremony in Kenai Superior Court.

Jennifer Showalter Yeoman Chairperson jyeoman@kenaitze.org
Rosalie Tepp Vice Chairperson rtepp@kenaitze.org
Audre Gifford Treasurer agifford@kenaitze.org
Lisa Blizzard Secretary lblizzard@kenaitze.org
Mary Ann Mills Council member mmills@kenaitze.org
James O. Segura Council member jsegura@kenaitze.org
Susan Wells Council member swells@kenaitze.org

Find more information on the tribe’s website.

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Mary Ann Mills Council member mmills@kenaitze.org
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Susan Wells Council member swells@kenaitze.org

Find more information on the tribe’s website.
Net has long history

Tribal Council Secretary Aliisia Blizzard presented a history of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe’s fishery during opening remarks on May 1. The following is a transcript of her comments:

For thousands of years the Kenai Dena’ina have depended on the Cook Inlet and its tributaries for food: salmon, shellfish, herring, halibut, candlefish, bullheads, and trout, tom cod.

The most common way to catch fish at that time was with a weir, and they also used a drag-net and fish spears. The harvest was then divided up among the families.

European and Russian contact began in the late 1700s, and Alaska was purchased by the United States in 1867. A small-pox epidemic and influenza killed many of our people and Native culture began to decline at that time.

In 1959, Alaska became the 49th state. Statehood brought heavy regulations on fishing and hunting. Our way of life changed dramatically and our people became an invisible tribe.

Kenaitze Indian Tribe became federally recognized in 1971 and our people began to come home. Now our numbers are growing. We have over 1400 tribal members, to date.

So now I’m going to talk about the years of court cases and turmoil and hard work that started in 1978. The State of Alaska passed its first subsistence law designed to protect the lifestyle of hunting and fishing for rural residents. Then ANILCA was passed in 1980 and the state was mandated to maintain subsistence hunting and fishing preference for rural residents.

In 1982, there was a statewide effort to repeal that subsistence law. Then in 1985, the Alaska Supreme Court struck down the subsistence law in the Madison decision, ruling that all Alaskans are entitled to participate in subsistence. Only in times of extreme shortages of fish and wildlife should there be discrimination between Alaskans on an individual-by-individual basis.

In 1986, the Alaska legislature enacted a new law with criteria to determine who qualified for subsistence. All urban residents were denied subsistence. The Kenaitze Indian Tribe then filed a suit in federal court to protest the classification of the Kenai Peninsula as an urban area.

Then in 1987, a federal judge ruled against the Kenaitze. In 1988, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco reversed the Kenaitze decision and criticized the state’s definition of rural. State officials were afraid the ruling would lead to all Kenai residents getting subsistence status.

So then, in 1989, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals mandated that the State of Alaska should grant the Tribe a preliminary injunction for one year. So we had one single net for one year.

Then the following year, we got a second consent preliminary injunction and now, we’re in our 25th year of fishing and it has never really been settled.

So now the Kenaitze Indian Tribe is working toward getting a permanent fishery. We have operated this fishery very successfully and it has become the core of our Tribal government. It has brought our people together. It has given us fish to eat. We feed our families from this net.

But it has given us a lot more than just food. We have regained our culture. We are learning our language and we are no longer invisible.

The Kenaitze people today are survivors. We are a very resilient people. We are the Kahtnuht’ana. Thank you.

Council takes stand on king salmon issue

The Tribal Council responded recently to a media request for comment concerning the issue of declining numbers of king salmon with the following statement:

It is with grave concern that we watch the falling numbers of king salmon returning to our ancestral rivers. For us, the fish do not represent something to put a price tag on, or something to pose with for a photo. For us, the fish are at the very heart of our culture. We believe that our existence as a people relies on healthy returns of salmon to the rivers of our homeland.

We have fought hard in the past to safeguard our access to the fish; food security remains one of our highest priorities.

This summer marks the 25th year that we have fished collectively as a tribe after winning a legal challenge to a law that attempted to ban our way of life. Once again, our Elders are teaching our youth how to fully utilize each species of fish with care and respect. Nothing goes to waste. The fish that return to us are shared with our Elders and with those whom we no longer able to fish.

The tribe’s educational net is a gathering place — our town square — where stories are shared and relationships rekindled alongside an open camp fire. The annual Opening of the Net ceremony on May 1 is one of our most important days. It takes place at a time our people call Laq’a ni’u — salmon month.

The tribe catches few kings in its net — last year 19 came to us — but restrictions intended to protect the kings are threatening our food security. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has restricted in the past the locations, the hours and the gear we may use to fish.

Restrictions are already in place this year, as well. The tribe was told in April that it will be allowed to fish only one of its two nets for the months of May and June. Additionally, the king salmon quota has been reduced to a harvest limit of 50 king salmon per year from both the Kenai and Kaslo Rivers combined.

In March 2013, the council endorsed Senate Resolution No. 5 requesting that the North Pacific Fishery Management Council take action to reduce the quantity of chinook salmon by-catch in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea troller fisheries by setting new limits in the Gulf of Alaska troll fisheries, and by lowering the existing limits in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea potlock fisheries to at least half of the current limits.

As Dena’ina people, we are raised to respect the plants and animals and to be good stewards of the land, its resources and all creation. We call this place Yaghanen, the good land. We call ourselves Kahtnuht’ana, people of the Kenai River. For generations, the salmon have returned to us. As a tribe, our mission is to thrive forever. We need to ensure that our salmon stocks thrive forever, as well.

The tribal net has long history — this year marks the 25th year of fishing for the Kenaitze. We have operated this fishery very successfully and it has become the core of our Tribal government. It has brought our people together. It has given us fish to eat. ... But it has given us a lot more than just food. We have regained our culture. We are learning our language and we are no longer invisible.
Council takes stand on Law And Order report

The Tribal Council issued the following statement in February following the release of a scathing report on the state of law in order in Native America:

It has been 25 years since the Anchorage Daily News received a Pulitzer Prize for a series of articles chronicling problems facing Alaska Native people. The series was titled, “A People in Peril.”

Now, a bipartisan commission has delivered to the President and Congress a report that shows that Alaska Native people are still a people in peril and the blame, in the report’s own words, is “the legacy of failed federal laws and policies” concerning public safety for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

The results of this legacy—a legacy that continues unchecked today—are staggering. Here are just a few of the findings from the report:

• Alaska Native women are 47% of reported rape victims, yet Alaska Natives are only 19% of the total population.

• Police, court and related services are based in regional hubs, far from many of the communities they serve.

• At least 75 communities in Alaska do not have any law enforcement at all, in other communities, Village Public Safety Officers are not even allowed to carry guns.

• Domestic violence rates for reported crimes are up to ten times higher in Alaska than the rest of the United States.

• Alaska Native and American Indian youth suffer Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder at a rate of 23%—twice the general population and comparable to rates affecting veterans who served in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Conditions in our state are so bad, that Alaska received its own chapter in the report. No other state was singled out in such a shameful manner. Of course, none of this news is new to the Kenaitze Indian Tribe. We have been working on all fronts, for decades, to improve conditions for our tribal members, other Alaska Natives and the rest of our communities.

Our Na’ini social services program has been helping people in our community meet their potential and become resilient. Services include assistance for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking; career planning; job placement; and education services; conservation for vulnerable adults; financial, energy, burial, and emergency assistance; a wildlife harvest program and food bank; child care assistance and a Child Protection Team. Our Nakenu Family Services behavioral health professionals have been helping those affected by trauma, drugs and alcohol. Soon, all of our healthcare professionals will work side by side, using our Den‘a Wellness Model, to heal people in our new Den‘a Wellness Center. Kenaitze Tribal Court is also seen as a model of success. We hear and adjudicate matters concerning child protection; custody; domestic violence; marriage, divorce and annulment; protection for seniors and vulnerable adults; and conservatorship and guardianship.

The Kenaitze Indian Tribe strongly recommends repealing Section 910 of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) to enable Alaska tribes to exercise concurrent jurisdiction with the state over civil and criminal matters. Alaska Native women are not currently protected by the 2013 VAWA Reauthorization. Those protections were excluded by Section 910 Special Rule for the State of Alaska, which applies protections only to “Indian country.” The term “Indian country” must be changed to reflect Alaska tribal court jurisdiction, which are based on customary and traditional land management.

Additionally, Alaska tribes must have the ability to impose civil sanctions consistent with Alaska laws and the Indian Civil Rights Act, therefore we also strongly request a federal commitment to providing adequate and consistent funding for tribal courts in Alaska.

Tribes must be enabled to impose civil sanctions consistent with state law and the Indian Civil Rights Act, to include restorative justice, community service, and other traditional and cultural remediation.

Finally, we ask for the federal government to establish a task force to address Alaska statistics, as well as the number of unsoled cases of assault, rape and murder of Alaska Native women.

Working together, we can deliver safety and justice to all of Alaska’s citizens.

The report, “A Roadmap For Making Native America Safe,” from the Indian Law and Order Commission, may be found on the Internet in full and in summary at: www.indianlawandeordercommission.org/report/storylink-relato

The Kenaitze Indian Tribe is planning the Grand Opening Celebration for our new Den‘a Wellness Center next summer in Kenai, Alaska. We hope to see you there!
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 by:
• working toward united effort with Native organizations and other governments that impact our people.
• developing and implementing a tribal education system.
• living our traditional values and practices.
• empowering our sovereignty.
• continuing to demonstrate resiliency.
• striving for excellence in all of our programs.
• elevating the wellness of our people.
• using our talents and resources to ensure we are able to take care of ourselves and share with others.

Addresses and phone numbers
Administration Building
150 N. Willow St., Kenai, AK 99611
(907)335-7200
(907)335-7239 fax

Early Childhood Center
130 N. Willow St., Kenai, AK 99611
(907)335-7260

Tyotkas Elders Center
1000 Mission Ave., Kenai, AK 99611
(907)335-7280

Yaghanen Youth Programs
35105 K-B Dr., Soldotna, AK 99669
(907)335-7290

Environmental Program
35105 K-B Dr., Soldotna, AK 99669
(907)335-7287

Dena’ina Wellness Center
508 Upland St., Kenai, AK 99611
(907)335-7500

Na’ini Social Services
150 N. Willow St., Kenai, AK 99611
(907)335-7250

Tribal Court
150 N. Willow St., Kenai, AK 99611
(907)335-7217

On the Web: kenaitze.org
On Facebook: facebook.com/kenaitze