

The Counting Cord

Nitnuqeyishi



August–October 2015

KENAITZE INDIAN TRIBE NEWSLETTER

5 elected to Council at annual meeting

Tribe adds 51 new members

More than 120 voting members attended the tribe's Annual General Council Meeting in October, electing three new members and reelecting two members to fill five open positions on the Executive Council.

Bernadine Atchison, Clinton Lageson and Wayne Wilson were elected to serve two-year terms as new members. Liisia Blizzard and Audre Gifford will serve two- and one-year terms, respectively, as returning members. Those five join Rosalie A. Tepp and Jennifer Showalter Yeoman to make up the seven-member Council.

After the meeting, which was held at the Dena'ina Wellness Center, the new Council elected its officers as follows:

- Chairperson, Rosalie A. Tepp
- Vice-Chairperson, Audre Gifford
- Secretary, Liisia Blizzard

See **MEETING**, p. 2



Voters cast their ballots during the Annual General Council Meeting on Oct. 3.

Youth Council makes historic trip

A Kenaitze youth group recently attended an historic gathering in Washington, D.C.

The Gganilchit Dena'ina ("Stand Up Dena'ina") Youth Council came together in April when Kenaitze youth accepted the Generation Indigenous Youth Challenge, or the "Gen-I Challenge" set out by President Barack Obama.

As part of the challenge, the Youth Council was asked to do something positive to address issues facing the community. By participating in the challenge, youth could be invited to the first ever White House Tribal Youth Gathering in Washington, D.C., in July.

The first project they chose was to address the issue of local food security. The Youth Council wanted to raise awareness to the challenges that Alaska faces, including the high cost of fresh produce, awareness of genetically modified organics and their health concerns, and the fact that most of Alaska's foods are shipped from the Lower 48. If the shipping to Alaska was interrupted, there



The Youth Council and chaperones pose at the Washington Monument during their trip to D.C. in July.

would only be three or four days of supplies left in stores.

To call attention to food security, the Youth Council asked those who planned to attend the annual Opening of the Net potluck in May to bring food dishes that were or could have been supplied by local foods. The youth marked each

plate with "locally grown" flags, and identified that more than 60 percent of the plates brought to the potluck were or could have been locally grown. Those who participated in the local foods challenge were given starter vegetable plants that the Youth Council planted

See **YOUTH**, p. 3

Tyotka's on track

After a groundbreaking ceremony marked the beginning of construction in June, the project to bring a new Tyotka's Elder Center to Old Town Kenai continues to move ahead.

Stan Mishin, President of Kahtnuht'ana Development Corp., which is managing the project, said in late-September that walls were up, sidewalks were installed and the parking area was paved.

Furniture and fixtures would soon be selected, Mishin added, and planning would continue behind the scenes between contractors and engineers.

"A lot of the work has been happening on the back end," Mishin said.

The 6,500-square-foot building is in the same location as the old Tyotka's Elder Center, which was demolished last spring.

The new facility is expected to be ready for occupancy in early 2016. It will face south toward Cook Inlet, featuring a gathering space, large kitchen and more.

Mishin said he will present a project update to Elders on Nov. 12.

NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Idahdi, Hello friend!

Yaghali du? How is it with you?

As you can see from the stories in this quarterly newsletter – our largest ever – we have been busy!

It was good to see so many of you at the celebration and dedication for Raven Plaza, and at the Annual General Council Meeting on Oct. 3.

The celebration was an important one for us.

The permanent art installation Jon Ross gifted the tribe will serve as a lasting connection to our past, our present and our future. We are grateful to Cook Inlet Region Inc. for financially supporting the installation.

In the April – July Counting Cord, Jon said he designed the plaza to tie together Dena'ina history and culture with the land, directions, values and more.

"It's not just for connecting intellectually, but also connecting in our hearts – with the land, with the Heavenly Father, with the seasonal cycle, with how and when we do things," Jon said.

In much the same way, we celebrate and welcome our Tribal Doctor, Estelle Thomson. Alaska Native people have always cared for themselves using a holistic, total person approach to wellness.

"I work with physical, emotional and spiritual issues – and they are all tied together," Estelle said recently.

I hope that Estelle and our Traditional Healing Program will help you on your own journey to wellness.

I also hope that you will be able to join us at our next Quarterly Membership Meeting on Dec. 19 at the Dena'ina Wellness Center. We are going to place a stake in the ground to take a stand against the damage drugs and alcohol cause in our community.

At the Raven Plaza celebration, Joel Isaak presented his "Lay Your Burdens Down" installation. He spoke about how the artwork explored moving beyond pain and burdens to a new, better place.

At the meeting on the 19th, we want to hear how you have found your own resilience. We want to hear your thoughts on how the tribe can work together to battle our common foe. After we've placed a stake in the ground, we will place stakes on the table, so you'll want to save the date. Details on the meeting will be announced on the Calendar of Events page on the tribe's website. We will also mail a postcard to addresses in Alaska.

The next issue of the Counting Cord will be mailed in January. In that issue, I'll talk about the goals we have set out for the coming year to accomplish our Mission, to assure Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina thrive forever.

I hope that I will see you on Dec. 19. Chiqinik!

— Jaylene Peterson-Nyren
Executive Director, Kenaitze Indian Tribe

Do you know these people? Help us update their address

Please help find correct addresses for the following people so that we can deliver important news and information to their mailbox. Update one of these addresses and you will be entered to win an Apple iPad. Call 907-335-7202 or email Sasha Jackson at sjackson@kenaitze.org with info.

Albright, Dawn
Ashton, Lori
Azzara, Anthony
Batt, Raymond
Blatchford, Joel
Bliss, Amanda
Bocatch, Claude
Boling, Sharon
Boulette, Brittany
Boulette, Camryn
Burnham, Heather
Burnham, Hillary
Busane, Manual
Campos, Frank. Jr.
Carlough, William
Chaffin, Kenneth
Chaffin, Tina
Costanios, Hazel

Coveyou, Anthony
Coveyou, Kathryn
Coveyou, Katie
Coveyou, Rachael
Coveyou, Sarah
Cross, James
Crump, Jessica
Darien, Edward
Darien, Lisa
Davis, Julia
Davis, Rebecca
Davis, Angela
Deitz, Tracy
Demidoff, Emelie
Dolchok, Clifford
Dolchok, Mack
Edelman, Drassanna
Edelman, Erika

Edelman, Jay
Edelman, Edwin, Jr.
England, Patricia
Fleenor, Rose
Forstner, Ashley
Frost, Ashley
Frost, Gabrielle
Frostad, Brian
Frostad, Kathryn
Gaines, Vivian
Gibson, Amee
Gregoire, Matthew
Hallstead, Steven
Harker, Nelson
Harker, Solani
Haskell, Gregory
Holzwarth, David
Page, Jared

To our donors: *Chiqinik*

The Kenaitze Indian Tribe extends a warm chiqinik – thank you – to our generous donors. In addition to the individuals and organizations included below, we also thank the many people who wished to remain anonymous, as well as those who supported us through tribal events and fundraisers during the past year.

Mary Lou Botorff
Ballard Co.
Liisia Blizzard
Cook Inlet Region Inc.
Cook Inlet Tribal Council
Margy Crosley
Dennis Davidson
Fidelity Charitable Grant
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GHCF J. Yeoman Fund
Sharon Isaak
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Norwex
Jaylene Peterson-Nyren
Salamatof Native Association
Salamatof Tribal Council
Soldotna Chamber of Commerce
Southcentral Foundation
Star Oil
Kim Sweet
Rosalie A. Tepp
University of Alaska Anchorage
Chrystal VanSky
Jennifer Yeoman

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: Sasha Jackson
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Kenai, AK 99611

sjackson@kenaitze.org
907-335-7202

From the editor's desk

The Counting Cord is a publication for members of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe and its customers.

Find more information on the tribe's website at kenaitze.org and like us on Facebook at [facebook.com/kenaitze](https://www.facebook.com/kenaitze).

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



NOTE FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON

Hello,

Congratulations to our newly elected Council Members. The Council works hard for our people and I am sure you will do good work. Thank you for your decision to serve.

Thank you, too, to everyone who came to the Annual Meeting. We had more than 120 people vote and we added 51 new members to the tribe's roll. I know all of you want to see the tribe prosper.

One way you can help is to show up and participate at our meetings. Last year your Council committed to quarterly membership meetings. We got a lot done and we plan to keep holding them.

The next one will be on Dec. 19 at the Dena'ina Wellness Center. The time has not been set yet. Watch for a postcard if you live in Alaska. The details will also be on the calendar



on the website.

The purpose of the meeting will be to hear from people who have fought against alcohol and drugs. Our people have been through a lot and they know a lot. We want to hear from you what you think works and what doesn't work. We want to enhance our drug and alcohol program with feedback from you. We need to stop the damage drugs and alcohol are doing.

Your Council is also going to be working on the fishery and on education in the coming year.

Thank you again for supporting your Council.

— Rosalie A. Tepp
Tribal Chairperson, Kenaitze Indian Tribe

YOUTH, from p. 1
themselves.

The second project the Youth Council started was a monthly litter pick-up. Once a month the council agrees on a date and location on the Kenai Peninsula to pick up trash. Locations have included Cannery Road, Kalifornsky Beach Road near Kalifornsky Village and the area between the Kenai Holiday gas station and the Three Bears store.

The third project the Youth Council submitted was an effort to help children who are in the tribe's Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program. CASA volunteers speak for abused and neglected children in state and tribal courts.

For this project, they filled duffel bags with items that would be helpful for a child transitioning to a new home. Some of the items were basic toiletries such as a toothbrush and toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, body wash, deodorant and a comb, as well as a journal and pens and a homemade blanket made by the Youth Council.

In the middle of May, the Youth Council received news that all 11 of the youth that had participated were invited to attend the White House Tribal Youth Gathering.

The Youth Council then started a series of fundraisers to raise money to send as many youth to the Washington gathering as possible. In four weeks, the Youth Council held four split the pot fundraisers at the Oilers Bingo Hall in Kenai;

served food and held a split the pot at the Tyotka's Elder Center's steak dinner night; had a fry bread sale at the Oilers Bingo Hall; and held a door prize raffle drawing and an Indian taco dinner for donations. In four short weeks, the Youth Council raised over \$5,000.

On July 6, all 11 youth – Raven Willoya, Destyne Svenson, Kimberly Eide-Segura, Ashley Segura, Jessica Segura, Christopher Campos, Haley Trefon, Summer Trefon, Cassidy Oder, Nadia Walluk and Breezy Big Crow – joined adults Kami Wright, Kaleb Franke and Christa Huf, en route to the first White House Tribal Youth

Obama told the youth that they now have a voice in Washington, D.C., and that the President and First Lady are listening to them, support them, and in her own words, "we have your back."

After the gathering, the Youth Council participated in the UNITY Conference. They spoke with other youth from across the country about issues affecting the youth in their communities and how other youth are working on resolving these issues. Important subjects included drug and alcohol prevention, suicide prevention, strengthening family bonds and culture, and language preservation.

The youth visited the Holocaust Museum, the National Air and Space Museum, the National Museum of the American Indian, and saw the Constitution and Bill of Rights of the United States.

With the Kenaitze Indian Tribe's Executive Council as a model, the Youth Council has covered a lot of ground. It has learned about community organizing,

community service, running council meetings using Robert's Rules of Order, forming meeting agendas and writing meeting minutes. Members have bonded with each other, as well as networked with hundreds of youth across the nation. They have come back to Alaska with life-changing experiences and the drive to help the Kenai Peninsula community become an even better place to live.



The Youth Council in Washington D.C.

TRIBAL COUNCIL

Rosalie A. Tepp
Chairperson
rtepp@kenaitze.org



Audre Gifford
Vice-Chairperson
agifford@kenaitze.org



Liisia Blizzard
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lblurzard@kenaitze.org



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jyeoman@kenaitze.org



Bernadine Atchison
Council Member
batchison@kenaitze.org



Wayne Wilson
Council Member
wwilson@kenaitze.org



Bequsilna *‘those who are gone’*

The following tribal members have passed away since the 2014 Annual General Council Meeting.

This space will be dedicated to remembering our bequsilna, those who are gone.

Please submit death notices to Sasha Jackson at sjackson@kenaitze.org or by phone at 907-335-7202.

Gerry Allan Lindgren
9/14/1968 – 10/5/2014

Victoria Ann Miller Cameron
2/14/1951 – 11/24/2014

Cody Mack Jr.
7/21/1971 – 11/24/2014

Antonett Johnson Bryan
2/27/1942 – 2/23/2015

Larry Sanders
12/23/1939 – 2/28/2015

Eugene Juliussen Sr.
6/20/1944 – 3/20/2015

Tauna Lewis Showalter
3/12/1983 – 2/8/2015

Elizabeth M. Segura
1/26/1972 – 8/18/2015

Carol Ann Segura
2/19/1935 – 9/8/2015

Sign up now for Early Childhood Center classes

The Early Childhood Center is accepting applications for the 2015-16 school year. Children must have been 3 or 4 years old by Sept. 1. The no-fee program is open to Native and non-Native children, regardless of household income, and operates from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Applications are available on the tribe's website under the Early Childhood Center tab and at the center, which is located at 130 N. Willow St. in Kenai. Call the center's main line at 907-335-7260 or contact Sasha Fallon at 907-335-7259 for more information or to receive a tour of the facility.



Tribal members participate in the Annual General Council Meeting on Oct. 3.

MEETING, from p. 1

- Treasurer, Clinton Lageson
- Council member, Bernadine Atchison
- Council member, Wayne Wilson
- Council member, Jennifer Showalter Yeoman

Before tribal members cast their ballots, they had an opportunity to make comments from the floor. Much of the discussion revolved around the recent removal of two members from the Council. The removal was explained to the membership in two letters mailed prior to the meeting.

Tribal leadership also offered reports highlighting the past year across the tribe.

Executive Director Jaylene Peterson-Nyren said the tribe is in a strong position financially, with its facilities and in many other areas as it continues to grow.

She said representatives from the M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust recently traveled from the Lower 48 to visit the Dena'ina Wellness Center, an indication that the tribe is being noticed not just locally but also beyond.

"It meant so much that 40 trustees from around the nation would come and see little old us," Peterson-Nyren said. "Well it's not little old us anymore ... It is a tremendous honor to be a part of a team serving tribal members."

James Segura, Chairperson for the

Hunting, Fishing and Gathering Commission, said the tribe is working to increase the tribal fishery's quota.

Gifford, Chairperson for the Finance Committee, reported that the tribe ended the 2015 fiscal year with \$1.4 million in savings and has increased its total assets from \$11.67 million to \$57 million over the past five years.

Members also approved adding 51 people to the tribe's roll, increasing membership from 1,583 to 1,634.

Throughout the morning, booths showcasing different areas of the tribe were displayed in the upstairs area of the wellness center, giving tribal members a chance to learn about the tribe's many programs and services.

Learn about Tribal Court

Dena'ina Athabascan people have resolved conflict, maintained peace and delivered justice within their territories through the use of traditional laws and practices for thousands of years.

Today, the Kenaitze Indian Tribe adheres to and practices those same principles through a Tribal Court established in 1986.

But how does Tribal Court function and how is it accessed? Here's some Tribal Court 101:

Accessing Tribal Court

The process starts with a petition being filed through the court clerk's office.

Judges review the petition to determine if it falls within tribal jurisdiction. If the petition is approved, the judges then determine if the case is appropriate for a panel-style hearing or the tribe's traditional conflict resolution program.

A minimum of two judges participate in this review and determination process. After cases are accepted, the court clerk contacts the parties regarding future hearings and proceedings.

Types of Cases

The court hears a wide range of cases as described in the tribe's Domestic Relations Code. They include:

- Child protection for Children In Need of Aid (CINA)
- Voluntary relinquishment or involuntary termination of parental rights
- Tribal adoption
- Child custody
- Domestic violence
- Marriages
- Divorces and annulment
- Name change
- Protection and guardianship of Elders and vulnerable adults

Structure

A Chief Judge oversees the overall operations of court, and the court administrator/clerk oversees daily functions. Currently, the tribe has three judges in addition to the Chief Judge. The court operates a Tribal Circle program and Court Appointed Special Advocates program, which run up through the Chief Judge.

Judge Requirements

At a minimum, to become a tribal

judge a person must:

- Be an enrolled tribal member
- Reside in the tribe's customary and traditional Dena'ina Indian Country
- Be at least 31 years old
- Not have been convicted of a non-violent crime with the previous two years, unless otherwise approved by Tribal Court; fishing, hunting and gathering violations do not exclude a person from serving as a judge
- Not have been convicted of a violent crime within the past 10 years, unless otherwise approved by the Tribal Council
- Not have been convicted of any crime involving sexual assault, molestation, sexual abuse or sexual exploitation in their lifetime
- Agree to participate in judicial trainings as they are made available by the tribe
- Provide a criminal background investigation, child protection clearance, and drug and alcohol-free workplace statement
- Not have been previously removed from judgeship
- Not be a current tribal council member.

Christmas comes early

Kenaitze helps with capitol tree project

No one spotted Santa Claus or his reindeer, but it began to feel a lot like Christmas at the Tyotka's Elder Center – in September.

That's because tribal Elders and members of the Youth Council, Gganilchit Dena'ina, spent three days at the center making ornaments for the U. S. Capitol Christmas Tree. The tree will anchor the front lawn of the White House come December.

"It's a chance to share our culture," said tribal member Sharon Isaak, who participated in the ornament-making.

Every year, the U.S. Forest Service provides a tree from a different national forest to display on the White House lawn. This year's tree will come from the Chugach National Forest, the first time an Alaska tree has been selected since the tradition began in 1964.

The tree – also known as the "People's Tree" – will be transported from Alaska

Ornaments, including these tiny hand-crafted mittens, have been sent to organizers to hang on the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree.

to the White House in early November, according to the project website.

At Tyotka's in September, the goal was to make 500 ornaments.

Participants cut mitten shapes from green and red felt, stitching them shut and decorating them with beads and glitter. They also made drums from birch wood.

As the collection of ornaments grew, participants agreed it was a unique opportunity.

"It represents us and it represents the area," said Carey Edwards, Tyotka's cook assistant.

And although she admitted it was difficult to see the tiny needle as she sewed, Edwards said it was refreshing to be together in a group – and it was especially nice to see Elders and youth working together.

"I enjoy this. We don't do these things enough," she said. "This kind of thing is important, and it's fun."

Breezy Big Crow, one of the youth participants, echoed that sentiment.

For Big Crow, who worked alongside her brother making drums, the best part of the experience was twofold.

"Learning culture and getting together," she said.



Above, Breezy Big Crow uses a photo of a traditional Dena'ina bead design she found on Pinterest with her iPhone to guide her work as she decorates a wood and skin drum ornament that is destined for the U. S. Capitol Christmas Tree later this year during an ornament-making party Tyotka's Elder Center.

At left, Youth and Elders work together to create ornaments for the 2015 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree and other trees in the nation's capitol.



Fish camp

Yaghanen program teaches tradition, culture, skills

With his sleeves rolled up, Joshua Grosvold clasped the carcass and scraped a spoon across the edge of its spine.

Dabs of meat, still cool from the saltwater a few hundred feet away, began rolling off the tooth-pick-thin bones.

"You can definitely tell how good someone is at cleaning fish by how much meat is on the backbone," said Grosvold, 14. "If there's not a lot of meat left, you can tell they are good."

In July, the Yaghanen Youth Program hosted a pair of Fish Camps – first a junior session then a senior session – in partnership with Cook Inlet Tribal Council of Anchorage. Grosvold was among

more than 30 children who attended, learning the traditional practices of early Dena'ina people in a culturally rich environment.

Both sessions spanned five days and were based at Spirit Lake in Kenai.

Each day, campers participated in a range of activities that gave them a glimpse into the way of life for the Dena'ina people, who have inhabited the Kenai

Peninsula for thousands of years.

Campers visited the tribal fishery on the beach along Cannery Road in Kenai, where they mended, pulled and picked the net before cleaning sock-eye salmon and preparing

them to be smoked and canned.

With tribal fishery coordinator George Showalter leading the way, senior campers set the net twice, pulling in more than 50 fish.

Campers then worked together to clean and fillet the fish.

That's when Grosvold, participating in his third Fish Camp, learned to scrape meat off the fish's backbone to maximize use of the catch. The approach represented the traditional Dena'ina value of stew-

ardship – respectful use of the land, resources and all creations.

"This is so peaceful," Grosvold said.

Stewardship is one of the many values Yaghanen youth advocate and camp instructor Ashley Knicely has learned through the Yaghanen program.

Knically attended Yaghanen camps as a youngster and believes it's important to share the knowledge she gained with the current generation of children, including her own.

And there's no better way to learn, she added, than to receive hands-on experience.

"It's part of tribal life, passing these skills onto kids," Knicely said. "The

way we teach is by showing, not telling."

Campers also made a trip to the Russian River, where they learned about wildlife, vegetation and more.

As part of the junior session, open to children in sixth through eighth grades, Tyler Gagat of the United States Forest Service led participants on a hike along the water's edge, teaching them about plants, bank restoration and fish protection.

During the hike, campers spotted Dall sheep on a steep hillside near the river. They also received tips on co-existing with bears, a lesson not lost on the group after it stumbled upon a still-moist, pile of scat in the middle of the trail.

"That's probably a pretty

big bear," Gagat said, peering down as campers huddled around the heap.

After the Russian River excursion, the group toured the tribe's K'Beq' Heritage Site.

Tucked under a canopy of trees along the upper reaches of the Kenai River near Cooper Landing, K'Beq' includes boardwalks and informational displays showcasing life of the early Dena'ina.

Following the tour, campers had a chance to reflect on their time at camp.

Kaelyn Pungowiyi-Cleveland, 14, said she most enjoyed canoeing across Spirit Lake.

"I barely had gone canoeing before, and I don't really remember it because it was so long ago," she

said. "This is what I will remember for the rest of my life."

This was the second consecutive year Yaghanen partnered with Cook Inlet Tribal Council on Fish Camp, which also saw campers smoke and can salmon, sleep in cabins at Spirit Lake and share laughs around the fire.

Yaghanen coordinator Michael Bernard said the focus of Fish Camp, which dates back to the 1990s, has never changed.

"Giving the kids a chance to get into the woods, disconnect from technology and learn in an environment that's culturally based is our top priority," Bernard said. "And we want to pass on culture and also have fun."



Yaghanen's fish camp takes children through the process of preparing fish, from setting the net to canning smoked strips.

Lay Your Burdens Down



Joel Isaak, left, talks about his “Lay Your Burdens Down” installation that was on display during the Raven Plaza dedication. “My goal of this exhibit was to create an environment that allows the viewer to carry, and then lay down their own burdens. ‘As far as the east is from the west so far He removed our transgressions from us,’ (Psalms 103:12), became the core concept for this exhibit,” Isaak wrote.

Traditional Healing takes wing

Ask Estelle Thomson how she became the Traditional Healer at the Dena’ina Wellness Center, and she shares a defining story.

A few years ago, Thomson was running a massage-therapy business in Anchorage and wanted to learn more about alternatives to Western medicine. Problem was, no schools in the area offered the curriculum she sought.

So she called the Southcentral Foundation, hoping for any kind of lead – and landed a meeting with the director of the wellness department. Not long into the meeting, Thomson knew it had promise.

“Instead of me asking all the questions, he started asking all the questions,” she remembered, comparing it to an interview.

Sure enough, Thomson went on to earn an apprenticeship with the foundation’s traditional healing program. She became a Certified Tribal Doctor within a year.

The tribe hired Thomson as its first Traditional Healer in April and officially blessed her program during a dedication ceremony for Ggugguyni T’uh, Raven Plaza, at the Dena’ina Wellness Center in September.

For Thomson, who is Yup’ik and from Hooper Bay, it was a proud moment.

“I’ve never felt so embraced by a community,” she said.

Traditional healing is an indigenous practice that takes a holistic approach toward wellness, addressing the natural, emotional and spiritual elements of a person’s health in addition to the physical aspects.

Thomson’s customers – or



Tribal Doctor Estelle Thomson talks about her reception at the Dena’ina Wellness Center during the Raven Plaza event. “I have never felt so embraced by a community,” she said.

“Un’ina” – have access to prayer and guided meditation, song and dance, traditional plant medicine and foods, talk story, healing circle, cleansing and blessing, and more. The physical components of her program include soft and connective tissue manipulation, bone and joint manipulation, energy and circulatory work, lym-

phatic drainage, and more.

The program fits into the tribe’s integrated approach to care, giving customers access to a wide range of services beneath one roof.

“I work with physical, emotional and spiritual issues – and they are all tied together,” Thomson said.

When Thomson meets new cus-

tomers, she asks them a wide range of questions – about sleep patterns, family history, allergies and more – to gain insight into their situation. It’s an evaluation process Thomson compares to peeling away layers, the goal being to get to the root of the issue.

And it’s a useful process, Thomson said, because pain can stem not just from mechanical issues but also emotions.

“I look at things a little bit differently,” Thomson said. “I look not just at the issue someone is dealing with, but also the causation.”

Thomson has been working primarily with Elders since April, but she anticipates broadening the customer base and expanding services over time.

Director of Health Systems Dr. John Molina said traditional healing is an important component of the wellness center’s repertoire of services.

“Estelle’s traditional healing program provides the tribe the opportunity to embrace and strengthen their cultural values and traditions,” Molina said. “For our customers, Un’ina, it provides a more holistic approach to healing, by addressing the natural and spiritual elements of healing and health.”

For Thomson, the best part of the job is helping people.

Some customers have dealt with pain and other issues for so long that by the time they see her, they have forgotten what it feels like to be well.

“The biggest compliment is when people I see say, ‘I pay attention to how I feel. I feel better because you showed me how to,’” Thomson said.



Raven Plaza celebrated

The tribe dedicated and celebrated *Ggugguyni T’uh* (Raven Plaza) at the Dena’ina Wellness Center on Sept. 19. The creation, located just outside the main entrance, represents Dena’ina cosmology, said its designer, Jon Ross. Raven Plaza is a circular, granite display featuring a fire pit in the center. The fire pit is surrounded by a design that incorporates the solar and lunar year, days, weeks, months, tides, seasons and phases of the moon. The perimeter of the circle includes the 16 Dena’ina values found in the traditional Dena’ina values wheel. Concrete bench seating runs along the edge of the plaza, etched with representations of Mount Iliamna, Redoubt and Spurr. “It’s not just for connecting intellectually, but also connecting in our hearts – with the land, with the Heavenly Father, with the seasonal cycle, with how and when we do things,” Jon said. Above, Ross (at left) stands with the crowd as a ceremonial fire consumes burdens written on paper from Joel Isaak’s “Lay Your Burdens Down” exhibit. At left, a member of the audience wears a beaded pendant given to visitors during the ceremony. Bottom left, Director of Health Systems Dr. John Molina speaks about the center. Below, the Del Dumí Drummers perform.





Students study Dena'ina language in a class at Kenai Peninsula College this semester taught by Sondra Shaginoff-Stuart and Helen Dick.

Dena'inaq sht'a sheł dini

Say it in Dena'ina

College class promotes local language

Estelle Thomson wants to honor the people whose land she lives on. Danielle Self wants to share knowledge with her children. And Bunny Swan Gease wants to make up for lost time.

Thomson, Self and Swan Gease are participating in Kenai Peninsula College's introductory Dena'ina language course for their own reasons. But the participants share at least one common belief – that Dena'ina, the indigenous language of the Kahtnuht'ana Denai'na people, is important and deserves a place in the community.

"I feel that we missed out on that rich part of our lives because it was not popular to speak our language," said Swan Gease, a tribal member who grew up knowing and speaking little Dena'ina, despite her heritage. "But now it is great."

The course is offered through the Alaska Native Studies Program and meets Tuesday and Thursday evenings through December. With 19 students enrolled, it overviews basic listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

In addition to teaching students the fundamentals of a complex language that has five dialects, the course aims to preserve an important part of Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina culture.

Sondra Shaginoff-Stuart, the college's Rural and Native Student Services Coordinator and co-instructor of the course, said there are fewer than 30 people today who speak fluent Dena'ina.

The course is a good start toward improving that number, Shaginoff-Stuart said, but there must ultimately be life-long advocates if the language is to thrive.

"We're hoping to find that person or group of people who is willing to make that commitment," she said.

During a September class, students participated in hands-on, group exercises.

Co-instructor, Helen Dick, who is fluent in Dena'ina, placed objects on the floor, said them in Dena'ina and asked students to repeat the words.

After a few rounds of practice, students closed their eyes and received an object to hide under their coats or

in bags on their laps. Then they took turns guessing which classmate had which object – speaking, of course, in Dena'ina.

One person had a coffee cup – "chashga." One had a small

cooking pot – "vak'edleshi" or "dudlik." Another had a metal spoon – "lugheshga."

Students agreed it was a helpful exercise. "I was so

excited. I said, 'Wow, that's a great way to learn,'" said Lucy Daniels, who works in the tribe's Na'ini Social Services area. "It's fun. That's the key – it's a fun way to learn."

For Maria Hargrove, who also works in Na'ini, the group approach helped reduce her anxiety of learning something new.

And it also was effective.

"I recognize them (the objects) more with these fun activities," Har-

grove said.

Thomson, who was hired by the tribe as a Traditional Healer this past spring, has studied four or five indigenous languages. She said it's interesting to see the correlations and similarities across those languages, despite their differences.

Beyond learning, Thomson said she signed up for the course as a show of respect for the Dena'ina people.

"It is important to honor the people whose land I live on," said Thomson, who is Yu'pik and from Hooper Bay, Alaska.

Meanwhile, Self, also of Na'ini, has been taking knowledge from the classroom and sharing it at home with her children. During the September course, she learned the Dena'ina words for cooking ingredients such as cranberries, sugar and cream.

Now her kids will know those words, too.

"They'll be really excited," Self said.

Linda Ross, who is Dena'ina, said she is sad that she never learned the language at a younger age and feels deprived.

But now, years later, she is thankful to have the opportunity.

"I'm grateful for this class," Ross said. "It's an honor to be here."



Dick and Shaginoff-Stuart co-teach the class.



Raven Willoya-Williams and Destyne Svenson work on a dig at Lucky Bay on Australia's southern coast during their six-week archaeology internship.

'I learned tons'

Australia internship leads to cultural exchange and personal growth

A few months ago, Raven Willoya-Williams had never left the United States.

Now she's been halfway across the globe and back.

Willoya-Williams, a tribal member and employee, recently completed a six-month internship hosted by Applied Archeology Australia. Destyne Svenson, who in the past has participated in the Yaghanen Youth Program, also completed the internship.

During their time in the Outback, they worked on community heritage projects with indigenous groups across the country, studying cultural site protection, plants, history and more.

"I learned tons," Willoya-Williams said.

As an archeology field assistant, Willoya-Williams participated in a wide range of projects.

She helped excavate tools dating back 5,000 years. She learned about aboriginal history and European settlements. She met indigenous groups who she said are facing challenges similar to those of Alaska Native and American Indian people.

Willoya-Williams spent much of the time in Esperance, a coastal community of about 10,000 in Western Australia. But she visited many other areas, too, including Perth, Sydney and Rottnest Island.

"They were all unique and different," Willoya-Williams said.

In addition to the day-to-day work, Willoya-Williams also enjoyed the surprises that come with visiting a foreign country.

There was the unique wildlife – she saw kangaroos. There was the array of food – she sampled turtle. And there was the similar-yet-different language – despite the fact that Australians speak English, Willoya-Williams said there were many nuances in speech.

"I was surprised at all the little differences," she said.

Willoya-Williams, who graduated from Kenai Alternative High School last spring, said the experience gave her a better understanding and appreciation of archeology and anthropology.

And she will always remember the experience.

"We did a lot of interesting things," she said. "It was fun."



Raven Willoya-Williams and Destyne Svenson share Dena'ina culture and language with high school students at One Arm Point in Western, Australia.

School year underway at ECC

The 2015-16 school year recently got underway at the Early Childhood Center, and students and staff have already enjoyed many accomplishments thanks to collaboration and partnerships across the tribe. Yaghanen Youth Program staff members have been visiting preschool students three times a week to share cultural language. Na'ini Social Services helped with the food served at September's welcome-back barbecue at the tribal fishery. The dental team at the Dena'ina Wellness Center

offered beginning-of-the-year screenings and fluoride treatment. Amber Delago of the Wellness Department has been working with kids on "Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies." And Phillip Lazenby of the Behavioral Health Program organized a group for fathers – "AK Dad." The center also would like to welcome new staff members Lauralee Smart, preschool teacher; Misty Mosquito, after-school teacher; and Leslie Hemphill, cook aid substitute.

Family Services seeks foster families

Family Services is interested in speaking to people who have considered being a foster parent. If you are interested in becoming a tribally licensed foster family, contact Shannon Dodge at 907-

335-7200. Family Services also offers an Adult Protective Services program assisting Elders and vulnerable adults with advocacy and protection. To learn more, contact Shelly Becker at 907-335-7612.

Better Choices, Better Health course available

The Tyotka's Elder Center and Dena'ina Wellness Center are partnering to offer a "Better Choices, Better Health" course. The class spans six sessions, teaching participants about planning, reaching

goals, self-management and more. Participants are encouraged to bring family members and friends to class. Contact Heather Daniels at 907-335-7280 or Robin Morris at 907-335-7583 to enroll.

Tyotka's offering Elder assistance

Tyotka's is offering support to Elders who need assistance with light chores, respite, home visits, shopping, paperwork and other basic needs. An intake form and screening process determines eligibility. Additionally, Tyotka's provides special transportation

to the center for lunch on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, with 24-hour notice, the center provides transportation for appointments and other errands. Call 907-335-7280 to learn more or sign up for transportation services.

Fred Meyer Rewards can help CASA

Did you know you can help support Kenai Peninsula Court Appointed Special Advocates – CASA – simply by shopping at Fred Meyer? Sign up for the Community Rewards Program by linking your Fred Meyer rewards card to Kenai Peninsula CASA at www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards. Each time you shop, you will help CASA earn a dona-

tion while still earning fuel, rebate and other award points. The CASA program matches trained adult volunteers with vulnerable children going through the tribal court system. The volunteer's role is to create consistency in the child's life and ensure the child is appropriately represented and heard in court proceedings.

Nursing scholarship opportunity survey available

Tribal members interested in receiving a scholarship for nursing school or a paid stipend to attend nursing school while working are encouraged to email Paige Hodges

at phodges@kenaitze.org. Your response will be part of a tribe-wide survey to determine interest in nursing scholarships and stipends for the next fiscal year.

Veteran's Day observation planned

Tyotka's Elder Center will host a Veterans Day breakfast on Nov. 11, from 8 to 10 a.m. All local

veterans are welcome. To accommodate the breakfast, lunch will not be served on the 11th.

Follow the Calendar of Events at kenaitze.org and the tribe's Facebook page at facebook.com/kenaitze for meeting schedules and other events and opportunities.

The Big Picture



The tribe's Jabila'ina Dancers perform under beautiful sky above Kenai at a dedication for Raven Plaza at the Dena'ina Wellness Center on Sept. 19. See more on pages 8 and 9.

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
907-335-7600

Tribal Court
508 Upland St., Kenai, AK 99611
907-335-7217

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



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