

The Counting Cord

Nitnuqeyishi



November 2015–January 2016

KENAITZE INDIAN TRIBE NEWSLETTER

Hop, kick and a jump

Native Youth Olympics draws competitors from near and far

With his hands wrapped around the stick and knees bent at a 45-degree angle, Ben Boersma sat across from the opponent and stared into his eyes.

“Ready. Set. Pull!” the official proclaimed.

The competitors began pulling the stick in their own directions, grimacing as the soles of their shoes pressed together. After a few seconds, Boersma’s opponent leaned to the side and let go of the stick. The duo stood up and shook hands.

The Eskimo stick pull, Boersma’s favorite event, occurred during the three-day Native Youth Olympics hosted by the Kenaitze Indian Tribe’s Yaghanen Youth Program in January at Kenai Middle School. The invitational, which attracted athletes from as far as Chickaloon, was part of the Peninsula Winter Games organized by the Soldotna Chamber of Commerce.

The invitational is open to youth up to the age of 18 and emphasizes sportsmanship through a range of traditional events, including the two-foot high kick, arm pull, scissor broad jump, wrist carry, seal hop, and more.

See **NYO**, p. 6



William Wilson competes in the one-foot high kick, an event that demands strength, flexibility and focus.

Making access easy

Na’ini Family and Social Services move to Old Town

The Kenaitze Indian Tribe has again expanded its footprint in Old Town Kenai.

In November, Na’ini Family and Social Services moved from the tribe’s administration building on Willow Street to a two-story property located just steps from three major tribal facilities in Old Town – the Dena’ina Wellness Center, the soon-to-open Tyotkas Elder Center, and the Tribal Courthouse.

The new building, which the tribe acquired in May 2015, also houses the Education and Employment Department.

Analisa Selden, Director of Human Services, said the social service and family service programs have already seen an increase in referrals since moving to the new space.

She attributed the increase to the building’s proximity to other tribal

See **NA’INI**, p. 2

Thoughtful talk for a tough subject



Darryl Tonemah speaks about trauma at a quarterly tribal meeting.

Discussion at quarterly meeting focuses on trauma, substance use

In the aftermath of a tornado that ripped through his Oklahoma home, destroying all but the closet in which he and his family hid, Darryl Tonemah began to wonder.

“I was curious how it was going to affect my family,” said Tonemah, a psychologist and musician.

In December, Tonemah attended the tribe’s quarterly membership meeting at the Dena’ina Wellness Center to discuss trauma and the affect it has on a person’s life. The tribe invited him to speak as part

of an ongoing effort to address the growing concern of substance use in the community.

Tonemah is of Kiowa, Comanche and Tuscarora heritage and currently directs the Health Promotion Program at the University of Oklahoma’s College of Continuing Education, working with indigenous groups across North America.

His presentation to tribal members included everything from scientific data to history to humor, but

See **TRAUMA**, p. 4

NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Yaghalí du? How is it with you?

With us, it is *aa' yaghalí*. It is good. More specifically, it is well. We are focusing on our community's wellness more with each passing day, and you will see that reflected in these pages.

The Kenaitze Indian Tribe defines wellness far more broadly than having a good checkup at the doctor, or not having to miss work or school because you haven't been sick.

For us, wellness affects the whole person — body, mind and spirit.

This total wellness is what we are working toward in our Mission: To assure Kaht-nuht'ana Dena'ina thrive forever. It is also what we are working to achieve in every program and every service that the tribe offers.



For several years, this vision of total wellness — our Dene' Model of Care — has been our guide as we've integrated dental, medical, behavioral health, and wellness programs into one Dena'ina Wellness Center.

It has also guided us in expanding services to include physical therapy, traditional healing, orthoscopic dentistry and nutrition. We've expanded Tribal Court and social services, including education and training.

The Dene' Model of Care has also inspired us to integrate and cross-train our social service employees so that they can help with the many factors that affect our social wellness. These include a good education, job training, safe housing, and family support.

Now, as you can read on Page 1, those services are located right next to our Dena'ina Wellness Center.

Across the parking lot from these two buildings, our Tribal Court is receiving national attention for its contribution to the judicial wellness of our people.

Some of you are reading this newsletter for the first time. In the past, it was distributed primarily to our 1,634 Kenaitze tribal members. Starting with this issue, we will be distributing the Counting Cord to all of our customers.

We are also expanding coverage of our services at the Dena'ina Wellness Center in a special section of the newsletter called *Yaghalí Nusdlan*: He or she got well. In this issue, the section begins on Page 12.

Stories in *Yaghalí Nusdlan* will help introduce you to services you might not know we offer. The section will also provide tips on how to better utilize those services on your own journey to wellness.

I'd like to close with a special *chiginik* — thank you — to Bill Overstreet. Bill shared with us his story about how the tribe has helped him on his journey to wellness. I hope you read his story on Page 12 and hope that his experience with our diabetes prevention program will inspire you on your own path.

Next time you see one of the tribe's 300 employees, tell us how you are doing and how we can walk with you on your path to wellness!

Chiginik for letting us serve you.

— Jaylene Peterson-Nyren
Executive Director, Kenaitze Indian Tribe



Kate Schadle and Lucy Daniels work in November to unpack upstairs in the new offices for Na'ini Family and Social Services.

NA'INI, from p. 1
facilities in Old Town.

"It's easily accessible," Selden said.

The move also means that social services employees and family services employees can work side-by-side, offering integrated services to customers.

The integration of the two programs has created cohesion among employees while giving customers one-stop access to an

array of services, Selden said.

"It allows staff to collaborate as a team and provide wraparound services to families, whether they are in crisis or just need some guidance or direction on career pathways," Selden said. "Having our staff cross-trained in what all the other departments and positions do means there isn't ever a time when un'ina (those who come to us) have to wait."

Under one roof

The following services are available at the tribe's new office building in Old Town Kenai:

- Social Services — energy assistance; general assistance; burial; emergency assistance, including fire, flood and earthquake; domestic violence and sexual assault; food bank; and child care.
- Family Services — adult protection; child protection; foster care; and family preservation.
- Education and Employment — scholarships; higher education assistance; Workforce Investment Act services; youth internships; and job training and placement.

Learn more

Phone number: 907-335-7600

Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Fridays

Address: 510 Upland St. in Kenai (across from the Dena'ina Wellness Center)

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:

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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,

Thank you to everyone who showed up for our last quarterly meeting. We had really good attendance and your comments are going to help us on Council as we look for a way to fight back against the alcohol and drugs that are hurting so many people now.

Too many people are dying from substance abuse and despair. We have to do what we can to end the cycle. With your help we can stop it. Your Council is hard-working and this is one of the biggest problems we have to solve.

We don't have the date set for the next quarterly meeting, but tribal members will receive a post card with more information as soon as the date is set.

The Council is working on improvements to the fishery and on the tribe's



education system. Members will hear more about the fishery before the opening of the net on May 1.

It is good that we have been able to move our social services next to the Dena'ina Wellness Center. The Council has already heard how the move has made it easier for people to get help.

It won't be long and we will be moved into our new Elders building too. It will be good to have our own place for Elders again.

Thank you for being active in your tribe. Together we can get a lot done. We have a lot to do.

Rosalie A. Tepp

— Rosalie A. Tepp
Tribal Chairperson, Kenaitze Indian Tribe



Veterans, family and friends stand on Nov. 11 to recognize those who have served during a breakfast honoring veterans at Tyotkas Elder Center.

Tyotkas hosts Veterans Day Breakfast

More than 40 people attended a Veterans Day breakfast at the Tyotkas Elder Center in November, recognizing those who have served in the United States Armed Forces. The event included remarks from Executive Council Chairperson Rosalie A. Tepp, who thanked veterans for their service and dedication to the country, as well as Executive Director Jaylene Peterson-Nyren and Chief Judge Kim Sweet. Veterans were invited along with a guest of their choice, enjoying a full breakfast and the company of family and friends.

VITA Program offers tax-preparation assistance

The tribe is currently accepting appointments for those interested in utilizing the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program. The program offers free tax-preparation service to Alaska Native and American Indian people who qualify for tribal services and earn an annual income of less than \$54,000. The service is being offered by IRS-certified volunteers at the tribe's administrative offices at 150 N. Willow St. Appointments are required and will be available through April 15. To schedule an appointment, contact DeeDee Fowler at 335-7622 or Sara Dennis at 335-7625.

Please bring the following documents to your appointment:

- Proof of Indian blood
- Forms: W-2, 1099 and 1098
- Social Security Cards or ITIN letters for you and anyone else on your tax return
- Picture Identification (such as a valid driver's license or other government-issued ID) of you and your spouse, if applicable
- Copy of your 2014 tax return
- Any other tax forms you received for 2015

TRIBAL COUNCIL

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Members of the Executive Council listen intently as Darryl Tonemah describes the devastating effects of trauma during a quarterly tribal meeting held in December at the Dena'ina Wellness Center.

TRAUMA, from p. 1
the overarching message was that there is a strong correlation between trauma and health and social issues, including substance use.

To illustrate the point, Tonemah shared the findings of the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACE study). The study asked participants to identify different types of trauma they had experienced, including forms of neglect and abuse, divorce, substance use in the household, domestic violence, and more. For each type of trauma a participant had endured, they were assigned one point.

Citing the study, Tonemah said participants whose score was four points or higher were at 12-times greater risk for alcoholism, drug abuse, depression and suicide attempt.

“We know that trauma creates illness,” Tonemah said. “Trauma creates un-wellness.”

Recognizing that trauma can lead to harmful behaviors such as substance use is an important step toward addressing the issue, Tonemah said, though it's a complex process.

“There's a way bigger component to it than stopping the behavior,” he said. “The behavior is more of an impulse, a compulsion, that is not necessarily thought through.”

After his presentation, tribal members had an opportunity to share comments with the group. Some offered ideas and solutions, others shared stories, while still others expressed frustration.

What they agreed on was that it was an important conversation to have.

“I'm glad that we're finally talking about this problem,” said Rita Smagge, a tribal Elder. “It's been existing for many years. It didn't just happen recently.”

“I pray for you guys. I pray for my community. I pray for my people. I want them to be whole and healthy.” – **Linda Ross**, on spirituality.

In their own words

Tribal members stepped to the microphone during the quarterly meeting, sharing their perspectives on substance use and how it's affected their lives as well as the community. This is a sampling of the comments offered.



“We can't do this alone.” – **Joel Isaak**, on the importance of supporting one another.



“It really helps to understand that it's part of life. There's no one here who is not messed up. There is no one here that doesn't have trauma.” – **Adam Swan**, on trauma.



“We need to hold up their hands. We need to love them no matter where they're at, and we need to have compassion.” – **Rita Smagge**, on those suffering from substance use issues.



“If you can't fix the problem, you can fix the individual. But you can't fix the individual if you keep returning them to the same environment. It doesn't work. It's kind of like a restraining order against yourself. You can't go back there. No matter what.” – **George Wright**, on providing after-care to those who received treatment for substance use.

Tribe earns coveted award

Tribal Court, CASA receive Honoring Nations recognition

Harvard University – yes, that Harvard – has taken notice of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe.

The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development recently named the tribe a winner of the 2015 Honoring Nations Award. One of six awardees nationwide, the tribe was recognized for its Tribal Court and Court Appointed Special Advocates Program – CASA.

In October, CASA program coordinator Thia Peters, Chief Judge Kim Sweet and former CASA program coordinator Joy Petrie attended the National Congress of American Indian's 72nd Annual Convention in San Diego, where they accepted the award on behalf of the tribe.

“It was a really great experience,” Peters said. “It was amazing to watch Joy and Kim up there on stage. To be able to be part of that was amazing.”

To be eligible for an Honoring Nations award, tribal governance programs must be nominated and complete an application process.



Former CASA program coordinator Joy Petrie, Chief Judge Kim Sweet and CASA program coordinator Thia Peters pose for a photo at the 2015 Honoring Nations Awards.

The 2015 award pool included 87 applicants before the field was ultimately narrowed to six.

The tribe learned that it had advanced to the final stage last summer. In August, Honoring Nations representatives made a site visit, touring tribal facilities and meeting Tribal Court employees. After the site visit, Honoring Nations invited the tribe to San Diego.

That's where Peters, Sweet and

Petrie accepted an “Honors” award on behalf of the tribe. Of the six finalists, three received “Honors” and three received “High Honors.”

Peters, who became the tribe's CASA program coordinator in August, said the award is important to the tribe and that it has already helped Tribal Court form new partnerships.

“We will always be part of Honoring Nations,” Peters said. “It's

been great to network and have other tribes reach out to us.”

The CASA program trains and appoints adult volunteers to represent children who have been removed from their homes because of abuse or neglect. The volunteers advocate for the child at court proceedings and work to ensure they are placed in safe homes.

Honoring Nations is administered by Harvard University and identifies, celebrates and shares exemplary programs in tribal governance. It judges programs on a range of criteria, including effectiveness, significance to sovereignty, cultural relevance, transferability, and sustainability.

Honoring Nations started in 1998 and has since recognized 124 tribal government programs from more than 80 tribal nations.

“The Honoring Nations awardees are exemplary models of success and by their best practices, all government – tribal and non-tribal alike – can benefit,” said Megan Minoka Hill, Honoring Nations Program Director.

New Elders building set for spring opening

The new Tyotkas Elder Center in Old Town Kenai will open this spring.

Construction on the 6,500-square-foot building, which faces south toward Cook Inlet and the mouth of the Kenai River, is complete. Now crews are preparing the building for daily operation, which will include installing furniture and fixtures and relocating staff, among other projects.

Stan Mishin, President of Kahtnuht'ana Development Corp., which has been managing the project, said there have been a few delays along the way and it's been a learning experience for those involved, but that the finished product turned out well.

“The building will have some neat features, the inside looks impressive to me,” Mishin said. “Hopefully people are excited about the building.”

The interior features a fireplace, kitchen, office space and more. But the focal point is a large gathering space framed by floor-to-ceiling windows that reveal sweeping views of the inlet and river. The exterior combines light and dark browns, including a covered entrance supported by wood pillars.

The facility sits at the same location as the old Tyotkas building on Mission Avenue across from the Dena'ina Wellness Center. The old building was demolished last year.



Finishing work is underway inside the new Tyotkas Elder Center, where crews will soon install furniture and other interior equipment.

Soldotna-based G&S Construction built the new facility. Kenaitze-owned Kahtnuht'ana Development Corp. is managing the project.

One-foot high kick

Junior girls
1. Savanna Wilson, Kenaitze, 66 inches; 2. Emilee Wilson, Kenaitze, 69 inches; 3. Morgan Lemm, Kenaitze, 52 inches; 4. Leila Kell, Chickaloon, 52 inches; 5. Robin Cronin, Seward, 52 inches.
Junior boys
1. Tommy Cronin, Seward, 81 inches; 2. William Wilson, Kenaitze, 69 inches; 3. Ceiony Allen, Ninilchik, 60 inches; 4(t). Cooper Bernard, Kenaitze, 58 inches; 4(t). Levi Rickard, Ninilchik, 58 inches.
Senior girls
1. Julianne Wilson, Kenaitze, 88 inches; 2. Kya Ahlers, Kenaitze, 78 inches; 3. Brittany Sallaffie, Bartlett, 72 inches; 4. Misty May Agoff, Chickaloon, 70 inches; 5. Trillium Kell, Chickaloon, 70 inches.
Senior boys
1. Noah Brown, Wasilla, 93 inches; 2. Greg Smith, Homer, 90 inches; 3. Raymond Lamont, Wasilla, 88 inches; 4. Jacob Smith, Wasilla, 88 inches; 5. Steven Riley Ninilchik, 85 inches.

One-hand reach

Senior girls
1. Trillium Kell, Chickaloon, 44 inches; 2. Julianne Wilson, Kenaitze, 42 inches; 3. Samantha Derr, Wasilla, 42 inches; 4. Misty May Aganoff, Chickaloon, 42 inches.
Senior boys
1. Raymond Lamont, Wasilla, 50 inches; 2. Noah Brown, Wasilla, 50 inches; 3. Judah Eason, Ninilchik, 48 inches; 4. Luke Riley, Ninilchik, 46 inches; 5. Steven Riley, Ninilchik, 46 inches.

Two-foot high kick

Junior girls
1. Tierra Bond, Wasilla, 46 inches; 2. Emilee Wilson, Kenaitze, 42 inches; 3. Leila Kell, Chickaloon, 42 inches; 4. Alexa Richards, Ninilchik, 36 inches; 5. Robin Cronin, Seward, 36 inches.
Junior boys
1. Tommy Cronin, Seward, 58 inches; 2. Joe Whittom, Kenaitze, 46 inches; 3. Ceiony Allen, Ninilchik, 44 inches; 4. Tiernan Bond, Wasilla, 40 inches; 5. Seth Strange, Government Hill, 40 inches.
Senior girls
1. Julianne Wilson, Kenaitze, 72 inches; 2. Misty May Agoff, Chickaloon, 58 inches; 3. Kya Ahlers, Kenaitze, 58 inches; 4. Trillium Kell, Chickaloon, 42 inches.
Senior boys
1. Noah Brown, Wasilla, 82 inches; 2. Jacob Smith,

2016 Native Youth Olympics at Kenai Middle School

Wasilla, 79 inches; 3. Steven Riley, Ninilchik, 70 inches; 4. Raymond Lamont, Wasilla, 70 inches; 5. Tony Riley, Ninilchik, 66 inches.

Alaskan high kick

Junior girls
1. Tierra Bond, Wasilla, 52 inches; 2. Leila Kell, Chickaloon, 48 inches; 3. Savanna Wilson, Kenaitze, 48 inches; 4. Mahogoni Harrison, Chickaloon, 48 inches; 5. Denali Bernard, Kenaitze, 44 inches.
Junior boys
1. Tommy Cronin, Seward, 53 inches; 2. Nathaniel Tanape, Kenaitze, 49 inches; 3. Joe Whittom, Kenaitze, 42 inches; 4. Mason Holler, Chickaloon, 42 inches; 5. Seth Strange, Government Hill, 42 inches.
Senior girls
1. Misty May Agoff, Chickaloon, 62 inches; 2. Julianne Wilson, Kenaitze, 60 inches; 3. Trillium Kell, Chickaloon, 58 inches; 4. Kya Ahlers, Kenaitze, 52 inches; 5. Priscilla Stoltz, Seward, 49 inches.
Senior boys
1. Judah Eason, Ninilchik, 77 inches; 2. Kobe Norman, KPNYL, 72 inches; 3. Jacob Smith, Wasilla, 70 inches; 4. Noah Brown, Wasilla, 66 inches; 5. Steven Riley, Ninilchik, 62 inches.

Arm pull

Junior girls
1. Tierra Bond, Wasilla, 50 inches; 2. Genevieve Wilson, Chickaloon; 3. Denali Bernard, Kenaitze; 4. Mahogoni Harrison, Chickaloon; 5. Emma Maier, Wasilla.
Junior boys
1. Samiel Wilson, Kenaitze; 2. Joe Whittom, Kenaitze; 3. Tommy Cronin, Seward; 4. William Wilson, Kenaitze; 5. Gabe Davis, Chickaloon.

Eskimo stick pull

Junior girls
1. Emma Maier, Wasilla; 2. Tierra Bond, Wasilla; 3. Genevieve Wilson, Kenaitze; 4. Mahogoni Harrison, Chickaloon; 5. Denali Glenzel, KPNYL.
Junior boys
1. Nathaniel Tanape, Kenaitze; 2. Joe Whittom, Kenaitze; 3. Tommy Cronin, Seward; 4. Samiel Wilson, Kenaitze; 5. Tiernan Bond, Wasilla.
Senior girls
1. Cassidy Oder, Kenaitze; 2. Samantha Derr, Wasilla; 3. Kya Ahlers, Kenaitze; 4. KristiAnna Standifer, KPNYL; 5. Priscilla Stoltz, Seward.
Senior boys
1. Greg Smith, Homer; 2. Randal Jones, KPNYL; 3. Noah Brown, Wasilla; 4. Robert McGinnis, KPNYL; 5. Desmond Moon, KPNYL.

Indian stick pull

Junior girls
1. Shanae Harrison, Chickaloon; 2. Denali Glenzel, KPNYL; 3. Brandi Schwenk, Kenaitze; 4. Emilee Wilson, Kenaitze; 5. Mia Denboar, Ninilchik.
Junior boys
1. Nathaniel Tanape, Kenaitze, 2. Mason Holler, Chickaloon; 3. Joe Whittom, Kenaitze; 4. Seth Strange, Government Hill, 5. Tommy Cronin, Seward.
Senior girls
1. Misty May Agoff, Chickaloon; 2. Jade Robuck, Ninilchik; 3. Hanna Wilson, Kenaitze; 4. Makala Whittom, Kenaitze; 5. Kya Ahlers, Kenaitze.
Senior boys
1. Luke Riley, Ninilchik; 2. Judah Eason, Ninilchik; 3. Greg Smith, Homer; 4. Tony Riley, Ninilchik; 5. Tim Sagoonick, Unalakleet.

Kneel jump

Junior girls
1. Leila Kell, Chickaloon, 28 ¾ inches; 2. Robin Cronin, Seward, 25 ½ inches; 3. True Bond, Wasilla, 20 inches; 4. Alexandria Richards, Ninilchik, 18 ¾ inches; 5. Jenna Yeoman, Kenaitze, 18 inches.
Junior boys
1. Tommy Cronin, Seward, 34 inches; 2. William Wilson, Kenaitze, 25 ¼ inches; 3. True Bond, Wasilla, 21 inches; 4. Seth Strange, Government Hill, 20 ¾ inches; 5. Ceiony Allen, Ninilchik, 18 ½ inches.
Senior girls
1. Julianne Wilson, Kenaitze, 42 ¼ inches; 2. Misty May Agoff, Chickaloon, 29 ¾ inches; 3. Trillium Kell, Chickaloon, 27 ¼ inches; 4. Makala Whittom, Kenaitze, 24 inches; 5. Priscilla Stoltz, Seward, 23 ¼ inches.
Senior boys
1. Steven Riley, Ninilchik, 47 ½ inches; 2. Tony Riley, Ninilchik, 40 ½ inches; 3. Luke Riley, Ninilchik, 37 inches; 4. Judah Eason, Ninilchik, 34 inches; 5. Raymond Lamont, Wasilla, 31 and ¾ inches.

Scissor Broad Jump

Junior girls
1. Tierra Bond, Wasilla, 21 feet, 11 ¼ inches; 2. Robin Cronin, Seward, 19 feet, 1 ½ inches; 3. Leila Kell, Chickaloon, 18 feet, 10 ¼ inches; 4. Genevieve Wilson, Chickaloon, 18 feet, 5 ¼ inches; 5. Angel Anderson, Kenaitze, 18 feet, 2 ½ inches.
Junior boys
1. Tommy Cronin, Seward; 24 feet, 7 ¾ inches; 2. Levi Rickard, Ninilchik, 20 feet, 10 ¾ inches; 3. Ceiony Allen, Ninilchik, 19 feet, 4 ¾ inches; 4. Gabe Davis, Chickaloon, 18 feet, 7 ½

inches; 5. Seth Strange, Government Hill, 18 feet, 3 ½ inches.

Seal hop

Junior girls
1. Emilee Wilson, Kenaitze, 59 feet, 8 ¾ inches; 2. Tierra Bond, Wasilla, 56 feet, 9 inches; 3. Jenna Yeoman, Kenaitze, 46 feet, 5 inches; 4. Leila Kell, Chickaloon, 45 feet, 10 ½ inches; 5. Angel Anderson, Kenaitze, 33 feet, 10 inches.
Junior boys
1. Tommy Cronin, Seward, 65 feet, 11 ¼ inches; 2. Cooper Bernard, Kenaitze, 49 feet, 8 ¾ inches; 3. True Bond, Wasilla, 41 feet, 5 inches; 4. Gabe Davis, Chickaloon, 40 feet, 9 ½ inches; 5. Joe Whittom, Kenaitze, 35 feet, 11 inches.
Senior girls
1. Julianne Wilson, Kenaitze, 115 feet, 3 inches; 2. Trillium Kell, Chickaloon, 81 feet, 4 inches; 3. Brittany Sallaffie, Bartlett, 76 feet, ¼ inch; 4. Misty May Agoff, Chickaloon, 42 feet, 9 inches; 5. Makala Whittom, Kenaitze, 38 feet, 10 ½ inches.
Senior boys
1. Noah Brown, Wasilla, 39 feet, 6 ¾ inches; 2. Judah Eason, Ninilchik, 30 feet, 1 ¼ inches; 3. Steven Riley, Ninilchik, 26 feet, 10 ¾ inches; 4. Raymond Lamont, Wasilla, 20 feet, 11 ½ inches; 5. Luke Riley, Ninilchik, 13 feet, 6 inches.

Wrist carry

Junior girls (in seconds)
1. Leila Kell, Chickaloon, 22.58; 2. Savanna Wilson, Kenaitze, 20.55; 3. Jayln Yeoman, Kenaitze, 15.62; 4. Jenna Yeoman, Kenaitze, 9.48; 5. Alexa Richards, Ninilchik, 7.06.
Junior boys (in seconds)
1. William Wilson, Kenaitze, 14.08; 2. Mason Holler, Chickaloon, 9.43; 3. Tommy Cronin, Seward, 8.55; 4. Rylan Krager, Ninilchik, 6.48; 5. Olin Liljemark, Seward, 6.03.
Senior girls
1. Trillium Kell, Chickaloon, 34 feet, 11 inches; 2. Julianne Wilson, Kenaitze, 13 feet, 1 ½ inches; 3. Misty May Agoff, Chickaloon, 8 feet, 5 ½ inches; 4. Hanna Wilson, Kenaitze, 1 foot, 8 ¼ inches; 5. Priscilla Stoltz, Seward, 1 foot, 2 ½ inches.
Senior boys
1. Andrew Wilson, Kenaitze, 210 feet, 1 inch; 2. Luke Riley, Ninilchik, 202 feet, 3 inches; 3. Judah Eason, Ninilchik, 167 feet, 4 ½ inches; 4. Raymond Lamont, Wasilla, 161 feet, 5 ¼ inches; 5. Noah Brown, Wasilla, 126 feet, 2 ¾ inches.



NYO, from p. 1
For Boersma, 10, a student at the Kaleidoscope School of Arts and Sciences in Kenai, it was his first year competing. In addition to the Eskimo stick pull, he participated in the Alaskan high kick.
Boersma participated as a member of the Kenaitze team and said he registered for the competition after a friend involved in the Yaghanen program urged him to give it a try.
“I thought it would be fun because I had never done it,” Boersma said. “It’s been fun, it’s been great.”
Boersma started practicing in mid-September and was pleased with his top-10 finish in the Alaskan high kick on opening night. As a first-year competitor, he said he appreciated the supportive environment and camaraderie among competitors.
“It helps me when I’m doing an event because I believe in myself, which helps me do better,” Boersma said. “Without that, I probably wouldn’t do as well.”
For other athletes, NYO is an event to which they look forward all year.
Greg Smith, a senior at Homer High School, got involved in the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics six

years ago, which led him to NYO.
A member of his high school’s football and baseball teams and hoping to play baseball collegiately, Smith said it’s a good change of pace to participate in traditional activities.
Like Boersma, he said the sportsmanship among athletes is what makes NYO special. With that experience, he tries to bring a similar attitude toward school sports.
“It’s awesome because you see athletes helping athletes,” said Smith, who in addition to competing helped with setup and scorekeeping. “It’s not so much about competing against each other, but participating with each other. It’s such a cool aspect.”
The weekend-long festivities also included a potluck dinner for competitors and their families, as well as a concert by tribal funk band Pamyua. The concert raised money for the



Clockwise from top left: Nolan Freeman grimaces as he competes in the Eskimo stick pull event at the Kenaitze Indian Tribe’s Native Youth Olympics Invitational at Kenai Middle School. Julianne Wilson works to a win in the one-foot high kick event. Kenaitze’s William Wilson, right, and Government Hill’s Seth Strange shake hands after competing in the Eskimo stick pull event. Kenaitze’s Abby Seamen heads to her feet in the kneel jump event. Julee-Anna Van Velzor and Misty May Agoff, of the Ya Ne Dah Ah team from Chickaloon, join Julianne Wilson of Kenaitze to cheer a competitor in the one-foot high kick event.
to this event.”
Based on the enthusiasm of athletes during the award ceremony following the events Saturday, Bernard’s assumption appeared accurate.
As top-five finishers were called to the podium to receive individual awards, their teammates – and competitors – filled the gymnasium with applause and cheer.
“They know there only will be five people standing up there, but there’s, what, 50 of them cheering for them?” Bernard said. “It’s not just the winning teams and athletes celebrating – it’s everybody.”



Participants in last fall's Yaghanen Youth Programs Moose Camp gather at Spirit Lake to talk about the weekend's plans.

Lasting Moose camp offers more than a lesson plan

There was no cellphone service, it was below freezing and the boys were covered in snow.

The hunt had yet to yield an animal. And each time the fire flared up, the fire flickered out.

No, the conditions were not perfect on this Saturday afternoon in November out the Swanson River Road, miles from town.

But that did not matter to the fathers and sons. They had not come for perfect conditions.

They had come, together, for the experience – the memories.

“He’s going to school, doing his thing, so it’s nice to spend time together. That’s the important thing,” said Greg Lemm, whose son, Braden, stood nearby. “And what better outfit to do it with, you know? That’s how I look at it. We’re all out here learning – learning about the culture – and enjoying it.”

Each fall, the Yaghanen Youth Program hosts Moose Camp – “Dnigi” – taking male students on an educational hunt emphasizing the traditional and cultural way of life established by early Dena’ina people. Campers learn to harvest moose and utilize all parts of the animal, receiving instruction on gun safety and responsible outdoor

practices.

A unique aspect of camp is that parents are invited to participate, supporting the tribe’s core value of family: honoring and sustaining health and happiness of family as a first responsibility. Five fathers attended in 2015 along with campers ranging from about 10 to 18 years old.

Typically, the entire camp is held at Spirit Lake in Kenai. Campers sleep in cabins, share laughs and stories around the fire, enjoy food, and participate in educational games and activities – all in a safe, substance-free environment. The group then hunts in the Spirit Lake area.

The 2015 camp began at Spirit Lake, but the hunting portion was postponed after one night when campers woke up to heavy rain in the morning.

Instead of hunt, the group enjoyed an oatmeal breakfast and listened to two presentations – one on gun safety and another on the importance of moose to the Dena’ina people. Campers received

hands-on demonstrations and had a chance to ask questions.

“I enjoyed learning and keeping our traditions going,” said camper Joshua Grosvold, 14. “I also loved hanging out with friends and meeting new people.”

But camp would not

end there.

About a month later, campers reconvened on a Saturday morning at the Yaghanen office. A dumping of snow had made the road impassable to Spirit Lake, so the crew chose to hunt along Swanson River Road outside Sterling.

Temperatures dipped slightly below freezing that day, but it was clear. The first stretch of road was plowed, but soon the snow deepened, slowing the caravan of vehicles carrying staff, campers and parents.

Save for a couple sets of prints along the edge of the road, there was no sign of moose before lunch, which included hot dogs around the fire.

The hunting remained slow into the afternoon and didn’t lead to a moose.

But it didn’t discourage the group.

For the Lemms, the trip provided a chance to get outside and participate in a shared passion.

“We just love being out in the woods and doing this,” Lemm said of he and Braden. “It’s a plus if you get a moose, but if not, it’s still a great day.”

For one camper, Randall Borkowski, Moose Camp was his first



Campers learn about gun safety from the tribe’s Safety and Security Administrator Kaleb Franke.



Participants in last fall's Moose Camp gather around the fire.

experience with Yaghanen.

Borkowski, 18, hails from Mountain Village, Alaska, and moved to the central Kenai Peninsula in 2007. Growing up, he hunted everything from ptarmigan to rabbit to muskrat to duck to moose.

A recent high school graduate and the oldest camper in the bunch, Borkowski said he wanted to be a good role model during camp and that he would participate again if he has the chance and time allows.

“It’s been really fun,” Borkowski said. “I got to meet some new people and I’m finding interesting ways to have fun.”

The group made a third and final attempt in December.

On a mild but overcast Saturday, the area of choice was again Swanson River Road.

The group drove past an array of lakes and trailheads, scanning clearings and peering between clusters of trees. Much of the snow had melted since their previous attempt, but signs of moose remained scant.

After another campfire and hot dogs for lunch, the hunt continued into the afternoon to no avail.

Back at a pullout near the beginning of the road, the group agreed it was time to go home.

“Even though we didn’t harvest a moose, I believe that we still met many of our goals by providing cultural education and fellowship for young men and their fathers,” said Michael Bernard, Yaghanen Manager.

Bernard has worked at the tribe for more than a decade and coordinated and led dozens of camps.

This year’s camp was special for Bernard because his son, Cooper, attended.

“I really enjoy being able to teach my children the knowledge and skills that I’ve been able to share with so many other children throughout the years,” Bernard said.

Joshua Grosvold’s father, Sam, also attended camp and said he cherished the time with his son.

The Grosvolds became involved with Yaghanen in the mid-2000s when the program needed a drummer for the Peninsula Winter Games. Since then, the duo has enjoyed music, fishing and more through the program.

The elder Grosvold said he and his son won’t soon forget those experiences – especially Moose Camp.

“It’s priceless. How can you say it’s anything but good?” Sam Grosvold said. “It’s just memories. We’ll remember this forever.”



Campers learned about moose from a Dena’ina perspective and had fun making memories together.



The Capitol Christmas Tree glows with lights in front of the Capitol in Washington, DC, during a lighting ceremony in December.

From Alaska to the Capitol

Tribe participates in Capitol Christmas Tree festivities

When the lights adorning the 2015 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree came on during a lighting ceremony at the Capitol in December, a 74-foot Lutz spruce stood in the glow – not far from members of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe.

For the tree, taken from Alaska's Chugach National Forest, it was the end of a cross-country journey over land and sea.

For the tribe, it was the culmination of months of involvement around the first Capitol Christmas Tree to come from Alaska.

In September, tribal youth and Elders worked together to create culturally significant ornaments to decorate the tree. In October, Kenaitze representatives attended the ceremony when the tree was felled, offering a traditional blessing during the event. Then, in December, tribal leadership visited Washington DC to celebrate the lighting of the tree.

"I hope everyone realizes how much it means to us," tribal Elder Sasha Lindgren said.

Lindgren was among those in attendance when the tree was cut 15 miles outside Seward alongside the Seward Highway in late October. The ceremony included remarks from U.S. Forest Service representatives, City of Seward Mayor Jean Bardarson and Kenaitze Indian



Jon Ross introduces a song before the Kenaitze delegation performed at the U.S. Forest Service Chief's reception honoring the Capitol Christmas Tree.

Tribe Culture Bearer Jon Ross.

Ross offered a traditional blessing before the tree was felled. He walked around the tree in a circle, rubbed sage on the bark and placed tobacco on the ground beneath its branches – traditional symbols of honor and respect.

After the 74-foot Lutz spruce had been blessed, a chainsaw cut through its trunk as crews propped it up with a crane and harnesses. Soon, the crane lowered the tree onto a flatbed, and it was secured for the approximately 5,000-mile cross-country journey.

Ross said it was important to

honor the tree before it was cut.

"Just to recognize the sacrifice of the tree, which is a living being with a spirit," he said. "We're taking its life, so it's important to show respect."

The Alaska SeaLife Center hosted a community celebration following the tree-cutting ceremony.

The Yaghanen Youth Program's Jabila'ina Dancers and Del Dumi Drummers opened the celebration with performances near the center's main entrance, greeting visitors with traditional song and dance. Tribal employees also were onsite cooking fry bread.

Esther Joseph, a fifth-grader at Mountain View Elementary who has been participating in Yaghanen programs since fourth grade, said it was fun to perform for a large audience.

And her strategy for performing in front of the big crowd? Simple. "Smile," she said.

Meanwhile, in Washington DC, tribal representatives participated in three events.

They attended a Chief's Reception, where Executive Council member Bernadine Atchison spoke to the audience about the tribe's government-to-government relationship with the U.S. Forest Service. Kenaitze's delegation also sang, danced and shared stories at the event.

The group then attended the tree-lighting ceremony in front of the Capitol before participating in a reception hosted by Sen. Lisa Murkowski in the National Botanical Gardens.

The U.S. Forest Service began the tradition of selecting the Capitol Christmas Tree – also known as the "People's Tree" – in 1964. The tree comes from a different national forest each year, and 2015 was the first year it came from Alaska.

"It's a special thing for Alaska, to be able to highlight the beauty of our land and this tree for the rest of the world," Ross said.



Barbara Kinzy and Kaydence Kline-Samson work together on a word puzzle while waiting for lunch to be served at Tyotkas Elder Center. Elders and youngsters from the Early Childhood Center have been sharing time at lunch.

Bridging generations

Early Childhood Center, Tyotkas bring together youth and Elders over lunch

The Early Childhood Center and Tyotkas Elder Center are using food to help connect the wisest members of the tribe with some of the youngest.

For the past few months, Early Childhood Center students have been visiting Tyotkas to eat lunch with Elders, sharing tables, food and conversation.

"It's important to us to bridge that gap between the younger kids and the Elders," said Diane Bernard, education and disability coordinator at the Early Childhood Center.

Bernard said the programs had a similar arrangement in the past, but it wasn't until last summer when the idea was reborn and planning began.

Now the partnership is established and visits have been occurring once every couple weeks, with about five ECC students participating each time.

During a visit in November, Nikiski resident Sam Hodena sat at a table with ECC student Diego Cazares.

Hodena began attending Tyotkas events in summer 2015 after seeing a flyer at the Dena'ina Wellness Center. She said she appreciates the transportation services offered by the tribe and enjoys

going to the beach with Elders.

As Hodena ate baked ham, corn on the cob and macaroni and cheese, Diego played with small toys across the table between bites of food.

"Everything is wonderful," Hodena said, smiling at her younger counterpart. Also in attendance was Barbara Kinzy, who recently moved to the central Kenai Peninsula from Crooked Creek, Alaska, to help care for her mother.

Kinzy shared a table with 4-year-old Kaydence Kline-Samson. Together, they cut corn from the cob, played with plastic sea creatures and practiced writing letters of the alphabet.

"I can do letters!" Kaydence exclaimed, holding up a piece of paper mid-meal.

The move drew a chuckle from Kinzy. "She's very intelligent," Kinzy said.

For their part, Tyotkas staff has embraced the partnership as well.

Employee Deb Coveyou, taking a quick break from serving food, said the children bring energy to the building and that it's fun watching them interact with the Elders.

"They've been so awesome," Coveyou said. "They've been good little kids."



Tyotkas hosts annual Christmas party

In December, the Tyotkas Elders Program hosted its annual Christmas party at the Kenai Visitor and Cultural Center. Members of the tribe's Youth Council, "Gganilchit Dena'ina," helped serve dinner and clean up. There was live music and door prizes. In all, the event raised more than \$1,700 for Tyotkas.



Children make "Survival Soup."

Partnerships key to curriculum

The Early Childhood Center has been partnering with programs across the tribe on a number of activities and events. Kaleb Franke, the tribe's Safety and Security Administrator, recently presented information about preparing for emergencies. Parents and children who attended made "Survival Soup," including kits that were donated to the Na'ini Food Bank. Employees from the Dena'ina Wellness Center have been teaching children, families and staff about healthy lunch ideas, eating on a budget and nutrition. Additionally, Erica Long, Family Wellness Consultant at DWC, has been hosting Wednesday morning socials for families wishing to have open dialogue under professional guidance. The center also recently hosted its annual Winter Dinner, celebrating a successful 2015.

Child Center accepting applications

The Kenaitze Indian Tribe's Early Childhood Center is currently accepting applications for the 2015-2016 school year. The center serves families from many different backgrounds, Native and non-Native, low income or not, as well as children with disabilities. Children must be 3 or 4 years old by Sept. 1, 2015, to be eligible. The no-fee program operates Monday-Thursday, 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. For more information or to schedule a tour, please call the center's main line at 907-335-7260 or Sasha Fallon, Community Partnership Coordinator, at 907-335-7259. A waitlist is generated when programs become full.

Yaghali Nusdlan

He or she got well

Taking the preventive path

Diabetes Prevention Program takes proactive approach, encouraging healthy diet, exercise

Bill Overstreet walked into the grocery store, strolled to the salad bar and grabbed a plastic to-go box. Tongs in hand, he scanned the colorful spread – carrots, lettuce, peppers – and began assembling his lunch.

Then, nearby, something caught his eye: a neatly packaged pecan pie.

"It was pretty tempting," Overstreet said. "But I passed it up."

As he told the story before a morning workout at the Dena'ina Wellness Center in December, Overstreet admitted there was a time, not long ago, when he would have made a different choice had he faced the same temptation.

Overstreet, 54, is enrolled in the Diabetes Prevention Program offered through the Wellness Department. The program is open to customers who have been diagnosed with pre-diabetes, encouraging exercise, a balanced diet and other healthy lifestyle choices.

Before he entered the program, Overstreet paid little attention to what he ate or how much he exercised. And his health reflected those choices.

The Kenai resident weighed 267 pounds and had high blood pressure and elevated glucose levels. His tonsils were removed about two years ago, and he has used a breathing machine to assist with sleep apnea.

And as added motivation, he recently learned he will be required to meet specific medical requirements to drive commercial vehicles, one of his professions.

"Not only do I have to do this for my health, but my job as well," Overstreet said.

As of mid-December, two-and-a-half months into the program, Overstreet had lost about 25 pounds and reduced his body mass index to 34.5 percent.

He attributed the transformation to two primary lifestyle changes: diet and exercise.

Although a shoulder injury limits his upper-body mobility, Overstreet



Bill Overstreet works out on the treadmill in the Dena'ina Wellness Center's activity area. Overstreet is enrolled in the Diabetes Prevention Program. Below, he talks about the dramatic improvements he has made to his health by eating better and by being more active.

exercises on a treadmill about 60 minutes a day. Some days, he goes to the Kenai Recreation Center. Other days, he uses the activities area at the wellness center.

To help pass time on the treadmill, Overstreet uses his cell phone to listen to music, watch television shows and movies, and even catch up on texts and emails.

"Next thing you know, 30 minutes has gone by without even knowing it," he said. "If you have something there to break up the monotony, to keep your mind off things, it goes a lot faster."

A healthy diet also has become important to Overstreet, who admits he enjoys all the bad stuff – burgers, soda, pizza, cookies.

Now he pays close attention to food labels and nutrition facts, monitoring calories, fat and sugar. He also weighs himself twice a day.

Turkey, in many forms – burgers, bacon, crumbles – have become one of Overstreet's go-to foods. So, too, have vegetable smoothies. Yogurt, grits and "Egg Beaters" are fixtures at breakfast, while salmon and salad are staples at dinner.

Overstreet consumes about 1,500 or 1,600 calories a day, sometimes

a little more, sometimes a little less.

"I'm not starving myself by any means," he said. "I'm just watching what I eat."

Teaching healthy lifestyle habits is one of the most important components of the program.

Robin Morris, Diabetes Prevention Coordinator and Wellness Consultant, said participants meet once a week for classes and receive coaching and individualized plans.

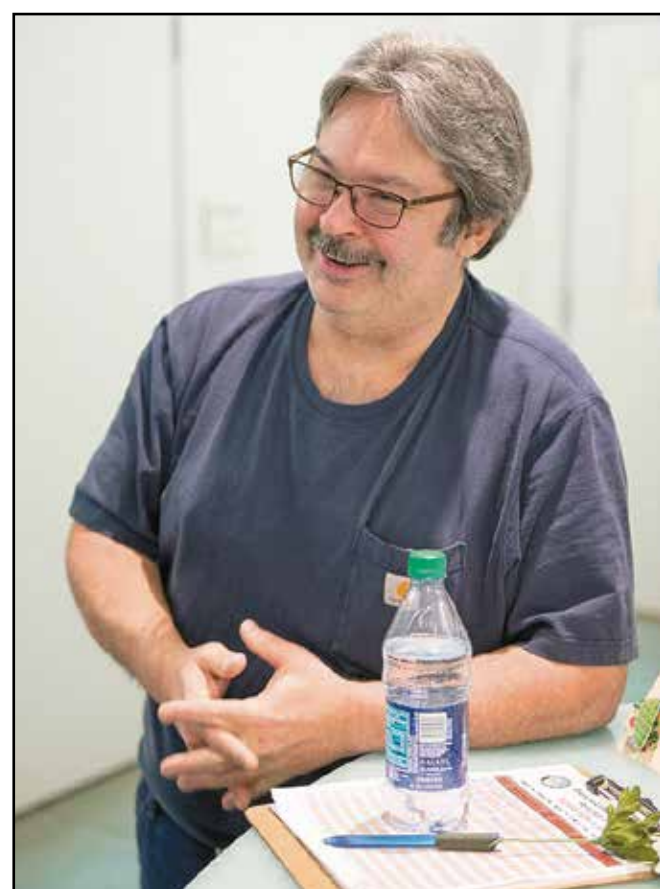
Participants also have access to seasonal harvesting activities, healthy cooking demonstrations and more. The program spans 16 weeks.

"Participants learn a lot about the importance of planning meals and goal-setting and achieving their goals – not only for health reasons, but for disease prevention and diabetes prevention," Morris said.

But the challenge does not end when participants graduate.

Morris said graduates are put on a list and contacted to participate in future wellness activities, something not lost on Overstreet, who completed the program a couple years ago only to gain the weight back.

Adding to the stakes, diabe-



Calling it quits

Tobacco cessation services available at the Dena'ina Wellness Center

To those who use tobacco but would like to quit, Deb Nyquist has a simple message.

"When you're ready, we're here," Nyquist said.

The Dena'ina Wellness Center offers many services to people wishing to eliminate tobacco from their life. Assistance is available to customers who use any form of tobacco as well as those exposed to secondhand smoke or who simply want information about tobacco use and how to quit. Referrals are not required.

Nyquist, DWC Wellness Director, said the benefits far outweigh the challenges of quitting.

"There are a million reasons to quit," she said.

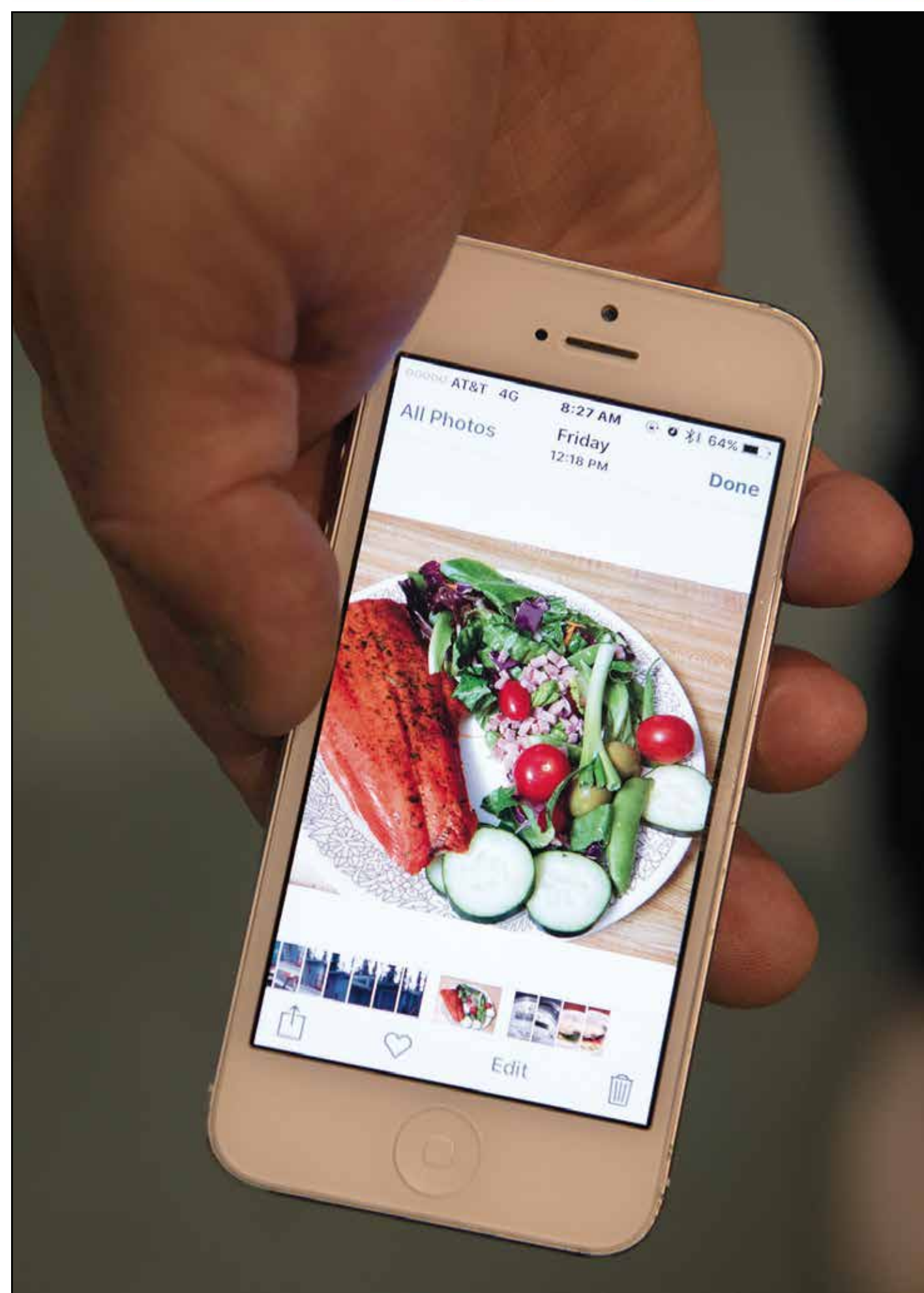
Tobacco takes on many forms, including cigarettes, cigars, pipes, bidis, hookah, chew, iq'mik, snuff, snus, orbs, e-cigarettes, pens, and other developing products.

Nyquist said it takes the average person seven to 11 attempts to permanently quit, meaning there's value in working with one of the center's professionally trained tobacco-cessation counselors.

The Wellness Department also offers free tobacco quit kits throughout the year. Another good resource, Nyquist added, is the Alaska Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-784-8669.

The tobacco cessation program tailors care to meet individuals' needs.

"We want to serve our whole family of customers," Nyquist said.



Overstreet uses his phone to display a photo of one of the healthy meals he now cooks regularly. "I'm not starving myself by any means," he said. "I'm just watching what I eat."

tes rates are higher than average among Alaska Native and American Indian people.

Morris said she sees many customers who approach her out of fear because of family history.

"They come to us and say, 'I don't want to have to do that, how can I prevent that?'" she said.

Overstreet has asked the same question.

And although it's been a challenge, and the hardest work is yet to come, now he has an answer.

"It's more self-discipline and determination than anything. If you can't discipline yourself, it's not going to work," Overstreet said. "If I should be eating a salad with salmon, but yet I'm really craving a hamburger, well, what's going to be the outcome?"

Know the risks

- Do you have a parent, brother or sister with diabetes?
- Are you Alaska Native or American Indian?
- Are you overweight?
- Do you get too little physical activity?
- Do you have high blood pressure?
- Do you have high cholesterol?
- If you are a woman, have you had a baby who weighed more than 9 pounds at birth?
- Are you 45 years or older?

If the answer is yes to any of these questions, act now by contacting the Dena'ina Wellness Center at 907-335-7500.

Do your part

- Eat healthy
- Move toward a healthy weight
- Manage stress
- Quit smoking
- Treat high blood pressure and cholesterol
- Get enough sleep

Have you been diagnosed with diabetes? The Diabetes Wellness Program teaches participants how to live well and manage diabetes. In addition to their medical provider, customers have access to a number of specialists, including foot and eye care, a dietitian, and more.

Which stage are you in?

- Pre-contemplation – "I like to smoke."
- Contemplation – "I like to smoke, but I know I need to quit."
- Preparation – "I'm ready to quit."
- Action – "I'm not smoking, but I still think about smoking from time to time."
- Maintenance – "I used to smoke."

To access tobacco cessation services at DWC, please call 907-335-7500.

Fending off the flu

There's no cheery way to say it. It's flu season.

And while there are no guarantees when it comes to avoiding the bug, you can help your chances by getting a seasonal flu shot.

"It's important to get vaccinated," said Irene Nelson, clinical intake specialist at the Dena'ina Wellness Center. "It gives you an extra boost."

For those wishing to receive a seasonal flu vaccine, the tribe offers many options.

Dena'ina Wellness Center customers have access to flu vaccines throughout the year. In December, Nelson and fellow intake specialist Valerie Gottsche visited the Tyotkas Elders Center to offer vaccines during the lunch hour.

Seasonal flu shots are not 100 percent effective, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, but they reduce the likelihood of contracting the flu and can make it less severe when contracted. People who get vaccinated also are less likely to spread the flu to other people.

It's especially important for those with vulnerable immune systems to receive a seasonal vaccine.

"With Elders, you don't want to take the chance of getting the flu because it could very easily cause pneumonia," Nelson said. "In this day and age, people are still passing away from the flu. It strikes children and the elderly the hardest."

Flu seasons vary in timing, severity and length year-to-year because there are many different strains, and the strains constantly evolve and change.

The CDC attempts to predict which strains will hit each year when it creates seasonal vaccines, but it's tough to forecast and every year is different.

Last year's vaccine missed the mark, Nelson and Gottsche said, which made it a bad flu season. They are hopeful for a better outcome this season.

"This year's vaccine is beefed up to hit some of those other strains," Gottsche said.

October to May is considered flu season, but Gottsche cautioned that it sticks around and people can get it any time.

In addition to receiving the seasonal vaccine, a common sense approach can help people avoid the flu.

"Make sure you keep yourself hydrated. Make sure you wash your hands," Nelson said. "Eat right. Exercise. Just do what you can to take care of yourself."



Children at the tribe's Early Childhood Center brush their teeth after lunch. Dentists from the Dena'ina Wellness Center regularly visit the center to help teach children healthy habits.

For kids, taking the fear out of dentistry

Talk to a group of adults about going to the dentist, and there's a good chance at least one in the bunch will admit it gives them anxiety.

But for young children unfamiliar with dentists and the importance of oral health, a trip to have their teeth cleaned can be especially frightening.

Dr. Michael Morton, Dental Director at the Dena'ina Wellness Center, says there are steps parents can take to help alleviate their child's fears.

"Present it as something fun and exciting," Morton said. "Avoid negative words such as 'hurt,' 'drill' and 'shot.'"

To help reduce anxiety, Morton said it's important for parents to explain to their children what occurs during visits to the dentist, including that the dentist will count, brush and take pictures of their teeth. It's also important, he said, to be encouraging and upbeat.

The Dental Program prefers to begin seeing children once every six months beginning at the age of 2. At that age, it also is beneficial for children to watch their parent's teeth be professionally cleaned because it familiarizes them with the process.

Many hygienists even recommend that an adult brush a child's teeth until the age of 9 or 10, Morton said, because children continue to develop fine motor skills up to that age.

"This will make the habit routine and they will have better check-ups when they see the dentist," Morton said.

The Dental Program partners with the Early Childhood Center to provide students with oral health screenings and fluoride treatments at the beginning of each school year, and provides a second round of fluoride treatments in spring.

Children learn about nutrition and the importance of maintaining good oral health habits.

Teresa Smith, Early Childhood Center Manager, said it's an important and beneficial partnership for the students.

"It really helps the kids. They get to know who the dentists are and what to expect, and they know that they don't need to be afraid," Smith said. "We immensely appreciate the partnership and look forward to continuing it for a long time."

Morton established the "Cavity-Free Club," giving children up to the age of 16 a chance to have their photo taken and win free movie tickets if they arrive to their six-month checkup without any cavities.

"The program is a huge success and helps to maintain healthy oral habits," Morton said.

5 Tips to Manage Your Child's Dental Anxiety

1. Explain how it works: Your child is less likely to be surprised or caught off guard if you cover the basics before their appointment.
2. Practice: Role-playing beforehand can help familiarize your child with the process so they're prepared for the real appointment.
3. Don't offer material rewards for good behavior: Instead of bribing them with material incentives, verbally praise your child following the appointment.
4. Explain good oral hygiene: Tell your child, in simple terms, that going to the dentist will keep their teeth strong and their smile looking great.
5. Focus on your child: Although it might be tempting to use your own dental experiences as an example, focus all the attention on your child; this can boost their confidence.

*Information from lh360.com.

Phone tree improves access

Dena'ina Wellness Center customers can now access services with the touch of a button.

The center recently implemented a phone tree that gives customers the option of speaking to the front desk or, instead, directly accessing individual departments through a selection menu.

Justin Knight, who works in the front-desk registration area and helped spearhead the initiative, said there was a learning curve when the system first took effect but that it's working well.

"Right now it's good," Knight said. "Everyone has gotten pretty used to it."

For customers who know which department they need to reach before calling, the

phone tree offers quicker access. For customers with general inquiries or who prefer to speak to the front desk first, the phone tree reduces wait time because fewer calls are routed to the front desk. Knight said the new system also has helped with after-hour calls.

Navigating the tree

Contact the Dena'ina Wellness Center by calling 907-335-7500 and access services directly by following these extensions:

- Behavioral Health – 1
- Dental – 2
- Primary Care/Medical – 3
- Pharmacy – 4

Customers who make no selection will have their call answered in the order it was received.

*Please call 911 if you experience a medical emergency

Before the phone tree was installed, all messages left after hours went to the registration team and were then relayed to individual departments. Now many of those messages go directly to the departments, eliminating an extra step.

"It has helped a lot," Knight said.

Drum group meets at new time

Come drum, sing or listen on Wednesdays, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the Dena'ina Wellness Center as the Heartbeat of Mother Earth Drum starts meeting at a new time. All adults are welcome to sit at the drum. Participants are respectfully asked to have 72 hours of sobriety prior to joining the drum circle.



Monthly foot spa open to Elders

On the second Saturday of each month, the Dena'ina Wellness Center hosts "Smiling Feet" Spa. The service is open to Elders from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., offering foot washes, simple toenail clippings and wellness information.

Marla Cheezem of the Dena'ina Wellness Center said the service offers Elders basic foot upkeep and a little pampering. However, it is

not intended to be a nursing visit or for diabetic foot care.

The foot spa is first come, first served. Cheezem encouraged Elders to participate, saying it's intended to be a relaxing event. "It's a good time to come together

with other Elders and receive some good foot treatment, too," Cheezem said.

For additional information, contact Cheezem at 907-335-7514.

Off the wall

When tribal Elder Rita Smagge was asked what the Kenaitze Indian Tribe's education system should be based on, she didn't hesitate to answer: "It's time to take our traditional values off the wall and start living them," she said.

Smagge's reference to the traditional values posters hanging on the walls across tribal operations is the inspiration for this space, "Off the Wall."

Off the Wall will celebrate people putting the tribe's traditional values into use, taking them "off the wall" and using them in their daily lives.

As told by tribal Elder Alexandra "Sasha" Lindgren:

In the early 1990s, the Anchorage Museum hosted the Etholen Collection exhibit containing Alaska Native artifacts, including several Dena'ina artifacts collected from Kenai in the 1800s.

The Kenaitze Indian Tribe sent several tribal Elders and members to view the exhibit. As the tribe's Cultural

Heritage Director, I traveled with the group and was joined by Elder Eva Lorenzo, who was a member of the Cultural Researchers Committee. The committee's role was to advise the tribe on issues relating to cultural heritage and language preservation. Eva spoke Dena'ina and was an invaluable resource.

Eva prepared for our trip by having her daughter, Marie Juliussen, cut her hair and she borrowed a dress coat to wear from Marie. The tribe was paying for our meals and provided a van for transportation. We were responsible for our individual spending money. The night before we left I visited my aunt Frances, who was going too, and she asked if \$100 would be enough for spending money. I assured her that it was and shared that I would have \$50. Others traveling on this and similar trips usually took between \$40 and \$100 for incidental expenses. When I picked up Eva, she shared that she had \$5.

On our trip we ate breakfast, lunch and dinner paid for by the tribe. Each time we purchased a meal Eva expressed her appreciation for the tribe and how much it meant to her. At the museum we viewed the exhibit and watched a dance presentation by Russian indigenous tribes. Eva was thrilled to participate. At the museum I remember a gentleman walking up to her and asking her about Alaska Native culture. She shared that she was a proud member of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe and Dena'ina. He asked her several questions which she answered, he thanked her and later brought a member of his family to talk with her too.

I traveled on many trips with Eva and my Aunt Frances and it was their custom to share Dena'ina words together, a Kenaitze version of Jeopardy in which the only topic was Dena'ina. They also shared memories of life in the village. Eva liked to share jokes, too, and once she got going, everyone was laughing and sharing. Magical, enriching times for all.

While we were driving back to

Kenai we started talking about our favorite candy in anticipation of our stop at Girdwood. I was the driver and remember sharing that my favorite candy bar was a Kit Kat. When we arrived at the station in Girdwood

If you would like to nominate someone for consideration in Off the Wall, please send a submission describing which traditional value(s) they took "off the wall" to editor M. Scott Moon at smoon@kenaitze.org.

I said that I would stay in the van as I was full and did not need to use the facilities. When everyone returned Eva climbed into the front passenger seat and said she brought me a

present because she wanted to thank me for organizing the trip. She then pulled out a large Kit Kat bar, which at that time cost \$2.49. I was humbled and blessed at the same time.

As tears came to my eyes I started to pull out my wallet to reimburse her. My aunt put her hand on my arm and shook her head no, softly saying, "Show respect, accept her gift and allow her the opportunity to thank you. It's our way."

Years later, I felt the same feeling of being humbled and blessed when I interviewed our Elders and asked them to define prosperity for our 2025 vision statement. I remembered Eva spending half of her spending money when the definition of having enough to provide for your family and share with others was developed. No one mentioned an amount of money. For Eva, prosperity was \$5 and buying a gift with half of it.

I have many wonderful memories of Eva; she and other Elders gave me my Dena'ina name, Chudash-la. I remember her dancing to Fred Mamalof's guitar playing and singing rock and roll in Fort Kenai. Her gentle corrections of my Dena'ina pronunciation and her patience whenever I called her for a specific Dena'ina word. She taught me many valuable lessons, and illustrated that the values of sharing and generosity do not need to be defined by a specific amount or action, only heartfelt.

There is more to this story. Before I submitted this article I asked Eva's children for permission to tell this story. Her son, Sammy, told me that one day he was feeling blue and unhappy. When Eva questioned him about the reason for his mood, he shared that he felt he was a failure and not a success. Eva then told him that there is not one standard for success, it is individual and she measures it by doing the best you can with what you have. Again, Eva humbled and blessed me. I accept her definition and will use it as my standard for success. How freeing not to have to compare myself to others.

The Big Picture



Kenaitze Indian Tribe employees “rock their mocs” at the Dena’ina Wellness Center in November during the 5th annual Rock Your Mocs week, a worldwide movement to celebrate indigenous culture. Participants are encouraged to wear moccasins or mukluks. Pictured footwear includes materials from beaver, otter, wolf, moose, polar bear, lynx coyote, spotted seal and bearded seal.

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
150 N. Willow St., Kenai, AK 99611
907-335-7287

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

Na’ini Social Services
510 Upland 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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