

## Constitution amendment process discussed

### Quarterly meeting outlines process to remove federal oversight

During a quarterly membership meeting at the Dena'ina Wellness Center in December, the Executive Council presented the process for making an amendment to the tribe's Constitution that it said will assert tribal sovereignty.

The amendment would eliminate a current requirement that the Secretary of the Interior approve any amendments to the tribe's Constitution. The amendment would allow the tribe to make fur-

ther amendments without federal approval.

Liisia Blizzard, Executive Council Secretary and Constitution Review Committee Chairperson, presented the process to tribal members.

"In this way we really assert our tribal sovereignty because removing that Secretarial election will allow us to govern ourselves, amend our own Constitution, and have our own vote without any

interference from the BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) or Department of the Interior. We don't have to have their approval," Blizzard said.

Blizzard also offered a historical timeline of the tribe's Constitution review. Key dates included:

- 1997 – The tribe amends its original Constitution to include lineal descendants.
- Jan. 17, 2012 – The first Constitution Review Committee

See **MEETING**, p. 4



Executive Council Secretary Liisia Blizzard reads from the list of procedures that would need to be followed in an election to remove federal oversight from the tribe's Constitution.

## 'Twas the season

### About 100 Elders attend Tyotkas Christmas party

As he walked away from the bearded man in the red suit, Jake Gibbs turned around and smiled.

"I haven't done that for a long time," Gibbs said, laughing. "I feel like a child."

Gibbs was among about 100 Elders who attended a Christmas party hosted by the Tyotkas Elder Program at Kenai's American Legion in December.

A fundraiser for Tyotkas, the event included dinner, music and prizes – plus a special appearance by Santa Claus, who posed for photos as Elders hugged and sat on his lap.

For Gibbs, it was his first time attending the Tyotkas Christmas party.

After eating dinner and socializing with fellow Elders at his table, he met and took photos with Santa.

He was impressed with the whole experience.

"It's a lot of fun, a great amount of fun-loving people," Gibbs said. "The spirit of the people is very accommodating and friendly."

More than 10 tribal departments assembled gift baskets that were given away as door prizes. There also were "old bag" giveaways, in which gifts were placed in bags donated by Elders. A silent auction and split-the-pot promotion round-

See **PARTY**, p. 5



Tia Holley talks about traditional uses for wild plants while presenting her final project in a Dena'ina language class at Kenai Peninsula College in December.

## Learning the language

### Students present final projects in Dena'ina course at Kenai Peninsula College

Fry bread. Salmon skin. Plant roots. Berry juice jam. A Dena'ina song.

Those were just a few of the topics students covered during final presentations of an introductory language course hosted by Kenai Peninsula College in December. Tribal members and employees were among those who completed the class, which taught Dena'ina speaking, reading and writing at an

elementary level.

For final projects, students chose topics relevant to Dena'ina traditions and culture, and incorporated words and phrases into a presentation. Some students worked in groups or with partners, while others worked alone.

"It's exciting to see them getting into something that they want to do and putting the language in it," said Sondra Shaginoff-Stuart, course

instructor. "I feel like they are going to use it at home. They are going to use it beyond this class. And that's the goal, is that they feel comfortable to use it with their family when they leave through this door."

Husband and wife Matt and Wanda Reams delivered a digital presentation on making berry juice jam. In addition to photos,

See **CLASS**, p. 7



NOTE FROM THE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Winter Greetings!

It is hard to believe that 2016 has come and gone in an instant! It is with sincere hope that you have had a moment to reflect on this past year and have enjoyed positive memories and experiences with your loved ones to take you into the New Year.

This issue of the Counting Cord expresses just how many positive, community based activities and programs we have worked hard to develop and sustain here at the tribe. We have worked hard and have made much progress in both old and new partnerships that will help to sustain the needs of our community well into the future. Chiqinik to all of our partners – we could not continue at the level we do without the mutual effort!



We anticipate a year of positive change and growth as we work to share what our staff and community have accomplished through partnering on behalf of our un’ina. I am especially proud and thankful for the effort of leadership and staff at the tribe for the continued and consistent effort in building process improvements and working to better respond to customer comments, concerns and compliments. We continue to work toward greater partnership with those we serve, to listen well and to do our very best to respond to your needs. Please do not hesitate to let us know where we can improve in addition to your many compliments regarding where we are doing well!

We have just completed a community needs assessment this past month and look forward to sharing with you the feedback we received. We will share this information in the coming months. We are also working on a facility needs assessment that will follow the conclusion of the needs assessment. It will indicate what our current and future plans will be for program and facility needs, which will be largely focused on the needs of both our youth and our Elders.

I look forward to 2017 and the promise it brings. With sincere wishes for health and wellness in the New Year,

Jaylene Peterson-Nyren  
Executive Director

Do you know these people?  
Help us update their address

If your name is on this list, the post office has returned mail we have tried to send. Please call Karissa Oder at 907-335-7204 or email her at [kodor@kenaitze.org](mailto:kodor@kenaitze.org) so that we can verify .

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To our donors: *Chiqinik*

The Kenaitze Indian Tribe extends a warm *chiqinik* – thank you – to our generous donors in 2016. 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.

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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  
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P.O. Box 988  
Kenai, AK 99611

[koder@kenaitze.org](mailto:koder@kenaitze.org)  
907-335-7204

From the editor’s desk

The Counting Cord is a publication for members of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe and the tribe’s customers.  
Find more information on the tribe’s website at [kenaitze.org](http://kenaitze.org) and like us on Facebook at [facebook.com/kenaitze](https://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](mailto:smoon@kenaitze.org).





# NOTE FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON

*Chiqinik* for your continued support. *Na' ldeqinaghelnik!* (We are happy!)

I hope everyone had a great holiday season these past few months! Holidays are normally filled with lots of food, family and fun. The holiday cheer has me back at the Wellness Center exercising again. It is so much fun seeing people there I have not seen in a while, and the great staff who work there are determined to keep us healthy! In the big picture, the healthier we keep ourselves, the less we will be visiting the doctor. I hope to see you there!

The Tribal Council continues to be busy as it works to make the tribe work better for our people.

Some of the things we have been working on include:

We completed committee meetings for the last quarter during the month of November and are placing new members on many of the committees. I encourage anyone interested in serving on a committee to please attend meetings for that committee. We hope to have more and more tribal members become active in government.

We have finalized the agreement with the Department of Fish and Game for our Educational Fishery for next summer. Our ultimate goal is to have our own fishery separate from the state of Alaska's oversight. Our people have managed our own fishery since time immemorial and will continue to monitor it to have it for generations to come.

We continue to work hard on improving our health system. Health and wellness begins with us at home, and our model of care works to support the needs of our families. We are part of the Alaska Tribal Healthcare Compact, where tribes and tribal organizations work to fulfill statewide healthcare needs. Alaska tribes and tribal organizations set up the Alaska Native Health Board to advocate for all Native people who receive health care. The ANHB works for continuous improvement. The overall system is



always getting changed, and with new leadership in Washington, D.C., there is concern about how the Indian Health Service might get changed. We attended a meeting with the National Indian Health Board to listen to other tribal communities about their concerns and find ways to respond to potential changes.

We continue to look for opportunities to have more tribal members be employed with the tribe. We are now working on updating the Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance (TERO) to ensure that our people are given ample opportunity to work for the tribe or be contracted with the tribe.

In addition, we have committed to listen to tribal members by meeting at each department, along with staff, with hope that we can interact with more tribal members and get their thoughts on how the tribe is doing and ways to improve. We met at Tyotkas Elder Center in November, the Dena'ina Wellness Center in December and Yaghanen Youth Center in January. In February we will be at the Administration office. I hope that we can continue to get great feedback from our tribal members as well as others who utilize our services.

One of our goals is to keep what we are doing transparent. I hope this message will help you to know about some of the issues we are working on. I would also like to remind all tribal members that you can request the approved minutes of any of our meetings. Tribal members are also encouraged to attend all our regular meetings. Meeting information is published on the calendar you can find on the home page of the tribe's website. You can also contact Sasha Jackson at 335-7200 for help with tribal government questions.

— Jennifer Showalter Yeoman  
Executive Council Chairperson

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# Share your opinion on education Kenai Peninsula Borough School district seeking community input for Native Ed

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District's Native Education Program is conducting a survey to help its Title VI Advisory Committee set future program priorities. The program is funded through federal money the district receives from its Title VI grant (formerly known as Title VII). It helps the district meet the needs of Alaska Native and American Indian students by providing additional support for children from kindergarten through high school.

If you have a student enrolled in the district or are otherwise interested in how the district meets the needs of enrolled Title VI students, please consider going online to fill out the survey. Find the link to the survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/27CNPWZ>. For more information, contact Native Education Program Coordinator Conrad Woodhead by email at [CWoodhead@KPBSD.K12.AK.US](mailto:CWoodhead@KPBSD.K12.AK.US).





Gganilchit Dena'ina Youth Council members Cheyenne Everett, Nadia Walluk and Raven Willoya-Williams help Council Chairperson Jennifer Showalter Yeoman and other participants at a bath and body workshop. The event raised funds for the group.

# Youth Council hosts fundraiser, seeks members

A Kenaitze youth group dedicated to community service and local improvement projects is currently seeking new members.

The tribe's Youth Council, *Gganilchit Dena'ina* – “Stand Up Dena'ina” – is open to tribal and community members between the ages of 14 and 24. Ideal candidates enjoy working with others and

helping in the local community. Currently, the group is made up of six members and three adult advisers.

“Our goal is just to be a positive outlet so that youth have a healthy way to spend their time, making a positive change in the community,” said Raven Willoya-Williams, Youth Council President.

In addition to recruiting new mem-

bers, the Youth Council is planning future community service projects.

In December, the group hosted a bath and body workshop in partnership with the Wellness Department. About 20 people attended, making lotions, soaps and bath bombs, or “fizzies.” Youth Council members assembled holiday gift baskets with products made at the

workshop, selling them to raise money for future projects.

The group hosts monthly meetings at the tribe's administration building in Kenai. For additional information, or if you're interested in joining the Youth Council, please contact Willoya-Williams at 907-690-0993 or [rwilloya-williams@kenaitze.org](mailto:rwilloya-williams@kenaitze.org).

**MEETING**, from p. 1

- meeting was held.
  - Nov. 18, 2015 – The Bureau of Indian Affairs amends its regulations governing Secretarial elections and procedures for tribal members to petition for Secretarial elections.
- Blizzard emphasized that no amendments to the Constitution will be made until the Secretarial requirement goes away.
- The election to remove Secretarial oversight is conducted by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. At the start of the process, eligible voting members will be mailed a letter from the tribe explaining the election. Then eligible voting members will be sent a registration form from BIA instructing them to register to vote in the election. Ballots will then be mailed to those who registered. Results will be tabulated by BIA. For the result to be valid, ballots must be submitted by at least 30 percent of the voters who registered. The time of the election will be set by BIA, and will likely be later this year.
- Tribal members had an opportunity to ask questions and express concerns about the process. The tribe's voting role, missing addresses of tribal members and language in the Constitution were among the issues discussed.



The tribe's Executive Council takes comments from tribal members during a quarterly meeting in December at the Dena'ina Wellness Center. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the process for holding an election to remove federal oversight from any future amendments to the tribe's Constitution.





At top, Rhoda Turinsky reacts with delight as Santa Claus makes an appearance at the Tyotkas Elder Center Christmas party. Above, members of the Executive Council pose with the jolly elf.

**PARTY**, from p. 1  
ed out the activities. Dinner and dessert were prepared by Tyotkas staff, served buffet-style.

Tyotkas program administrator Karla Evarts said the party was a chance for her program – and the entire tribe – to bring joy to the Elders who attended.

“I hope they take away that they are appreciated,” Evarts said. “We want them to be happy.”

Roberta Percy, an Elder who works in the reception area at the tribe’s administration building, attended with her sister, Mary Lusk. Percy attended the 2015 party with all five of her sisters and said

the camaraderie of the event is the best part.

“It’s fun to come to this just to socialize,” Percy said. “It’s fantastic. It gives us all a chance to interact with each other.”

Bonnie Juliussen, a tribal Elder, former Council member and former employee who wore a necklace with flashing Christmas lights, attended the party with Gibbs.

They are friends and co-workers. “We’re having a really great time,” Juliussen said.

Employees at Tyotkas also hosted a special holiday lunch at the center. That event featured Christmas carols.

# Bequsilna: ‘those who are gone’



Willa and Robert Louis “Bob” Fulton

## Robert “Bob” Fulton was a longtime tribal judge and former Executive Council member

Robert Louis "Bob" Fulton, a tribal Elder and old-time Alaskan, died Nov. 29 in Anchorage. He was 90.

Bob was born April 18, 1926, to Mary Pederson and Thomas Fulton. He was raised in Alaska, spending his early years in the areas of Eska, Anchorage and Kenai.

During World War II, Bob served in the United States Army. He returned to Alaska after his stint in the military. In 1950, Bob joined the Operating Engineers Union 302, where he was a member for 66 years.

Bob was a 44-year member of the Masonic Lodge. He served as the Past Master for the Kenai and Seward lodges. Bob also was an active Scottish Right, York Right and Shriner member for 40 years.

On March 21, 1959, Bob married Willa, and they had two children together. After retiring, Bob spent time serving the Kenai community, particularly the Kenaitze Indian Tribe. He was a member of the tribe and served as an Executive Council member and tribal judge

for 28 years.

In his spare time, Bob loved to cook and entertain family and friends. He had quite the green thumb, and always had a yard full of flowers and a house filled with plants.

Bob made a positive difference in this world with his actions and the service he provided to the community. Bob had a deep appreciation and love for his family and anyone who crossed his path. He didn't know a stranger and would always help those in need.

He had an abiding love for his wife, Willa, of 58 years. The two love birds were inseparable until her death in 2015. Bob's undying love for Willa continued and he yearned to be with her once until his passing.

Bob is survived by his son and daughter, James and Therese Fulton of Anchorage; his grandchildren Ramon Fulton, Breanna Brian, Morgan Fulton, Lee and Stephen Davis; and great-grandchildren August, Dillion, Lilah, Anthony and Elliot.

## Tax-preparation assistance available

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 13. 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 2015 tax return
- Any other tax forms you received for 2016.



# Learning on the job

Tribal internship program gives participants hands-on, professional experience

If there’s a keyboard, touchpad or screen involved, Logan Trigg is interested in learning more.

“I’ve always loved working with computers and getting my hands on electronics,” Trigg said. “It’s my passion.”

So when Trigg, 20, had a chance to participate in an internship in the tribe’s Information Technology Department, he didn’t hesitate. The internship was made available through the tribe’s Workforce Investment Program, which is open to qualified youth between the ages of 14 and 24.

Funded through a Department of Labor grant, the program gives interns 10 weeks – or 200 hours – of on-the-job experience. Applicants receive help writing a cover letter and creating a resume, and complete an interview that determines their interests and where at the tribe they might excel.

After interns are accepted into the program, education and employment specialist Danielle Self meets with them weekly. They set goals, celebrate achievements, and discuss progress and areas of improvement. The program capacity is eight.

“What’s important is finding a place in the tribe that’s a good mesh,” Self said.

Trigg, who has lived on the central Kenai Peninsula his entire life, started the internship in September 2015. He worked full days on Mondays and Tuesdays and half-days on Wednesdays. He spent most of his time at the administration building but went wherever he was needed.

He said he learned through the internship that no two situations are the same, which helped his problem-solving abilities. His next goal is to go to Alaska’s Institute of Technology in Seward to receive more training and complete certification programs, with the hope of possibly returning to the tribe.

Trigg’s advice to prospective interns is to be open-minded and unafraid.

“If you have an opportunity, take it. The worse you’re going to get is ‘no’ or ‘come back another time,’” he said. “You have nothing to lose and everything to gain with something like this – expanding your knowledge, expanding your job opportunities, expanding your interests.”

Fellow intern, Mirissa Green, 21, is in her second internship with the tribe.



Logan Trigg works on a computer in the integrated staff workspace at the Dena’ina Wellness Center during his Workforce Investment Program internship with the tribe’s Information Technology department.

She completed the first with the Tyotkas Elder Program and is currently at the Early Childhood Center, assisting with the after-school program. She helps students with math and reading, prepares snacks and is learning Dena’ina words. She is there five days a week, three

hours a day. For a time Green, who recently moved to Alaska from Texas, was interested in becoming a Certified Nursing Assistant. But thanks in large part to her experience at the Early Childhood Center, she now hopes to pursue a career in education.

“I love it over at ECC,” Green said. “I don’t want to leave.”

Green also plans to study math at Kenai Peninsula College. She even completed a tribal volunteer application, the goal being to maintain a pres-

ence at the Early Childhood Center after the internship ends. One day, Green said, she hopes to work full-time at the tribe.

She said the internship program has been good experience and given her new opportunities.

“It’s really opened my eyes a lot with the tribe,” Green said. “I was really amazed and quite shocked. As long as you put forth the effort, the tribe will take time and help.”

## Learn more

For additional information about internship opportunities, please contact Danielle Self at 907-335-7609. The tribe also offers the “Daggeyi” internship program, which is managed by Misty Klodt. To learn more about that program, contact Klodt at 907-335-7600.



**CLASS**, from p. 1  
they used many Dena’ina words in explaining how to make the recipe. A worksheet they distributed as part of the project included 18 phrases with Dena’ina translations, including:

*Dink’I chashga giga dudlek a tutghelt’et* – “Put four cups berries in the pot.”  
*Vadlida dinltl’et* – “Turn on the stove.”

*Lugheshga cheh el gigata’a velnuq’nitex* – “Stir berry juice with a big spoon.”  
For Matt Reams, who had never taken a Dena’ina language course, it was a challenging yet gratifying experience. He said wife Wanda is a good Dena’ina speaker who is passionate about the language, so it was nice to take the class together.

“I learned to speak some of my wife’s language and met some really great people,” Matt Reams said. “I enjoyed the whole thing.”

Tribal member Joel Isaak created a video on how to make salmon skin boots. The video included footage captured at the tribal fishery in Kenai, as well as audio of fluent Dena’ina speaker Helen Dick translating phrases.

The tribe recently hired Isaak as a contractor to spearhead a Dena’ina language revitalization effort. “It’s a way for me to feel part of the Dena’ina community,” Isaak said of learning the language. “It’s identity building. Knowing your language and your culture, and where you came from and where you’re going, I think is something that’s really empowering.”

Executive Council Chairperson Jennifer Showalter Yeoman also participated in the class. For her project, she wrote a song titled *Na’eldeqinaghelnik (K’elika)*, which means “We are Happy (Song),” and translated the words from English to Dena’ina.

Showalter Yeoman said she gained an appreciation for the complexity of the Dena’ina language in writing the song.

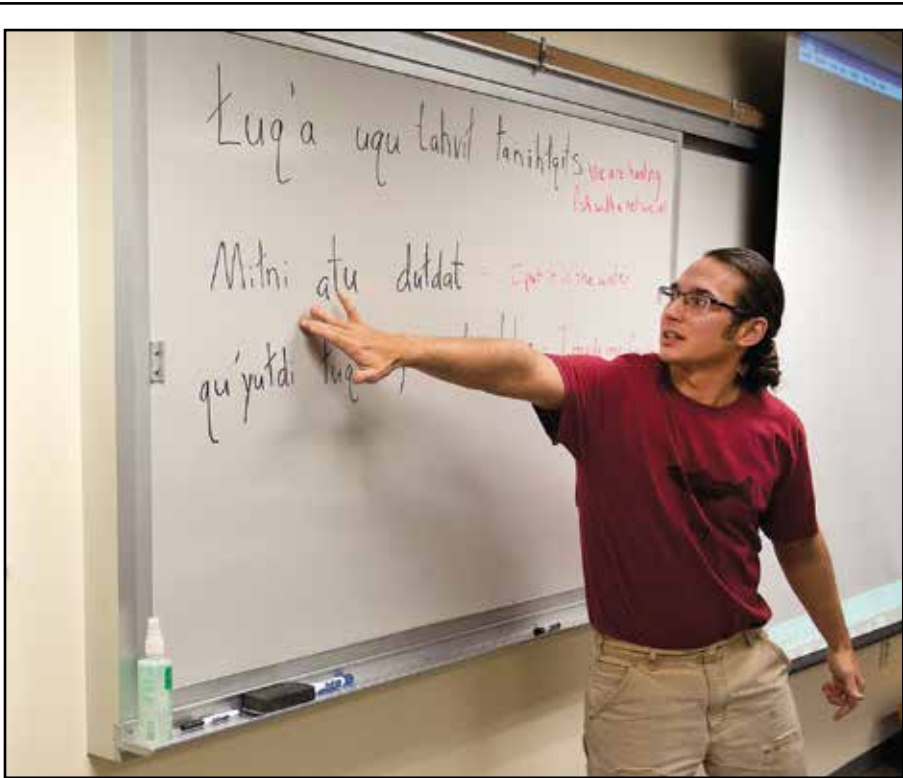


Items to make jam are shown labeled with their Dena’ina names during a presentation in a Dena’ina language class at Kenai Peninsula College.

“I had no idea how difficult it would be to translate,” she said during the presentation.  
Helen Dick, a fluent Dena’ina speaker who helped teach the class, said it was nice to see a younger generation take the time to learn the language.

The number of local Dena’ina speakers is dwindling, she said, so it’s important to bring the language to the forefront before it’s too late. “It’s real good that kids are learning because nobody speaks (Dena’ina) anymore. We lost all our Elders,” Dick said. “Our new kids don’t know anything about what the old-timers did. So I like to see some of the people learn about fish skins, boots, anything. I’m just happy to see the kids learning.”

Shaginoff-Stuart said a new language course, building on the elementary class, began in January. That course focuses more on writing.



Joel Isaak gestures to Dena’ina words on a white board at Kenai Peninsula College during a presentation.

## Tribe embarks on language project

The tribe has launched a project aimed at revitalizing the Dena’ina language and elevating its use across tribal operations and the community. Joel Isaak, a tribal member, recently signed a one-year contract to manage the project. A transcriptionist, resident Elder and two lead teachers will also be signed to contracts for the project. The project was created, in part, based on feedback the tribe gathered through a community needs assessment conducted in 2012. Isaak said the project is in its earliest stages, which includes gathering information about the tribe’s current language resources and use, scheduling meetings so people who are interested in the project can ask questions and learn more,

and planning workshops in which participants – youth and adults – can begin learning. Isaak said he looks forward to partnering with programs and people across the tribe as the project materializes. The project’s biggest challenges, he said, will be overcoming historical trauma, gaining community trust, and accomplishing as much as possible in a limited amount of time. Said Isaak: “I’ve been wanting to work at becoming fluent and being able to speak and write Dena’ina for years, and this would provide an opportunity for me and for other people to have that happen. What excites me is it’s something that can be shared with anyone who wants to learn about it or learn to speak it.”



Participants in Kenai Peninsula College’s Dena’ina language class listen to a student’s final presentation in December. From right are Matt and Wanda Reams, Council member Bernadine Atchison, professor Alan Boraas, and the Reams’ children Madison and Angel.



# Crocheting for a cause

## Wildwood inmates make hats for Early Childhood Center students

Monica Pelkey remembers the doilies her grandmother made for family, friends and community members on Kodiak Island. Crystal Dawn Aragon remembers the smile on her son's face the day he received a camouflage scarf at the age of 3. And Lisa Mann appreciates the chance to do something positive for the community.

Pelkey, Aragon and Mann are inmates in the pre-trial unit of the Wildwood Correctional Center in Kenai. Each is there for a different reason, facing consequences for their own offenses, yet they share more than concrete walls and criminal records.

They crochet for a cause.

The women participate in a program in which female inmates make crochet hats, blankets and scarves that are donated to organizations across the Kenai Peninsula and beyond. The tribe's Early Childhood Center, serving students from preschool to third grade, is among the recipients. Children at the center received crochet hats this holiday season, and for the past few years have received baskets at Easter.

On a December afternoon, in the gym of the correctional center's pre-trial unit, the inmates shared memories of crocheting and their reasons for participating in the program.

"It feels good," Pelkey said. "I hope this goes to someone who needs it, that's for sure."

The volunteer-run program, informally named "Crocheting Their Way," has existed about three years. Participants have crocheted for the Special Olympics, Boys and Girls Club, Haven House and LeeShore Center, to name a few, reaching across the state.

Susan Smalley, a lead volunteer, said program volunteers are at Wildwood three to four hours a week, year-round. Community members donate cash and materials, and participants come and go as the jail roster changes. The group is always looking for new people and organizations to help.

For volunteers, it's rewarding because the program not only benefits the community but gives inmates a positive outlet under otherwise difficult circumstances.

"My feet might never tread here, but these ladies need to know that I support them every step of the



Volunteers Susan Smalley and Twyla Mundy share a laugh with Lisa Mann during a visit to help Mann and other female inmates at Wildwood Pretrial Facility who participate in a prison crocheting program. The colorful products of their work go to benefit several community organizations, including the tribe's Early Childhood Center.



Twins Esther and Maya Kaliberda show off hats and scarves knitted at Wildwood for children at the Early Childhood Center.

way, and that's what our community doesn't do," volunteer Twyla Mundy said. "It's very hard for our community to step in, so that's why I appreciate this."

Added Smalley: "It's kind of a magical thing."

On this day, alongside Smalley and Mundy and under the supervision of a correctional officer, the women sat at a small table surrounded by a pile of yarn and quietly worked on their projects.

Pelkey, who lives in Homer, worked on a blanket another inmate had started but didn't finish.

She said crocheting is therapeutic, an activity that passes time and brings together female inmates from all walks of life.

"Yet here we are, in the same place, doing the same thing," she

said. "There's a little bit of a bond that definitely forms."

For Mann, who moved from Wasilla to Kenai a few years ago, crocheting helps her cope with the isolation of jail. She looks forward to visits from program volunteers because it brings enlightenment when she misses her family.

Mann learned to crochet in jail and feels good knowing her projects go to the community.

"It's great to be able to do something to give back while you're here," she said.

Aragon, who lives in Nikiski, said crocheting reminds her of her six children.

She learned to crochet at the age of 10 and enjoys it because it passes time and helps keep her from thinking negative thoughts.

"If my mind is somewhere else, it pulls me back because I have to think about every single stitch rather than what's bothering me," she said.

Each inmate said they look forward to seeing Smalley, Mundy and other volunteers. It's difficult being away from family, they agreed, but the volunteers are friendly faces.

"Once you get to know them, you get a bond with them," Aragon said. "It's not quite like seeing your family, but it's like seeing a friend. They can always tell when one of us is sad, they ask how we are doing, and it gives us hope."

At the Early Childhood Center, students received hats before Christmas. Extras will be donated to other community organizations, ensuring they are used.

Diane Bernard, the tribe's education and disabilities coordinator, said the hats brought joy to the students.

"I think it's a blessing for our children," she said. "Some of the children don't have many hats, so they make a difference."

Meanwhile, at Wildwood, a tear rolled down Pelkey's cheek as she crocheted a blanket.

It was similar to the one she had already made for her daughter.

"I'm just very thankful that they have this here," Pelkey said. "For us to be able to do something like this and give back to our community is really important because people don't see that from us on the outside."



# Yaghali Nusdlan

*He or she got well*



Pickled bowhead whale muktuk is one of the traditional foods served at a recent Native Foods Potluck at the Dena’ina Wellness Center.

## A good meal in good company

Native  
Foods  
Potluck  
connects  
people and  
traditions  
through  
diverse  
cuisine

When a friend offered her a bowl of homemade duck soup, Sassa Peterson began to cry. “She asked me, ‘What’s going on, what’s the matter?’” Peterson remembered. “I said, ‘No, I’m just so happy and grateful to be enjoying this soup that I really missed from back home.’”

Peterson was among those who attended a Native Foods Potluck hosted by the tribe’s Wellness Department in January. The tribe’s hosts the potlucks the first Monday of each month in the demonstration kitchen at the Dena’ina Wellness Center.

For Peterson, who is Yup’ik and grew up in Manokotak in the Dillingham area, the potlucks keep her connected to her culture and traditions. As a child, Peterson remembers her father hunting seals and people in the village sharing



Participants prepare plates of food at a recent potluck.

beluga whale and fish.

But after moving to the Kenai Peninsula in 1998, she began hearing less of her language and eating less of her traditional food.

That’s why it meant so much when her friend offered duck soup. “Having grown up with Native food and a subsistence lifestyle, I really missed it,” Peterson said.

Soldotna resident Jerry Daniels, who grew up in Elim in the Norton Sound region, also attended the January potluck.

He said he enjoys eating whale and seal and participates in the monthly gatherings for two reasons: “The people and the good Native food,” he said.

Deb Nyquist, Director of Wellness, said the tribe has hosted Native Foods Potlucks for years but that the event has gained popularity since the Dena’ina Wellness Center opened in 2014.

The events draw an average of more than 50 people, Nyquist added.

See **FOOD**, p. 10





Mary Lou Bottorff prepares a plate of food for her granddaughter as others move through the line. Bottorff spends several days preparing food in advance of the potluck and has played a big role in bringing people together for the monthly event.

**FOOD**, from p. 9  
ed, and largest turnouts have been close to 100.

Attendees are encouraged to bring a favorite dish, but it’s not a requirement. Anyone is welcome.

Like Peterson and Daniels, many of those who attend grew up outside the Kenai Peninsula. The potlucks give them a chance to reconnect with their past.

“Food is more than sustenance, it’s also wellness,” Nyquist said. “It connects us to our stories, our culture, our traditions, and of course there is all the warm socialization time and love that is shared.”

The January menu was robust and diverse.

There was beluga and bowhead whale prepared in a variety of ways. There were three types of soup – moose, caribou and seal – along with breads and crackers. An assortment of fish included candlefish, salmon and smelt. Berries, seaweed and vegetables also were available, along with an array of desserts.

Although many attendees bring dishes to share, tribal Elder Mary Lou Bottorff spends hours – even days – preparing food ahead of time.

In January, she arrived a couple hours before everyone else – setting up a buffett, warming up soup and making other last-minute preparations.

The secret to feeding so many people?

“Do a little bit at a time,” Bottorff said.



Food served includes fish and fowl, greens and game, and different varieties of dessert.

**Attend a potluck**

The next Native Foods Potluck is scheduled for Monday, Feb. 6, in the demonstration kitchen of the Dena’ina Wellness Center. Food will be served at 11:30 a.m.



# Cooking with Kenaitze:

## Cranberries, “hey gek’a”

Bread and sauce recipes to enjoy this winter

**SUGAR-FREE CRANBERRY BREAD**

**Ingredients**  
2 ½ cups flour  
2 teaspoons baking powder  
½ teaspoon salt  
¾ cup agave or honey  
¼ cup butter  
1 cup orange juice  
1 egg  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
1 teaspoon grated orange zest  
1 cup fresh cranberries, chopped  
¾ cup chopped walnuts

**Directions**  
Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine the flour, baking powder and salt in a bowl. Cream the butter and agave, then add the orange juice, egg, vanilla and orange zest. Pour the flour into the butter mixture to combine. Add the cranberries and walnuts. Do not over-mix. Pour mixture into a 9x5-inch greased loaf pan or 6 greased mini loaves. Bake 55-60 minutes for the 9x5-inch pan or 35 minutes for the smaller loaves. Let rest for 5 minutes in the pan, remove and cool on a wire rack. Serve.

\*Recipes courtesy of Linda Tannehill, Kenai Peninsula District Office of Cooperative Extension.

When Dena’ina Elders share their fondest memories, many times they include stories of hunting, gathering and preparing food across *Yaghanen*, the good land. From moose to salmon to wild berries, food is an important part of Dena’ina life. So comes this new recurring column, “Cooking with Kenaitze,” which will focus on ingredients and recipes relevant to Dena’ina culture. In the spirit of the recent holidays, what follows are cranberry recipes.

**NATURALLY SWEETENED CRANBERRY SAUCE**

**Ingredients**  
4 cups lingonberries or one 12-ounce bag of fresh cranberries  
½ cup honey or maple syrup  
½ cup water  
Zest of 1 medium orange (about 1 teaspoon)  
Optional: ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon and/or ¼ cup fresh orange juice

**Instructions**  
If using commercial cranberries, rinse them well and drain off excess water. Pick through the cranberries and discard soft ones. For lingonberries, do not rinse.  
  
In a medium sauce pan, combine the cranberries, honey and water. Bring the mixture to a boil over medium-high heat, then reduce heat to medium-low and cook, stirring occasionally until cranberries have popped and the mixture has thickened, about 5 to 10 minutes.  
  
Remove the pot from heat and stir in the orange zest. Add optional ingredients. Taste. If the mixture is too tart, add more orange juice, honey or maple syrup.

**Leftover suggestions**  
Use in a smoothie  
Stir into yogurt or oatmeal  
Serve with leftover poultry or pork

**CRANBERRY NUT BREAD**

**Ingredients**  
8 cups sifted all-purpose flour  
4 cups sugar  
6 teaspoons baking powder  
4 teaspoons salt  
1 cup shortening  
4 teaspoons grated orange peel  
3 cups orange juice  
4 eggs, well beaten  
4 cups fresh cranberries  
2 cups chopped nuts

**Directions**  
Sift together dry ingredients. Cut in shortening. Combine orange peel, juice and egg. Add to dry ingredients, mixing just to moisten. Fold in berries and nuts. Turn into greased 9x5x3-inch pans. Bake at 350 degrees for 60 minutes. Cool and wrap. Makes 4 loaves.

**SUBMIT YOUR FAVORITE RECIPE**  
Have a recipe to share? Please send it to M. Scott Moon at [smoon@kenaitze.org](mailto:smoon@kenaitze.org)





# The Big Picture



Traditional Alaska Native foods from across the state, including salmon, candlefish, and bowhead whale muktuk are pictured in January at the monthly Native Foods Potluck hosted at the Dena’ina Wellness Center. See story, p. 10.

## 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  
888-335-8865 fax

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

**Tyotkas Elder Center**  
1000 Mission Ave., Kenai, AK 99611  
907-335-7280

**Yaghanen Youth Program**  
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 Family and Social Services, Education and Career Development**  
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](http://kenaitze.org)  
**On Facebook:** [facebook.com/kenaitze](https://facebook.com/kenaitze)

