# Kenaitze Indian Tribe Annual Report



# About the Kenaitze Indian Tribe



Tribal Members gather for the first Annual General Council Meeting in 1970.

The Kenaitze Indian Tribe was federally recognized as a sovereign, independent nation in 1971 under the Indian Reorganization Act as amended for Alaska. Today, we have about 1,900 Tribal Members who live across the Kenai Peninsula and beyond. We employ more than 375 full-time employees, part-time employees, and interns.

The Tribe delivers a variety of programs and services that promote the wellness of our people and the community.

In 2014, we opened the 52,000-square-foot Dena'ina Wellness Center, an integrated health care facility. Kahtnuht'ana Qayeh, the Tribe's campus in Old Town Kenai, also includes Tyotkas Elder Center, Qiz'unch' Tribal Court, and Chuq'eya Qenq'a (Birch Tree House), which houses the Tribe's Behavioral Health services. The campus expanded in 2019 with renovations to the adjacent Toyon building to accommodate offices and workspaces for Na'ini Family and Social Services and the Kenaitze/ Salamatof Tribally Designated Housing Entity office.

The Tribe's new Kahtnuht'ana Duhdeldiht Campus opened for in-person services in September 2023. The 67,259-square-foot building is home to the Tribe's Early Learning, Yaghanen Youth Language and Culture, and Community Education and Career Training programs.

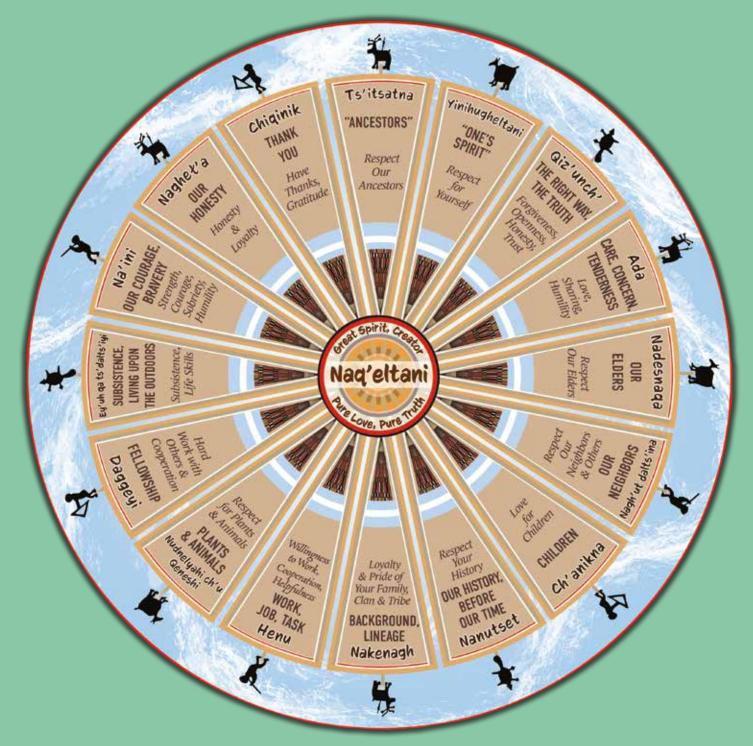
The Tribe also operates an educational fishery from its beach site on the shores of Cook Inlet near the mouth of the Kenai River.

At our Annual General Membership Meeting on the first Saturday in October, we elect members to the Tribal Council to serve staggered terms. The seven-member Tribal Council governs the Tribe in accordance with our constitution, by-laws, ordinances and resolutions. The Council appoints a Chief Judge to oversee Qiz'unch' Tribal Court and uphold Tribal laws. The Tribal Council also hires the Executive Director to manage the dayto-day operations of the Tribe.

Our funding comes from federal, state and private grants, as well as third-party revenue generated by our health care programs.

Our Tribe is more than buildings and programs; it is our people, the Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina. The Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina have inhabited Yaghanen, the good land, since time immemorial. Our vision, to assure Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina thrive forever, continues to guide us in all that we do.

# Kenaitze Indian Tribe Traditional Values





Seven Tribal Council Members govern the Tribe in accordance with the Tribe's constitution, bylaws, ordinances and resolutions. Council Members are elected at the Annual General Membership Meeting in October. The Tribal Council holds regular meetings open to Tribal Members. Dates and times are posted to the Tribe's website.



**Brenda Smith** 

Secretary

Ronette Stanton Chair



**Wayne D. Wilson Jr.** Vice-Chair



**Gabe Juliussen Jr.** Treasurer



Bernadine Atchison Council Member



**Liisia Blizzard** Council Member



Mary Ann Mills Council Member

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# Message From the Chair



Esteemed Tribal Members,

With a deep sense of honor and pride, we present the annual report of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe, where our ancestral values have guided us in all our endeavors. As we reflect on the accomplishments

of the past year, we are reminded that the heartbeat of our Tribe resides in our traditions – a beacon that has guided our internal growth and external partnerships alike.

In this report, I am thrilled to share how our Tribe's tireless efforts, both within our community and in collaboration with external entities, have been intertwined effortlessly into our traditional values. Each achievement serves as a testament to our commitment to preserving our cultural heritage, strengthening our community bonds, and fostering a legacy that is steeped in wisdom and unity.

Please see the remarkable accomplishments of the past year, aligning our actions with our traditional values and carving a path forward that honors our ancestors, empowers our youth, and sustains the very essence of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe.

#### Connection to Cultural Roots:

Language and Cultural Revival: Our commitment to our traditional values of language and culture has manifested through the remarkable progress of our Dena'ina Language Revitalization Program. By embracing our ancestral language, we are preserving a vital aspect of our identity, fostering intergenerational connectivity.

**Cultural Workshops and Events:** Through workshops and events, we've emphasized the importance of traditional arts and practices. By nurturing skills such as drum-making and storytelling, we've honored our elders' wisdom and shared our heritage with younger generations.

**Collaborative Environmental Initiatives:** 

Our Tribe's partnership with local entities and regional corporations has yielded meaningful outcomes in environmental conservation. By engaging in projects focused on protecting our lands and natural resources, we've upheld the value of respecting and preserving the environment for future generations.

**Sustainable Economic Ventures:** Our commitment to sustainable economic growth, guided by our traditional respect for the land, has led to the expansion of our fisheries and tourism enterprises. These ventures demonstrate our dedication to responsible resource management.

**Collaborations with Local Entities:** Our partnerships with local organizations, such as the City of Kenai and educational institutions, have showcased our commitment to community support. By joining forces, we've upheld the traditional value of unity for the greater good.

Health and Wellness Services: Our Dena'ina Wellness Center's comprehensive healthcare services have been augmented by the traditional value of holistic well-being. We've addressed not only physical health but also mental and emotional well-being, ensuring our community's overall vitality.

#### Conclusion:

As we reflect on the achievements of the past year, we are reminded that every step we take is a reflection of our traditional values. Our Tribe's journey is one of continuity, where our ancestors' wisdom merges seamlessly with our modern aspirations. It is through the collective adherence to our values that we forge ahead, united in our pursuit of preserving our heritage, uplifting our community, and embracing a future guided by the wisdom of the past.

> Thank you, Ronette Stanton Tribal Council Chair





Kenaitze's Tribal Council and the Kenai City Council meet in January for a joint work session in the Kenai City Council Chambers. The hour-long session was likely the first time the two governing bodies have formally worked together. The Tribe's Executive Director and the City's outgoing and incoming City Managers participated in the meeting, and several City department directors were also in attendance. The two governments discussed how they might work together on projects and grant opportunities. Both governments committed to future discussions.

Members of the Tribal Council participate in regional, state and national organizations in support of the Tribe's mission, vision and values.

#### **Alaska Native Health Board**

The Alaska Native Health Board is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of Alaska Native people. It serves as a central hub for information, collaboration, and advocacy on Native health issues in Alaska. Ronette Stanton and Mary Ann Mills are the Tribe's primary and alternate representatives on the board.

The ANHB represents and supports tribal health organiza-

tions, which are responsible for delivering healthcare services to Alaska Native communities. These organizations work to address the unique health challenges faced by Alaska Native people, including high rates of chronic diseases, mental health issues, and substance abuse.

The board focuses on several key areas to improve Native health in Alaska. It promotes culturally appropriate healthcare practices that respect and incorporate Native traditions and values. It advocates for increased funding and resources for Native healthcare and programs and services. Additionally, it provides a platform for tribes and organizations to share knowledge and best practices for Native health topics.

The ANHB also plays a role in policy development and advocacy at the local, state and federal levels. It works to ensure that the unique healthcare needs of Alaska Native people are recognized and addressed in healthcare policies and legislation.

#### Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area Board

The Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area board consists of community members from within the Heritage area. The Tribe holds a seat as a recognized Tribe because of K'beq' Cultural Heritage Site and our ancestral lands. Council Member Bernadine Atchison sits on the board as the Treasurer.

The organization's mission statement is "to recognize, preserve, and interpret the historic, scenic, natural resources, and cultural landscape of the Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm historic transportation corridor." One of the accomplishments of being on the board has been to help implement a Land Acknowledgment which is used at all of the meetings.

The Land Acknowledgment reads: "We respectfully acknowledge the Dena'ina people on whose traditional lands we reside on. We honor the Dena'ina who have been the stewards of Alaska's lands and waters for centuries, the Elders who lived here before, the Dena'ina people of today, and future generations to come. We also recognize that Alaska Native people would traditionally gather here and harvest Native foods."

The board meets two to three times a year and approves grants up to \$20,000 to \$25,000 for projects that fulfill the mission and vision of KMTA. In the past year, the Tribe received a grant for K'beq' to improve and enhance our cultural site.

In November 2023, the board is having its first strategic planning session in several years to re-envision or fine tune the direction of KMTA. To learn more please visit kmta-corridor.org.

#### U.S. Government Accountability Office Tribal and Indigenous Advisory Council

In 2022, the U.S. Government Accountability Office began the process of forming its first-ever Tribal and Indigenous Advisory Council to provide insights and recommendations on issues affecting Tribal Nations and their citizens. Tribal Council Secretary Brenda Smith is an Indigenous Advisory Council Member.

The Council helps guide GAO's work on vital and emerging issues affecting Tribal Nations, their citizens, and Indigenous people more broadly. Among other things, this may include informing GAO of emerging topics of interest or concern, helping identify relevant stakeholders to ensure GAO work includes a diverse range of tribal and indigenous perspectives, and providing advice to GAO on its processes for working with Tribes.

The Council is comprised of 16 members, including leaders from federally recognized Tribal Nations; a leader of a state recognized Tribe; a leader of a Native Hawaiian organization; and experts on topics relevant to Tribal Nations and Indigenous people. GAO is committed to ensuring it hears from leaders and representatives of federally recognized Tribes with whom GAO has a government-to-government relationship. Given the broad design of federal programs, GAO also seeks perspectives from representatives of other Indigenous people served by federal programs.

#### **Cook Inlet Tribal Council**

Cook Inlet Tribal Council is a tribal nonprofit organization serving Alaska Native and American Indian people residing in the Cook Inlet region of southcentral Alaska. Wayne D. Wilson Jr. serves on the CITC Board of Directors.

CITC serves more than 12,000 people each year through an array of integrated programs and employs more than 400 people. CITC programs include eduction and youth services, employment and training services, career development, family preservation, and support for individuals recovering from addiction, substance abuse, or incarceration.

Through the Alaska Native Justice Center and Clare Swan Early Learning Center, CITC addresses the Alaska civil and criminal justice system and supports working families with childcare through an Early Head Start curriculum.



#### Policies, Ordinances and Procedures Tribal Council Workgroup

Brenda Smith, Chair Liisia Blizzard Mary Ann Mills Wayne D. Wilson Jr. Bernadine Atchison Gabe Juliussen Jr. Ronette Stanton

The purpose of the Policies, Ordinances and Procedures Tribal Council Workgroup is to review the Tribe's proposed and existing ordinances, policies and procedures in order to establish guidelines for the Tribe and to provide recommendations to the Kenaitze Tribal Council for approval. A new computer platform is being implemented to assist in tracking new and existing policies in order to ensure bi-annual review is completed in a timely manner.

#### **Constitution Committee**

Liisia Blizzard, Chair Logan Wik Elsie Maillelle Samantha Singleton Bernadine Atchison Mary Ann Mills Wayne D. Wilson Jr. Sharon Isaak Paul Shadura II Youth Seat, Vacant

As a sovereign, independent Nation, the Kenaitze Indian Tribe's Constitution establishes basic principles and rules that we use to self-govern, and ensures that the rights of our citizens are protected. The Constitution Committee meets on a regular basis to review and recommend revisions to the Constitution. The committee will be creating a process for the Tribal Membership to be able to vote and approve an amended Constitution.

#### **Court Code Committee**

Mary Ann Mills, Chair Liisia Blizzard Sharon Isaak Bernadine Atchison Russelle J. Wilson Benjamin Baldwin Bernice Crandall Evelyn Dolchok, Tribal Court Chief Judge, Ex Officio Maria Guerra, Family Services Director, Ex Officio Kimberly Kirchner, Tribal Court Code Attorney Advisor Youth Seat, Vacant

The Kenaitze Court Code Committee has completed and will send Chapter 2, Section 25 of the Garnishment Code to Committee Members for a final review and poll vote to recommend to Council for approval.

#### **Education Committee**

Gabe Juliussen, Chair Bernadine Atchison Samantha Singleton Mary Ann Mills Lisa Huffman Linda Ross Jennifer Showalter Yeoman Sondra Shaginof-Stuart, Kenai Peninsula College Ex Officio Quinton Kimball, Youth Seat

The Education Committee worked to developed a new mission statement for the Tribe's Education programs: "Empower our students and participants to become leaders, advocates, and agents of positive change within their communities and beyond while upholding our cultural values and traditions."

The Education Committee has been reviewing the results and recommendations from the Education assessment conducted by the OSIYO Group. An Education consultant has been hired to help the Tribe evaluate different approaches to establishing a Tribal school.

#### **Elders Committee**

Ronette Stanton, Chair Mary Lou Bottorff Katheryn Rodgers Suzanne Jackson Russell Wilson Phyllis Bookey Arnold Oskolkoff Mary Ann Mills,

Honorary Lifetime The Kenaitze Indian Tribe Elders Committee remains committed in its honor and support to the Tribe's Elders while fostering community connections and preserving cultural traditions. During the last year, the Elders Committee has been a part of the following events and accomplishments:

• The Elders Committee and Tribal Council have approved the creation of an Elders Memorial Wall. The creation of the Elders Memorial Wall stands as a tribute to the wisdom and contributions of the Tribe's Elders who have passed away. The memorial wall will serve as a lasting reminder of the legacy left behind by those who have played pivotal roles in shaping the Tribe's history.

• The Traditional Foods Potluck celebrates the culinary heritage of the Alaska Natives. Elders program participants contribute dishes made from traditional ingredients, showcasing the rich flavors and stories behind each recipe. The potlucks promote cultural exchange where we all appreciate the importance of traditional foods within the Tribe's way of life.

• The annual Christmas Dinner is a festive celebration that brings together members of the Kenaitze Tribe across generations. It's a cherished tradition that embodies unity, joy, and the spirit of togetherness during the holiday season.

• The Elders Craft Bazaar is a showcase of creativity and talent within the Kenaitze Tribe. This event allows Elders to display their handmade crafts and traditional artwork, offering visitors an opportunity to learn about the Tribe's cultural heritage. The bazaar fosters intergenerational dialogue, as attendees gain insights into traditional crafting techniques and their significance.

• The 1950's Sock Hop Dinner and Dancing Fundraiser is a unique event styled after a 1950's theme. The event features formal attire, music, and dancing. Beyond raising funds, it creates an atmosphere of joy and camaraderie, fostering a sense of connection and appreciation for Elders.

• The Easter celebration blends traditional customs with contemporary activities, inviting Elders, families, and children to participate. The event includes an Easter egg hunt and craft workshops.

 The Kenaitze Indian Tribe Elders Committee has achieved significant milestones in its ongoing efforts to honor, support, and celebrate the Tribe's Elders. Through a diverse range of events and fundraisers, the committee has fostered intergenerational connections, preserved cultural traditions, and strengthened the sense of community. Looking ahead, the committee remains dedicated to continuing these initiatives and exploring new avenues for engaging Elders and the broader community.

#### **Election Board**

Katheryn Rodgers, Chair Bernice Crandall Gloria Wik Russell Wilson, Alternate

The Election Board regulates all Tribal elections and resolves election disputes.

#### **Enrollment Committee**

Liisia Blizzard, Chair Evelyn Boulette Samantha Singleton Katheryn Rodgers Elsie Maillelle Bernice Crandall Linda Ross Jessica Crump, Enrollment Officer

The Tribal Enrollment Committee receives and verifies eligibility of all applications for Tribal enrollment. All approved applications for Tribal enrollment are ratified on a yearly basis during the Kenaitze Indian Tribe's Annual General Membership Meeting.

The regular process for the ratification of enrollment applications by the general body will be followed during the hy-

#### brid Annual Meeting on Oct. 7.

#### Environmental Protection Committee

Wayne D. Wilson, Jr., Chair Virginia Wolf Ronette Stanton Mary Ann Mills Julianne Wilson Nathaniel Juliussen Paul Shadura II Alana Shaw, Evironmenal Protection Manager, Ex Officio Sam Schimmel, Youth Seat

The Environmental Protection Committee's main purpose is to help ensure that the air, land and water are protected in and around Kenaitze traditional lands. Over the past year, the committee has focused on hearing presentations from various groups in the area that have done studies from water quality to fish habitat.

One of the main issues the committee focused on was the Anchorage wastewater treatment facility and the 301(h) permit waiver that the city is trying to obtain. The committee met with the Region 10 EPA office to learn more about the issue and to discuss some of the Tribe's concerns.

The committee is working on a plan to help work on the fisheries as a whole. The committee's goal is to make sure the fish thrive forever in the Cook Inlet basin and that Tribal households are able to catch enough to feed themselves throughout the winter.

#### **Finance Committee**

Gabe Juliussen, Chair Linda Ross Ben Baldwin

## BOARDS, COMMITTEES, & COMMISSIONS CONTINUED

Krista Holloway Maria Sweppy Jared Juliussen Sharon Isaak Youth Seat, Vacant

The Finance committee provides advice and makes recommendations to the Tribal Council regarding financial matters and financial policies. Responsibilities include review of financial audit reports and review of financial policies, annual draft budgets and budget amendments.

#### Head Start/Early Head Start Parent Policy Council

Brittany Miller, Chair Holly Rust, Vice Chair Nola Irwin Kristina Loy Jan LeFevre Susanne Barbour Janeth Ruiz Michelle Teates Kiersten Consiel, Community Tanya Rocho, Community Liisia Blizzard, Tribal Council Liaison Brenda Smith, Tribal Council Liaison Alternate

The Head Start/Early Head Start Parent Policy Council partners with staff, governing bodies, parents and volunteers to facilitate compliance with Head Start Performance Standards; assists in accomplishing program missions; and serves as an advocate between the program and community.

#### Hunting Fishing and Gathering Commission

Kaarlo Wik, Chair Gabe Juliussen James Coveyou Alex Coxwell Liisia Blizzard Sharon Isaak Logan Wik Mary Ann Mills, Honorary Lifetime Bernadine Atchison, Honorary Lifetime Clare Swan, Honorary Lifetime Youth Seat, Vacant

The Educational Fishery was established to teach and preserve the Dena'ina way of living and is made up of culture, tradition, and living with the land. Our educational fishery is a vital piece of who we are. It is a gathering place that brings together Elders, youth, families, and communities. It is a place where our culture and traditions are taught, learned, and shared.

Over the years, as our membership continues to grow, we work diligently to ensure our educational fishery is well equipped and prepared to meet the demands and needs of each and every Tribal Member. In recent years we have witnessed great change in our landscape by completing construction on our Harvest shop, vacpack room, and cleaning stations.

This year, we completed construction on our new Harvest Pavilion which was enjoyed by membership at our 2023 Opening of the Net on June 1, where we celebrated with over 250 Tribal members from Kenaitze and Salamatof, as well as Tribal employees. Moving forward, we hope to create campsites above the Fishery for those Tribal Members traveling to the area to fish the net. These sites will be for use during your tide for motorhome and/or tent use and will include a picnic table and fire ring.

#### Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina Health Board

Wayne D. Wilson Jr. Chair Mary Ann Mills, Vice Chair Ronette Stanton, Secretary Sharon Isaak Maria Sweppy Samantha Singleton Alex Coxwell

The Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina Health Board reviews and makes recommendations for the Tribe's Primary Care, Behavioral Health, Dental and Wellness programs.

#### Kahtnuht'ana Development Corporation

Gabe Juliussen Jr. President Bruce Gabriel, Vice President Virginia Wolf, Secretary Sagen Juliussen, Treasurer Rudy Wilson Vacant Vacant Gabe Juliussen Jr., Council Liaison

The Kahtnuht'ana Development Corporation exercises the full authority of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe, IRA in all matters relating to economic development, business creation and expansion and exploitation of natural resources.

#### Land Committee

Brenda Smith, Chair Mary Ann Mills Kaarlo Wik Gabe Juliussen Jr. Paul Shadura II Vernon Stanford Russelle Wilson Youth Seat, Vacant

The Land Committee has been researching ownership of the Kalifornsky Village and



Kenaitze Tribal Council Chair Ronette Stanton, second from left, talks about services at the Dena'ina Wellness Center during a tour for U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Marcia Fudge in August. From left are Margaret Salazar, Regional HUD Administrator; Stanton; Kaarlo Wik, Kenaitze/Salamatof Tribally Designated Housing Chair; Secretary Fudge and Chris Koski, Kenaitze Health Systems Director.

K'beq' sites, as well as how to register historical sites with the State Historic Preservation Office, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act on information regarding historical gravesites. The committee has also been working closely with the Environmental Protection Committee on the protection of Tribal lands and creating a Kenaitze cemetery.

#### Nił Qenach'delghesh Board of Directors

Wayne D. Wilson Jr, Chair Ivan Encelewski, Vice Chair Maria Goins, Secretary/Treasurer Sagen Juliussen Ronette Stanton Greg Encelewski Nił Qenach'delghesh, an intertribal consortium, was established in 2021 by the Kenaitze Indian Tribe and the Ninilchik Village Tribe. Both Tribes have been licensed by the FCC to provide broadband deployment and delivery for the benefit of the Tribes and their Members within the Kenaitze and Ninilchik service areas.

# BOARDS, COMMITTEES, & COMMISSIONS CONTINUED

The Tribe has received a \$7 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce National Telecommunications & Information Administration (NTIA), under the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, for project infrastructure, including construction of communications towers and placement of equipment on existing towers.

#### **Research Review Board**

Bernadine Atchison, Chair Virginia Wolf, Elder Elizabeth Atchison, Cultural Representative Norma Johnson, Archaeologist Robert Mitchell, D.O., Medical Director

Over the past year we updated our Research Review Ordinance. The main focus was to clarify the roles of the Board Members, add term limits and clean up the language and purpose. We meet once a month or as needed.

Over the past year we did the following:

• Continued our partnership with the University of Illinois on our salmon DNA project. The final part of this project is to have a SING (Summer internship for INdigenous people Genomics). We expect the SING to be in 2024 or 2025.

• Worked on having our ancestral remains returned to us so we can respectfully bury them. This is an ongoing goal.

• Provided guidance on preserving Kalifornsky Village.

• Worked with Tribal Programs in regard to cultural sites in Cooper Landing where the Sterling Highway is under construction at Milepost 45-60. Expect more reports on this as our Cultural Observers finalize their end of year report. The road project is expected to be completed by the end of 2027.

• We also review any research projects brought to the Tribe and make recommendations to the Tribal Council. To learn more please visit the Ordinance section on the Kenaitze website.

The Tribe's Cultural Resources Program, in collaboration with the Tribal Archaeologist and Sterling Highway Signatories, assisted with revisions of the Sterling Highway Programmatic Agreement, which was amended and signed in July.

The Lead Cultural Coordinator and the Cultural Observers have been working with the data recovery crew on the Sterling Highway Milepost 45-60 Project at sites SEW-1758, KEN-92 and KEN-215. These sites have been rich with cultural artifacts, grinding stones, faunal bone, agates, and stone tools. They recently came across three copper artifacts at KEN-92 and the Cultural Observers have been working diligently with each HDR crew helping to supplement cultural knowledge.

Cultural Resources and the Dena'ina Language Institute have assisted with the development of interpretive signage for the new Russian River panels.

#### **TDHE Housing Board**

Kaarlo Wik, Chair Maria Sweppy, Vice Chair Ronette Stanton, Secretary/Treasurer Gabe Juliussen Jr., Council Liasion Mary Ann Mills Eric Morrison, Community Member Jennifer Showalter Yeoman, Community Member

The Board of the Kenaitze/ Salamatof Tribally Designated Housing Entity provides leadership and strategic planning and creates policies to fulfill our mission to assist our un'ina in achieving an elevated standard of living through home improvement, home ownership, and rental opportunities, while breaking down housing barriers experienced by Alaska Natives/ Native Americans and empowering Native families to achieve financial stability.

#### **TERO Commission**

Lisa Huffman, Chair Bernadine Atchison Wayne D. Wilson Jr. Mary Ann Mills John Juliussen

The Kenaitze Indian Tribe Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance 2017-01 was adopted by the Tribal Council on Jan. 24, 2017. This ordinance established the Tribal Employment Rights Office and TERO Commission. The ordinance was amended and restated on Oct. 26, 2017 and again on Aug. 2, 2019.

The TERO Commission is composed of five Tribal Members with five-year staggered terms. The Commission follows the goals established by Tribal Council and has successfully established a Tribal Applicant Pool consisting of Tribal Members, Tribal Member spouses, and other Alaska



Native and American Indian people seeking employment opportunities. From the TERO Pool, qualified applicants are identified for employment opportunities within the Tribe as well as with other companies and businesses for which TERO applicants are interested in pursuing a career.

Kenaitze provides hiring preference to eligible and qualified Kenaitze Tribal Members, Tribal Member spouses, and Alaska Native and American Indian applicants pursuant to the TERO Ordinance and P.L. 93-638 Indian Self-Determination Act. In addition to employment preference, Kenaitze provides preference to TERO employees for promotion, training, or retaining to the maximum extent permitted by Tribal law.

The TERO Commission reviews job descriptions to ensure barriers are removed and opportunities are made available to eligible and qualified TERO applicants. The TERO Commission also reviews variances to hiring preference to ensure TERO preference is applied when filling vacant positions or promoting individuals within the Tribe. Variance requests receive final approval from the Tribal Council.

The Tribal Employment Rights Office has been instrumental in connecting TERO applicants with jobs at Kenaitze Indian Tribe and with businesses in our communities. Additionally, the Tribal Employment Rights Office has assisted TERO applicants with education and training so that more opportunities become available to our Tribal Members in line with our vision "to assure Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina thrive forever."

The Tribal Council is currently reviewing the TERO Ordinance to bring the Ordinance into alignment with Tribal Council's vision and goals for a Tribal Employment Rights Office.

**Title IV-E Committee** 

Mary Ann Mills, Chair Samantha Singleton Mandee Cogley Liisia Blizzard Brenda Smith Bernadine Atchison Bernice Crandall

The Title IV-E Program is a federal program that lets the Tribe administer its Foster Care Program through its Family and Social Service Program and Tribal Court. This gives an opportunity for Tribal Members and Alaska Natives in our service area to choose to have their cases addressed and managed through our programs rather than going through the state's Office of Children Services.

The Kenaitze Title IV-E Program is cautiously being implemented as the federal reimbursements have been a slow process.

The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System reports are still in progress. AF-CARS data provides information on the children in the Tribe's care. This report is submitted twice a year.

The Child Welfare Review Board training is being created. Four of the seven members have been appointed. Tribal Members who are interested in serving on this important Board or wish to become foster parents can contact Maria Guerra at mguerra@kenaitze. org, or Kimberly Kirchner at kkirchner@kenaitze.org, or you may contact Na'ini Family and Social Services at 907-335-7600.

#### Tribal Council Charter Workgroup

Ronette Stanton, Chair Wayne D. Wilson Jr. Brenda Smith Bernadine Atchison Gabe Juliussen Jr. Mary Ann Mills Liisia Blizzard

The Tribal Council meets periodically to review and make revisions as needed to the Boards, Commission and Committee Charters.

#### Tribal Council Orientation Workgroup

Ronette Stanton Wayne D. Wilson Jr. Brenda Smith Bernadine Atchison Gabe Juliussen Jr. Mary Ann Mills Liisia Blizzard

The Tribal Council is creating an orientation manual for new Tribal Council, Board, Commission and Committee Members, that would include, but is not limited to, the Traditional Values Wheel, Tribal Constitution, Ordinances and Policies.

**COVID-19 AD HOC Committee** 

Wayne D. Wilson Jr. Gabe Juliussen Brenda Blankenship



# Health Systems



Tawna Duncan, Wellness Director, presents information on the Tribe's diabetes program during the National Indian Health Board's annual meeting held in Anchorage in May.

We value an approach to service that places our un'ina, "those who come to us," at the center. Our Dene' Philosophy of Care takes a whole-person approach toward wellness, addressing physical, spiritual, emotional and social health as contributing factors to overall well-being.

The Dena'ina Wellness Center, along with Chuq'eya Qenq'a, is an integrated health care facility offering a holistic approach to care. Un'ina have access to Primary Care, Dental, Behavioral Health, Chemical Dependency, Wellness, Physical and Occupational Therapy, Optometry, Pharmacy Support and Laboratory Services, all on one campus. The Dena'ina Wellness Center also features a gym and class-room space.

The Dena'ina Wellness Center is now serving more than 8,000 un'ina.

In January, the Dental department performed its first dental implants. This new service allows un'ina to undergo the procedure close to home, rather than having to make multiple trips to facilities in Anchorage or beyond.

Our Behavioral Health Chemical Dependency and Recovery Supports Team attended the White Bison culturally based sobriety training. Behavioral Health also began offering walk-in substance abuse assessments. In February, the Laboratory and Radiology team at the Dena'ina Wellness Center received its Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments recertification. CLIA certification ensures that labs meet standards for accuracy, precision and reliability in their testing. Reliable, accurate testing is essential to providing quality care. It allows care providers and un'ina to receive a correct diagnosis and make decisions about their treatment.

Lab staff currently can perform 73 different tests. They perform approximately 2,200 tests each month – a number that continues to grow.

In the Optometry department, eyewear frame options avail-



Dr. Matt Richards completes a dental implant for Dan Gordon with assistance from Krystina Watson and Sabrina Gucker in the Dental clinic at the Dena'ina Wellness Center. It is no longer necessary for the Tribe's un'ina - those who come to us - to make multiple trips to Anchorage for the procedure.

able to un'ina have been updated and expanded.

There are now two Ch'k'denełyah yuyeh greenhouses in operation at Shanteh t'uh, the Tribe's Ames Road property. The outdoor garden has also been expanded, with

Individual Un'ina Served by Primary Care Providers



additional space for produce as well as traditional plants.

Produce grown at Shanteh t'uh is provided to Tyotkas for use in Elders' meals, as well as to the Na'ini Food Cache for distribution to those in need. A USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture grant will help the Tribe do more to address food insecurity.

The Wellness gym has expanded hours and is now open from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., with a selection of group fitness classes, including yoga classes four days per week.

Arts and crafts workshops and traditional activities offered by Wellness staff continue to be popular.

The popular monthly Arts and Crafts sale has also returned to the Dena'ina Wellness Center. The event showcases the work of Alaska Native artists.

More than

**8,000** un'ina have made at least **2 visits** to the Dena'ina Wellness Center in the last **3 vears** 



# Education



Joel Isaak presents a gift to Helen (Dick) MacLean during a celebration recognizing her receipt of an Honorary Doctor of Education degree from the University of Alaska Fairbanks during a celebration in April. MacLean has made countless contributions to the preservation of Dena'ina language and culture, including her work with the Tribe's Dena'ina Language Institute.

The Tribe's Education department kicked off 2023 by hosting the Kahtnuht'ana Hey Chi'ula Native Youth Olympics Invitational, with more than 100 athletes from across Southcentral Alaska converging on Kenai to participate. The Native Youth Olympics competition returned after a hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the winter, the Tribe worked with the OSIYO Group, an American Indian-owned professsional services firm, to conduct an assessment of the Tribe's Education programs and available resources. An education consultant has been hired to help the Tribe evaluate different approaches to establishing a Tribal school. Last fall, the Tribe moved into the Kahtnuht'ana Duhdeldiht Campus, bringing the Education department services together under one roof. The Tribe's Early Learning programs serve pregnant mothers and learners from birth until they go to kindergarten.

The Yaghanen Youth Language and Culture programs provide after-school and summer cultural activities for students from kindergarten through high school. Yaghanen participants receive academic support, develop life skills, and take part in the Del Dumi drum group, Jabila'ina dance group, and Ggugguyni Native Youth Olympics team. Summer activities include Yaghanen Culture Camp and Susten Archaeology Camp.

The Community Education program provides student support services, scholarships for students seeking two- or four-year degrees or other post-secondary education and training, Daggeyi youth internships, and career training and placement assistance.

This year, the Dena'ina Language Institute has provided regular Dena'ina language lessons for staff in the Education department, including Yaghanen Youth Language and Culture and Early Learning programs.

Several community language workshops were held throughout the year, with options for online and in-person participation.

The Dena'ina Language Occupational Endorsement Certificate program through Kenai Peninsula College had its first graduate last spring, a Kenaitze Indian Tribe employee.

The baby board books, "Dena'ina Qenaga Sounds" and "Ch'vala Gguya Sukdu'a (The Little Spruce Tree Story)," were published and distributed to the Kahtnuht'ana Duhdeldiht Campus.

A moosehide was processed in the cultural classroom at the Kahtnuht'ana Duhdeldiht Campus. This was a soft start to using the classroom as it was outfitted with tools and equipment.



Left: Participants in a Career Pop-Up Camp learn about jobs in the aviation industry from Kenai Aviation's Mike Sellers, at left. Middle Right: Sonja Ivanoff works on a touch-screen computer monitor as other participants in the Yaghanen Language and Cultural Program warm up for Native Youth Olympics. Bottom Right: Young people in a Yaghanen Summer Language and Culture Camp react to handling ice-cold berries while learning to make nivagi (Indian ice cream).



## \$255,000 Amount distributed in scholarships in 2023









Social Services Technician Krista Holloway loads a bag with food in Na'ini Family and Social Services' Food Cache. The department distributed food to 80 to 110 households each month this year. Distributions feed a household for three to four days.

Last summer, the Tribe's Title IV-E plan was approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families.

Na'ini Family Services staff continue to implement the plan. Title IV-E is a federal law that allows the Tribe to provide assistance to families so that Tribal children in need of foster care are able to stay with relatives or Tribal Members.

Na'ini staff facilitated several cohorts of Positive Indian Parenting throughout the year. The eight-week class draws on Indigenous cultural traditions from across the United States. Class participants explore traditional child-rearing techniques and learn how to apply them to modern parenting.

Na'ini Social Services programs include general and emergency assistance; low-income home energy assistance; community services block grants to remove barriers to self-sufficiency; burial assistance; and low-income home water assistance. Programs are generally open to Tribal Members and Alaska Native and American Indian people in the Tribe's service area.

Na'ini Social Services also maintains the Food Cache, with food items available on a monthly basis to those in need. The Food Cache is open to all members of the community.

In July, the Tribe hosted Carl Dawson, a nationally recognized expert in the field of substance use disorders, for a three-day seminar on substance related addictive disorders. The seminar was open to employees, our community partners, and the public.



The goal of the Kenaitze/ Salamatof Tribally Designated Housing Entity is to alleviate the burden of not having suitable housing for Alaska Native and Native American families.

The Housing program typically assists more than 100 households with home repairs or financial assistance each month.

The TDHE assists un'ina through home improvement, home ownership and rental opportunities. It also seeks to break down cultural housing barriers experienced by Alaska Native and Native American people, and empower Native families to achieve financial self-sustainability.

The Housing program serves Kenaitze and Salamatof Tribal Member households, and Alaska Native and American Indian households in the TDHE's service area, which includes Kenai, Soldotna, Sterling, Nikiski, Salamatof, Ridgeway, Kalifornsky, Kasilof, Funny River and Cooper Landing. Income qualifications apply.

The Tribe and TDHE have been awarded a \$7.5 million Indian Housing Block Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for an Elders housing project. The Tribe and TDHE also were awarded a \$5 million grant for the project in 2022.

Over the past year, the TDHE application process has been streamlined, so that one application is good for most programs. The Kenaitze/Salamatof Tribally Designated Housing Entity has a number of programs available to help people facing homelessness, in need of home repairs, or in need of assistance with rent, mortgage and utility payments.

**Homeless Placement and Prevention:** Provides individuals and families at risk of or experiencing homelessness with assistance for expenses to prevent eviction or foreclosure, or to place a household into affordable housing.

**Homeless Supportive Services:** Provides personal hygiene kits, outdoor shelter and equipment, and cold-weather clothing and gear for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

**Student Housing:** For full-time students pursuing a degree or certificate and attending an accredited college, university or trade school.

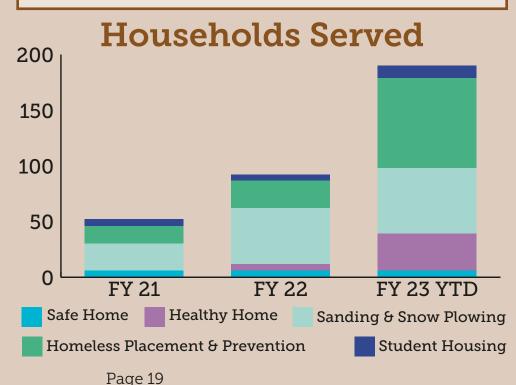
**Sanding and Snow Plowing:** For income-eligible Elders and disabled individuals.

**Healthy Homes:** Assists homeowners in need of environmental health and safety repairs.

**Urgent Home Repair:** Provides assistance to homeowners with qualifying urgent home repairs.

**Fire Safety:** Assists Elders and disabled households with inspection and replacement of carbon monoxide detectors, smoke detectors, and residential fire extinguishers.

**SafeHome:** Assists homeowners with rehabilitation and repairs for issues that threaten the health and safety of the family or property.



# Tribal Member Services



Classic cars line up at the Kahtnuht'ana Duhdeldiht Campus for a fundraiser in April.



*Tribal Member Services employees Ashley Segura and Jessica Crump glam for a photo while working at the Sock Hop and Car Show fundraiser.* 

Our Tribal Member Services team has been busy throughout the year.

With a return to in-person gatherings, Tribal Member Services has been planning and coordinating many events for Tribal Members, including Quarterly Tribal Membership Meetings and the Annual General Membership Meeting.

The Tribal Member Services team has also been active in

organizing other social and cultural events. Tribal Members gathered to celebrate the holidays with a Christmas party, as well as the annual Easter celebration. Tribal Members and the community also gathered for a dinner-theater performance of "The Music Man" in the fall, and a Sock Hop and Car Show in the spring. Proceeds from these two events raised almost \$21,000 for the Elders Emergency Fund. In addition to Tribal Member enrollment, Tribal Member Services staff administer several important benefits and services for Tribal Members. Those include:

- Tribal Member Enrichment Program;
- Burial assistance; and
- Funeral assistance.

Snow plowing and sanding, and urgent minor home repair and maintenance services are available to Tribal Elders and disabled Tribal Members.

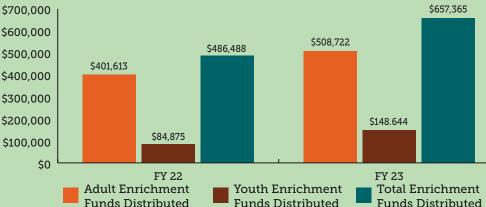
Tribal Member Services staff assist Tribal Members with the educational fishery.

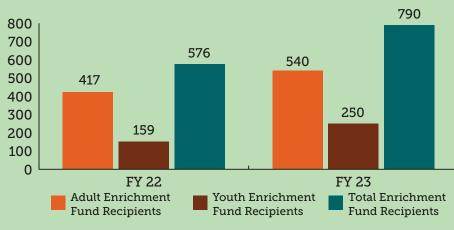
New this year, Tribal Member Services has established a Tribal Member store on the Tribe's website, with T-shirts, sweatshirts, jackets, and other items featuring the Tribe's seal and logo available for purchase by Tribal Members.

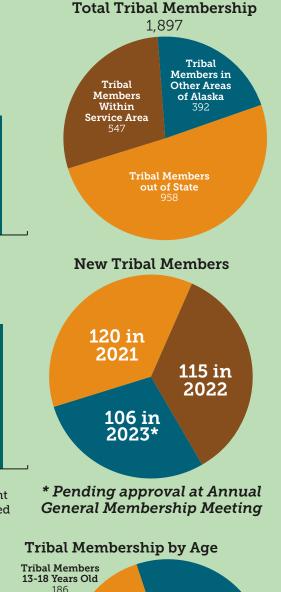
# Tribal Member Benefit Funds Distributed

FY23 figures are current through Sept. 1, 2023. Learn more about Tribal Member benefits funds at https://www.kenaitze.org/tribal-member-benefits/.









Tribal

Members

19-54

Members 55 & Older

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Tribal Members 6-12

Years Old

196

Tribal Members 0-5

Years Old

88

# TYOTKAS ELDER CENTER

It's been an active year for our Elders at Tyotkas Elder Center. Throughout the past year, Elders have had opportunities to participate in activities both at Tyotkas and through trips to locations around the Kenai Peninsula.

Activities at Tyotkas include arts and crafts, games, singalongs, bingo, and the return of the Native foods potluck. Excursion destinations include area beaches, the Tribe's Waterfront, the Ch'k'denełyah yuyeh greenhouses, whale watching in Seward, the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center in Portage, Homer, and Seldovia.

Special activities this year have included "Planting a Potluck," with our Elders working with youth from the Tribe's Yaghanen Youth Language and Culture program and Wellness department staff to plant and harvest food together.

Tyotkas continues to serve lunch Monday through Friday, and has added a light breakfast service on Tuesdays and Thursdays. For those unable to make it in to Tyotkas for meals, Elder staff have continued the home delivery of meals.

Elders are supported by our team of Elder Advocates. Elders may also participate in a "Healing the Generations" talking circle, facilitated by the Wellness department's Traditional Healer, and get their blood pressure checked each week by Wellness staff.



Elders gather for a "net day" in the new Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina Community Hall and Harvest Pavilion.





A Kenaitze transport van stops for a passenger going to the Dena'ina Wellness Center.

The Tribe continues to work toward establishing a fixedroute bus service for the central Kenai Peninsula.

Kahtnu Area Transit will serve Tribal Members, Alaska Native and American Indian people, and the general public in the Kenai-Soldotna area. Plans call for an initial bus route from Nikiski to Sterling, passing through Kenai and Soldotna along the way.

The Tribe is working with a consultant to finalize plans for the route and location of bus stops. Kahtnu Area Transit is intended to fill gaps in the area's transportation network and complement existing transportation services.

The Tribe's Transportation program continues to grow, providing rides for those who receive services from the Tribe. Transportation provides rides for those who receive care and services at the Dena'ina Wellness Center and participate in activities at Tyotkas Elder Center. Un'ina may also receive rides for life activities, such as trips to the post office, bank, or grocery store.

Transportation also assists with rides for students participating in Yaghanen Youth Language and Culture programs. The Tribe currently has 65 vehicles in its Transportation fleet, including vehicles used to transport un'ina, as well as vehicles used by Tribal departments. The fleet includes 10 SUVs, 19 minivans, 12 full-size vans, 13 trucks, six shuttle buses, and five buses.



\* As of Sept. 1, 2023





Rough weather made fishing challenging at times, with lots of so called stick fish - logs, brush and debris, tangling the nets.

Tribal Members had even more to celebrate when we gathered for the Opening of the Net this year. Before we worked together to set the net for the first tide of the season, we cut the ribbon on the new Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina Community Hall and Harvest Pavilion at the Tribe's Waterfront.

The pavilion, completed this spring, is 3,453 square feet, with room to gather for 299 people. Features include a central raised hearth, meant to evoke a traditional Dena'ina dwelling. The pavilion incorporates natural looking materials and colors, such as stone accents on the exterior and cedar throughout the interior.

Tribal Council Chair Ronette Stanton noted the importance of the fishery, which the Tribe has operated since 1989.

"The net preserves our culture and traditions, and brings us together with our children and our Elders, creating a sense of unity, and represents resiliency of our people," Stanton said.

The Tribe received a \$300,000 grant from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust that came with a requirement that the Tribe raise an additional \$150,000 from other donors. Contributors include: Cook Inlet Tribal Council: Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority; Rasmuson Foundation; Peninsula Ear, Nose and Throat Clinic, Inc.; Marathon Petroleum Corporation; Salamatof Tribal Council; Kenai Natives Association; Cook Inlet Region, Inc.; Chugach Electric; Chugach Electric Cooper Lake; and Southcentral Foundation.

Fishing has been steady this summer, though inclement weather early in the season made fishing some tides a challenge. Fishery access continues to be in high demand, with Tribal families signing up to fish every tide from the June 1 opening through late August.

The Tribe's 32-foot fishing boat, named the Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina, saw use fishing for halibut this season as well.

### **Educational Fishery Productivity**

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023*
Kings	1	4	0	0	0
Reds	8,572	7,040	10,758	8,199	8,044
Pinks	168	118	0	263	0
Silvers	24	506	568	648	124
Totals	8,765	7,668	11,326	9,110	8,168

\*As of Sept. 1, 2023

Fishery workers Julianne Wilson, right, and her brother Samiel Wilson pick fish from the Tribal net on a stormy August morning.

1 10 ... 0



The Kenaitze Indian Tribe's TERO office continues to help people find meaningful employment and improve their lives.

TERO stands for the Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance. The ordinance provides a way for the Tribe to exercise its sovereignty by giving preference to Tribal Members, spouses of Tribal Members, and Alaska Native and American Indian people in employment, contracting and other business activities.

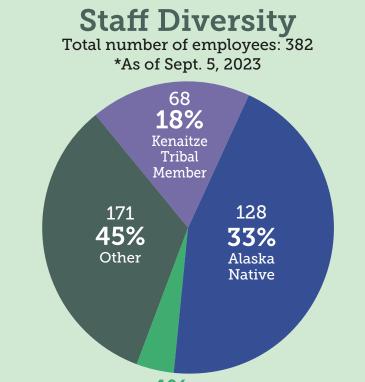
The Tribe is currently working with a consultant to evaluate the ordinance and ensure it is meeting the needs of the Tribe.

One of the goals for the TERO department has been to establish a pool of candidates. As of September, there were 430 candidates in the pool, including 120 Tribal Members.

From the pool, candidates who are qualified for job openings with the Tribe can be identified. The TERO office also helps candidates find training and education opportunities, so that they are qualified for even more jobs.

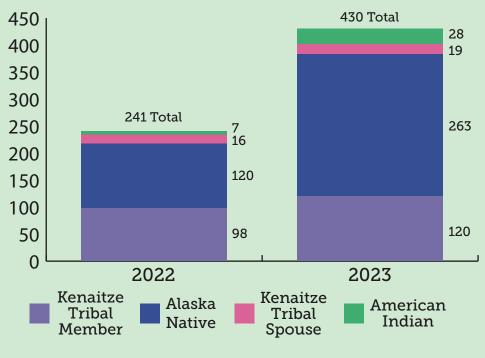
Over the past year, participation in the TERO job pool has grown from 241 candidates to 430 candidates. Of those in the TERO job pool, 53 percent are currently employed, while 47 percent are unemployed.

The TERO office serves Kenaitze Tribal Members, spouses of Tribal Members, and Alaska Native and American Indian people. Contact the TERO office by calling 907-335-7200, or visit www.kenaitze.org/tribal-member-services/tribal-employ-ment-rights-ordinance/.



15 4% American Indian

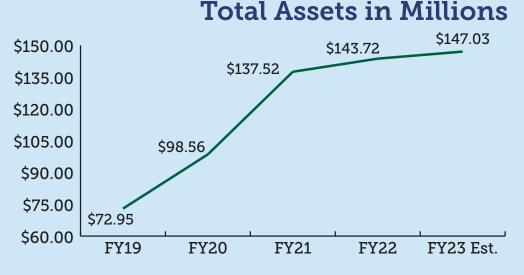
## **TERO Job Pool Participation**



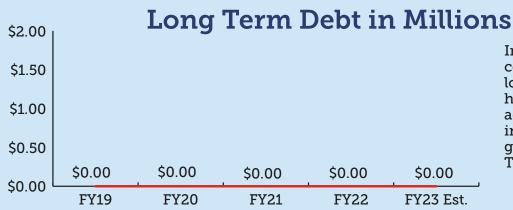
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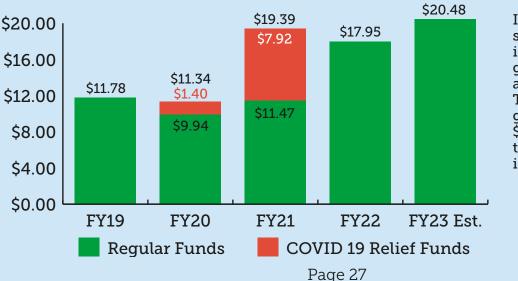
All figures presented in this report are derived from the Kenaitze Indian Tribe's audited financial statements. FY23 numbers are estimated as of Sep. 1, 2023.



The Tribe's assets increased by \$6 million in FY22 and \$3 million in FY23, due in large part to federal COVID and American Rescue Plan Act grants. A significant portion of the additional funding was used for capital projects and building improvements.



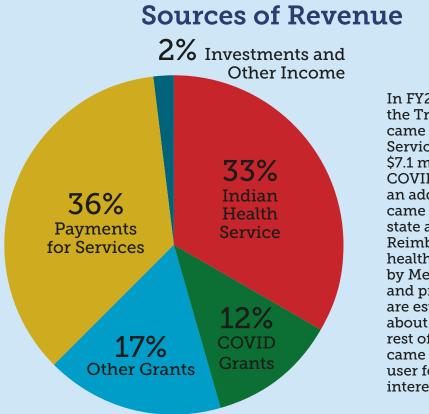
In FY23, the Tribe continued to hold no long-term debt and has been able to make additional investments in capital assets using grants and unrestricted Tribal funds.



### Health Systems Billing in Millions

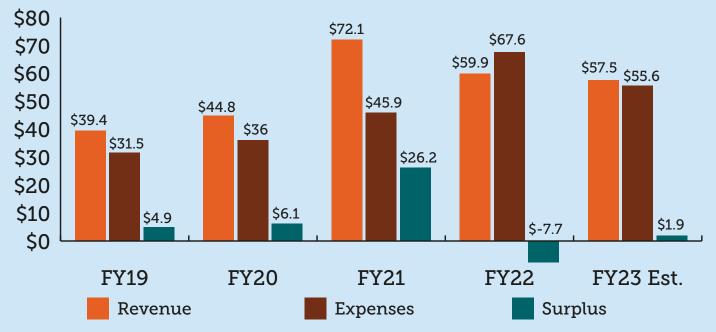
In FY23, the Tribe stayed focused on increasing revenues generated by its health and wellness programs. The Tribe expects to generate approximately \$20.5 million from third-party health insurance payers.

# Financials Continued



In FY23, \$19.3 million of the Tribe's total revenue came from Indian Health Service funding. About \$7.1 million came from COVID-related funds and an additional \$9.6 million came from other federal, state and private grants. Reimbursements for health services provided by Medicaid, Medicare, and private insurance are estimated to generate about \$20.5 million. The rest of the Tribe's revenue came from program user fees, donations, and interest income.

### **Financial Performance from Operations in Millions**

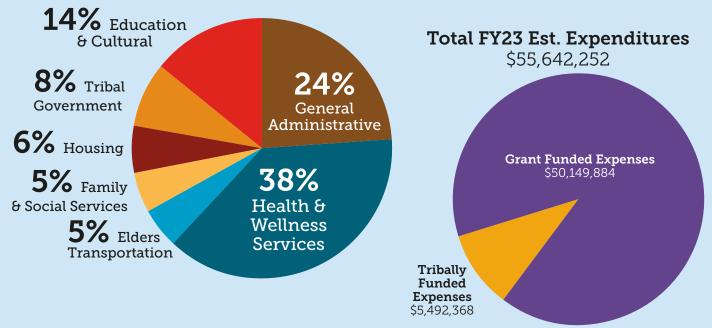


In FY23, the Tribe earned \$57.5 million in revenues and expended \$55.6 million on operating expenses and capital outlays. The \$1.9 million surplus of revenues over expenses will be used to support the Tribe's ongoing capital projects and future investments.



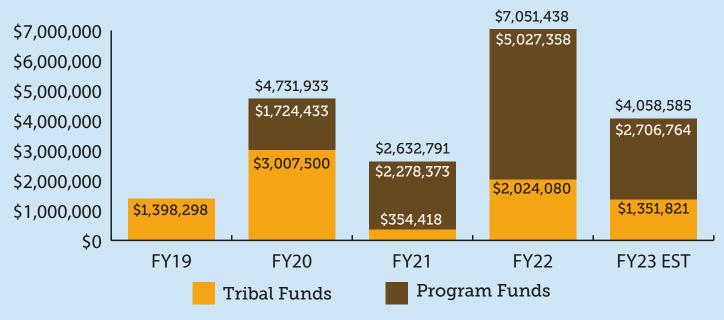
## **Operating Expenses by Program**

In FY23, the Tribe is estimated to spend \$47.1 million on operations. Of the total, \$18 million will be spent on Health and Wellness services, \$6.8 million on Education and Cultural programs, \$2.2 million on Family and Social Services, \$2.6 million on Housing services, \$3.9 million on Tribal Government services, \$2.1 million on Elders and Transportation, and \$11.5 million on General and Administrative services.



## **Financial Assistance Payments**

For FY23, the Tribe will spend about \$4 million on direct payments to those we serve to assist with housing, education, training, transportation and emergency needs. About 1/3 of total assistance payments were made using Tribal funds.



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# Bequsilna, Those who are gone

**Patricia Ellen "Patty" Mann** July 15, 1943 – September 8, 2022

Nick Leon Sacaloff September 5, 1984 – September 18, 2022

James Oliver Segura I January 24, 1940 – October 1, 2022

William G. Green September 21, 1952 – October 22, 2022

**Ronald Isam Hilleary** June 30, 1957 – November 11, 2022

**Cheryl Rene' Letender** October 24, 1962 – December 9, 2022

Logan Thomas Showalter February 26, 1992 – December 11, 2022

Julia Lorraine Wilson July 12, 1950 – December 27, 2022

Mae Demidoff June 8, 1932 – February 3, 2023

William Wayne "Uncle Bill" Segura Sr. January 17, 1945 – February 6, 2023

**Carl Patrick Wells** September 20, 1978 – April 6, 2023

**Raymond Benjamin Tepp** December 1, 1983 – April 22, 2023

John Carl Astad November 17, 1955 – April 18, 2023

Holli Anne Blohm-Kozlowski May 6, 1989 – June 15, 2023

James John Coveyou October 25, 1953 – August 30, 2023



## Addresses and Phone Numbers



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



Na'ini Family and Social Services 1001 Mission Ave., Kenai 907-335-7600





Dena'ina Wellness Center 508 Upland St., Kenai 907-335-7500



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



Kahtnuht'ana Duhdeldiht Campus 12271 Kenai Spur Highway, Kenai 907-335-7667



**Qiz'unch' Tribal Court** 508 Upland St., Kenai 907-335-7219



Kenaitze/Salamatof Tribally Designated Housing 1001 Mission Ave., Kenai 907-335-7228

#### 150 N. Willow St.

Kenai, AK 99611

#### www.kenaitze.org

907-335-7200



**Chuq'eya Qenq'a Birch Tree House – Behavioral Health** 510 Upland St., Kenai 907-335-7300

# KAHTNUHT'ANA DENA'INA

## **THRIVE FOREVER**

