

# The Counting Cord



**'Have fun and try your best'**

*Athletes gather for  
Kahtnuht'ana Hey  
Chi'ula NYO Invitational*

**'It's there forever'**

*Dental staff offer implants  
at Dena'ina Wellness Center*

**Finding healing**

*Talking circle provides  
space to address trauma*

**Winter 2023**

**FREE!**

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**On the front cover:**  
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## **Marking the days with a counting cord**

A counting cord, niłnuqeyishi, "the thing that is knotted," is a traditional Dena'ina string calendar. Knots or beads or feathers are tied into the cord to mark the days or record special events.

The Counting Cord publication is the newsletter of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe. It is published quarterly to mark the days and record the special events of Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina, "the Kenai River People."







# *The right way, the truth*



The traditional value of Qiz'unch' helps us have difficult conversations in a good way. We embrace forgiveness, openness, honesty, and trust so that we may find healing for ourselves and for future generations. Find a related story on an Elders healing circle on Page 20.



# Yaghalí du?

Chiqinik, thank you, to all who participated in the recent Quarterly Tribal Membership Meeting. While I wasn't able to attend, I appreciate the constructive questions, comments and discussion that took place during the meeting.

Tribal Council Members provided updates on a range of topics, that include, but are not limited to, Strategic Planning, the Tribe's Constitution, Title IV-E, and TERO. Our 10-year strategic plan is based on four pillars: Culturally Strong, Sovereignty, Self Sufficient, and Health and Well-Being. The Tribe is building on these pillars by focusing on tangible goals to achieve in the next one to two years.

The Constitution Review Committee has been looking at our governing document, and a number of proposals are undergoing a legal review. Once that's complete, information will be shared with Tribal Members, and the election process to approve or reject any amendments will be announced.

A topic that drew a number of comments and questions was the Tribe's plans for Elder housing on the 160-acre parcel recently acquired near the end of Redoubt Avenue in Kenai. Plans are still being developed, but our initial plan calls for breaking ground on 18 units in 2024. Additionally, the Tribe has applied for a separate grant that would allow us to build 14 more units on this same parcel.

The Tribe's Title IV-E plan to support families and children in need of foster care also was discussed, with a call to action for Tribal Members to consider becoming foster families as it is critical for children to be surrounded by their culture, traditions, people they know, and their community when they cannot remain in their home with their parents. Participation in Title IV-E allows the Tribe, among other things, to provide financial support for families and children in need of foster care who meet certain eligibility requirements. For more information, you can call Na'ini Family and Social Services at 907-335-7600.

The Council also shared the Tribe's plan for a consultant to review our Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance to make sure it fits the needs of the Tribe. We're excited to have a very experienced consultant take a deep look at our TERO program and offer insight on what we're doing well, and areas in which we could improve.

The question and comment period provided opportunities for Council Members and our Executive Director to expand on the topics covered as well as highlight additional questions or provide program updates, such as the work the Dena'ina Language Institute is doing to preserve the language and train staff to teach it.

Our next Quarterly Meeting will be on Saturday, April 29. I look forward to another productive discussion as we work toward our vision, "To assure Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina thrive forever."

Thank you,  
Ronette Stanton  
Tribal Council Chair



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# Tribal Council, Kenai City Council Discuss Collaboration



*Kenaitze's Tribal Council and the Kenai City Council meet Jan. 4 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.*

## Tribe purchases buildings to expand office space

The Tribe recently purchased buildings at 120 and 130 North Willow Street in Kenai, with an eye toward providing office space for several departments.

The two buildings previously housed the Tribe's Early Childhood Center and Nakenu Family House. The structures sit on a 0.86-acre lot next door to the Tribe's Administration building and offer a combined total of 7,680 square feet of space, with an additional 4,000 square feet of storage space.

The Tribe's Construction department has drawn up renovation plans to provide 23 offices at 130 North Willow. The building will house staff who are currently working in office space



*The Tribe has purchased the buildings that formerly housed the Early Learning Center and the Nakenu Family House. The two buildings are adjacent to the Administration building on Willow Street.*

in other locations being leased by the Tribe. The purchase will provide significant savings on lease payments.

Early Childhood Center programs and services moved to the Kahtnuht'ana Duhdeldiht Campus last fall.



# Better ways to learn

## Alaska explores tribal education compacting



*Kenaitze Tribal Member Joel Isaak leads an Alaska Native Education forum during the Alaska Federation of Natives Convention in October.*

**'This bill allows tribes to lead the work in drafting legislation for the Legislature to consider. It is a way of centering tribal voices to create what the solution needs to be.'**

*Joel Isaak, Kenaitze Tribal Member*

Last year, the Alaska Legislature passed and Gov. Mike Dunleavy signed a measure to provide Alaska tribes with the opportunity to compact with the state on education.

During the Alaska Federation of Natives Convention in October, Joel Isaak, a Kenaitze Tribal Member and Tribal Affairs Director for the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, led a panel discussion on the potential benefits of the measure, Senate Bill 34.

"This bill allows tribes to lead the work in drafting legislation for the Legislature to consider," Isaak said. "... It is a way of centering tribal

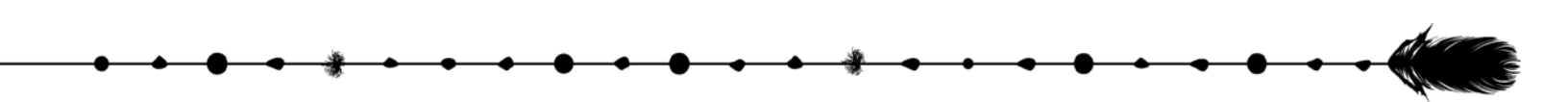
voices to create what the solution needs to be."

The panel included Sandra Kowalski, a longtime educator and member of the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development; Alaska State Sen. Gary Stevens, one of the bill's sponsors; and Heidi Teshner, Department of Education and Early Development Acting Commissioner.

The legislation gives tribes the opportunity to submit proposals for demonstration state-tribal compact schools.

"We're looking for a model that will go back to the Legis-





lature, and hopefully we'll be able to complete that legislation in the next few years," Stevens said. "State-tribal compacting is an opportunity for bringing in more Native history, Native culture, Native languages – and not just for Native students. All students are going to benefit from having this in their school."

Kowalski said that tribal compacting for education gets to the core of who a school is for, and the future for which it is preparing students.

"It should be our people, and in our communities, it should be about our land and our culture," Kowalski said. "... Our dreams are much bigger than what the state schools can do for us. While they're good, I know that our people can create schools and programs that can really be top notch and out of this world."

Teshner said the Department of Education and Early Development acknowledges that the current system does not adequately serve Alaska Native students, and noted several actions the department is taking. Changes include updating certification requirements for teachers who work in language and culture, and adding Alaska Native languages to the world languages in department regulations.

Teshner said department leadership is undertaking professional development to learn to better partner with tribes, and added that the Alaska Reads Act, also passed last year, will provide systemic support for learning to read in Alaska Native languages.

Kowalski said that when the state board first discussed tribal compacting, there was a sense of urgency to do something quickly. But, she said, tribal compacting for education hasn't been done in Alaska, and it's more complex than simply setting up a charter school.

"The reality is, for tribal compacting and schools to be successful, we have to go slow to go far," Kowalski said.

Stevens noted that SB 34 is a first step, and that it will take hard work to get tribal compacting right.

"It's going to take a lot of blood, sweat and tears," Stevens said. "Any of you who decide to have a tribal school, it's going to be a lot of hard work. I want to make sure, if nothing else, that nobody fails. If we start a tribal school, we've got to make sure it's a success."

Tribes had until Dec. 30, 2022 to submit applications to be part of the pilot program. Five demonstration programs will be selected.

"We're really interested in making sure that tribes have a voice and strong involvement in the plans they put together," Kowalski said. "... When these demonstration projects are considered, we're really going to be looking at a diversity across Alaska about the types of projects, geographic locations, and the size, to best inform tribal compacting going forward. We want to capture all of the success our tribes can bring to education."

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*Sandra Kowalski,*

*Member of the Alaska State*

*Board of Education and*

*Early Development*



# From Brown Bear to Seawolf

## Huffman makes jump to NCAA hockey

The current hockey season has been an eventful one for Caleb Huffman.

Huffman, a Tribal Member, started the season playing for the Kenai River Brown Bears, a junior hockey team based in Soldotna. The Brown Bears have been right in the thick of things in the North American Hockey League's Midwest Division, and in October, Huffman was promoted to team captain for his leadership on and off the ice.

Through the team's first 29 games, Huffman had five goals and 12 assists from his defenseman position. He scored a dramatic overtime winner just before Thanksgiving to give his team a two-game sweep of the rival Anchorage Wolverines.

And in early December, Huffman received an offer to play Division I college hockey at the University of Alaska Anchorage.

For Huffman, getting to the Brown Bears has been winding road. Huffman was initially cut by the Brown Bears during the 2020-21 season, and instead played with the North Iowa Bulls of the North American Tier III Hockey League.

"It was a step down, but I played a ton of minutes every night. I think it helped me in the long run," Huffman said.

Huffman was called up and made his debut with the Brown Bears in March 2021, and played in 55 regular season games for Kenai River during the 2021-22 season.



*Kenaitze Tribal Member Caleb Huffman will study business and finance, and minor in Alaska Native business management at UAA.*

One of the benefits of being able to play for Kenai River, Huffman said, has been for him to better get to know his Tribe. Huffman was born in Fairbanks and grew up in

Anchorage. While he's participated in some Tribal activities, such as the educational fishery, he said he never realized the presence the Tribe has on the Kenai Peninsula.





*Huffman controls the puck during his last game with the Kenai River Brown Bears in December. Huffman now skates for the University of Alaska Anchorage.*

"I didn't know as much about Kenaitze as I do now from living in Kenai for a year and a half," Huffman said.

His first day in Kenai, he said he saw one of the Tribe's shuttle buses making its rounds. After that, he started noticing the Tribe's vehicles all over town. He said he had to ask his mother, Lisa, who is active in the Tribe's governance, about all the services the Tribe provides.

He also takes pride in wearing his Tribal Member jacket, and said it's been a conversation starter when he bumps into other people in the community wearing Kenaitze apparel.

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"It's like we're family and know each other already," Huffman said.

Huffman said his father, James, got him started with hockey. He was on skates "even before I knew what it was."

He said he loves the speed of the game.

"It's so much faster than any other sport, being able to fly up and down the ice," Huffman said.

Huffman said he also appreciates being able to play in front of the home fans at the Soldotna Regional Sports Complex, the Brown Bears' home ice.

At UAA, Huffman said he plans to study business and finance, and minor in Alaska Native business management.

"It's an interesting field, and not like other businesses. There's more to it," Huffman said.

Huffman said he is also interested in working for the Tribe, in part because he would like to continue to learn more about his culture.

Huffman is making the jump from junior to NCAA hockey mid-season. He played in his first game with the Seawolves on Dec. 30. Huffman has three shots and a pair of blocks through his first four games with the Seawolves.



# 'Have fun and try your best'

## Athletes gather for Kahtnuht'ana Hey Chi'ula NYO Invitational

Native Youth Olympics competition returned to Kenai with the Kahtnuht'ana Hey Chi'ula NYO Invitational as more than 100 athletes from across Southcentral Alaska came to participate in the event.

While the competition was intense, participants said NYO is as much about challenging yourself as it is about competing with others.

"It feels great to know you did better than you did the last time," said Sonya Ivanoff, a member of Kenaitze's Gguggunyi NYO team.

Ivanoff said her favorite event is the Alaskan High Kick.

"I like how it trains you to be athletic," Ivanoff said. "If you don't work out, you won't do good."

Ivanoff said that for her, the One-Hand Reach is the toughest event – she once injured her wrist attempting the event.

"It requires a whole bunch of strength," Ivanoff said.

Ivanoff said that one of her favorite parts of the competition is seeing her friends from other teams. Many other athletes agreed with her sentiment.

"I've been seeing some of these girls since eighth grade, when I started NYO, and some I've met over the years," said Leah Evans, a high school senior and a member of the Homer Halibuts team.

Evans said her favorite event is the Indian Stick Pull. She won sec-



*Duc Ngo coaches Ignacio Niezek in the Alaskan high kick event for the Ya Ne Da Ah team from Chickaloon.*

ond-place in the event at the state NYO games last year.

"It's fun to see everyone's strategies," Evans said.

Evans said the toughest event for her is the Two-Foot High Kick.

"For me, there's the fear of going back too far and hitting your head," Evans said. "But keeping your toes even while doing everything else at once, it takes a lot of core strength,

and you have to use your arms correctly. It's pretty technical."

Evans said she appreciated the return of large NYO competitions after a hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Other competitors, coaches and officials will share tips with each other, and she is grateful for the advice.

"It's great to see all the sportsmanship," Evans said.





*The Native Youth Olympics games promote sportsmanship. Participants support each other at all levels of competition.*

David Fairbanks of the Sterling Ch'anikna team said he also appreciates the camaraderie of the event.

"I like that it brings all the competitors together," Fairbanks said. "I always enjoy NYO because everyone is so nice, and willing to help everyone else."

Fairbanks said his favorite event is the One-Foot High Kick –

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when he's not sore from three days of competition. He said he likes having the opportunity to challenge himself.

"Just seeing how far you can go, seeing what your limits are, and testing your limits and your strengths," Fairbanks said.

Fairbanks also likes to catch up with his fellow competitors.

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"It's really nice to see a bunch of people that I'm good friends with and haven't seen in a while," Fairbanks said.

Dakota Butler of the Salamatof team said he's missed the NYO atmosphere.

"I like just being around other people," Butler said. "I've missed that over the past couple years."

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Butler said his favorite event is the Wrist Carry, which he has a knack for.

The key is "just strength in your arm," Butler said.

Butler's teammate Merlin Peterson said his favorite event is "all of them."

"I get to play games with other Alaska Native people, and make new friends," Peterson said.

Peterson said for him, the toughest event is the Seal Hop.

"I'm in the senior division, and we have to go on our knuckles," Peterson said. "I just want to beat my personal record."

Ignacio White of the Chickaloon team also said the Seal Hop was his most challenging event.

"I'm not so good at holding that position," White said while demonstrating the plank position that competitors have to stay in.

His favorite event is the One-Foot High Kick.

"I like hopping on one foot when I land, and I like kicking the ball," White said.

But White said the individual events aren't the best part of NYO.

"My favorite part is seeing my friends," White said.

Jayden Engel-Ahvan of the Kenaitze Ggugguyni team was participating in his first NYO games. He said his favorite event is the Two-Foot High Kick, "because you can put both feet together to land better," while the hardest event is the One-Foot High Kick, "because you have to land on one foot."

Sean Moonin, who is from Nan-walek and came to the competition with the Ninilchik team, said he likes all of the events.



*Above: Byron Nicholai, the Indigenous artist and musician behind I Sing, You Dance, performs at Kenaitze's Kahtnuht'ana Duhdeldiht Campus. The performance coincided with the Native Youth Olympics events.*

*Right: Kenaitze's Axel Coxwell strains in the Eskimo stick pull event during the Tribe's Native Youth Olympics Invitational in January.*

"They're all fun. It's the adrenaline rush you get," Moonin said.

Moonin said he's mostly focused on challenging himself during the competition, but that all the camaraderie at the event gives him a boost. He said he's been practicing NYO events for about two years, but the NYO

Invitational was just his second time competing.

His advice for others?

"Have fun and try your best," Moonin said.

To learn more about the Tribe's Yaghanen Youth Language and Culture Program, call 907-335-7667.



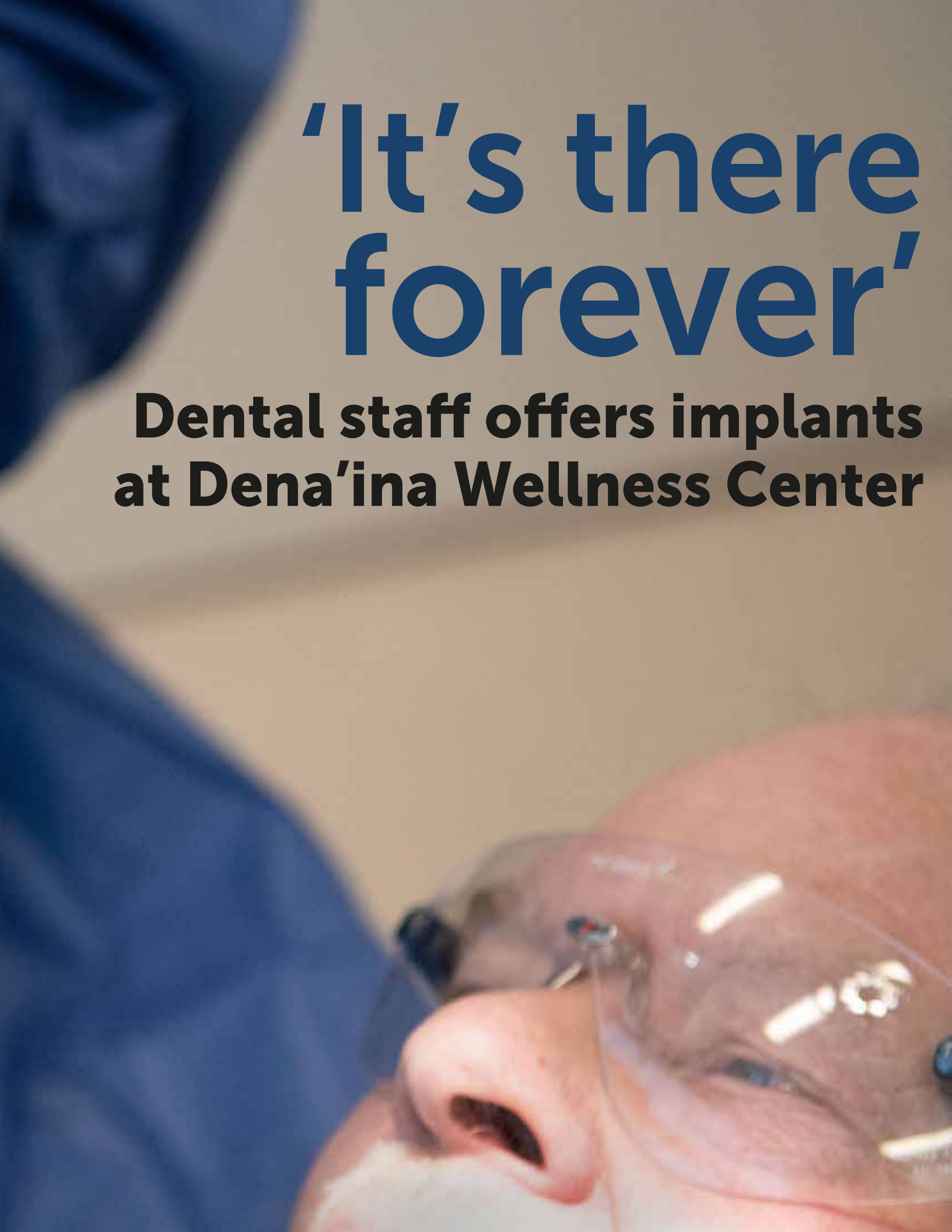






# 'It's there forever'

**Dental staff offers implants  
at Dena'ina Wellness Center**







# New service allows un'ina to stay close to home



*Left: Dr. Matthew 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*

*Above: Gordon talks with Dr. Richards following the procedure. "This is kind of cool. I've never had a ratchet in my mouth before," Gordon joked.*

*Previous Page: Dr. Richards shows Gordon the titanium screw before placing it in Gordon's lower jaw, visible in the X-ray at left.*

In January, Dan Gordon became one of the first people to receive a dental implant at the Dena'ina Wellness Center.

Gordon said the procedure went very well. He expected to have a sore jaw, but said that after the procedure, he had very little discomfort.

"The next day, I didn't even know I had it," Gordon said.

Gordon said he had been waiting to be able to get the implant at the Dena'ina Wellness Center to avoid the hassle and expense of having the procedure done over multiple trips to Anchorage.

Dr. Matthew Richards, Director of the Dental department at the Dena'ina Wellness Center, said staff have been working over the past year to be able to offer dental implants. The department obtained the specialized equipment necessary, as well as additional training.

Dr. Richards said there are a number of reasons an un'ina, "one who comes to us" for services, might opt for an implant. For someone who is missing a tooth or teeth, an implant can preserve the bone, which otherwise might shrink away or die around the missing tooth.

A dental bridge impacts the teeth on either side of a missing tooth.

"With an implant, we don't have to do anything to the adjacent teeth," Richards said.

Richards said an implant also has advantages over partial dentures.

"People don't like partials because they're always snapping them in and out. With an implant, you're not having something in and out of your mouth," Richards said.

Gordon said he likes the idea of a permanent solution.

"Then I don't have to mess with it. It's there forever," Gordon said.

The first part of the procedure, which Gordon had done in January, is to insert a titanium screw where the un'ina's tooth used to be. Over the course of several weeks, the bone will heal and integrate around the titanium. Once that's healed and strong enough to handle the forces generated by chewing, an artificial tooth will be fitted and attached to the titanium screw.

Depending on the un'ina, Dr. Richards said there are options to attach single or multiple artificial teeth.

Dr. Richards said candidates for dental implants should be non-smokers and generally healthy. For example, an un'ina's diabetes needs to be under control.

To learn more about dental implants and other services provided by the Dental department, call the Dena'ina Wellness Center at 907-335-7500.



# Finding healing

## Talking circle provides space to address trauma



*Mary Lou Bottorff, right, leans in to hear as Tom Titus talks about how the boarding school experience affected his brother.*

Last summer, a group of Elders approached the Tribe's Traditional Healer about starting a healing circle at Tyotkas Elder Center for survivors of boarding school abuse.

While the initial focus for the Growing Through It, Healing the Generations healing circle was boarding school survivors, the policies and social attitudes of the boarding school era caused trauma for many people, whether an

individual was forced to attend a boarding school or not.

Karen Trulove, the Traditional Healer at the Dena'ina Wellness Center, said many Elders were looking for ways to heal from traumatic events in their lives, and break the chains of generational trauma.

"I think that hearing people's stories and sharing your own, you realize how connected we are,"

said Tina Mulcahy, a participant in the healing circle. "In the Native community, we share our joy, and we share our pain. I really do think the path to peace and healing is that way."

Participants in the healing circle have shared stories about being sent to boarding schools far away from their home, and how they were forbidden to express any part of their Alaska Native culture. They





*Karen Truelove, a Traditional Healer at the Dena'ina Wellness Center, leads a healing circle for boarding school survivors and others who were affected. From left are Tina Mulcahy, Mary Hunt, Tom Titus and Mary Lou Bottorff.*

have talked about the abuse they suffered, and the effects that being disconnected from their family and community have had.

Some Elders who didn't go to boarding school still remember being hit on the hands with a ruler or whipped with a belt in public schools, just for speaking their Native language.

Tom Titus said he didn't know the term "generational trauma" – a term that describes how trauma can be passed down from one generation to the next – until he started participating in the healing circle.

"I used to fight. I wanted to get it out of me, and I didn't know how. That's what I feel like I'm doing here now. I've started understanding what generational trauma is.

There's a lot of emotions I've never let go of," Titus said.

Mary Hunt said that she hopes that finding some healing for herself will also help her children.

"I find that healing takes place the more you verbalize your past. You can let some things go that affect who you are. If I'm changing, they will see it," Hunt said.

Doris Lageson said she is a firm believer in sharing.

"I believe that anything that's happened in your past, if you hold those secrets in, those secrets come out in a negative way," Lageson said.

Those negative effects can include health issues, as well as violence or substance abuse, Truelove said.

Last May, the U.S. Department of the Interior released the first part of an investigative report as part of the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative, an effort to address the legacy of federal boarding school policies.

From 1819 through the 1970s, the United States implemented policies establishing and supporting Indian boarding schools throughout the country. The purpose of the schools was to culturally assimilate American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian children by forcibly removing them from their families and communities. Attendees were discouraged or prevented from speaking their language or practicing their culture. While attending boarding schools, many children endured physical and





*Mary Hunt talks about her experience at a boarding school in Holy Cross. Behind her is a statue from the village gifted to her by Mary Lou Bottorff. They were in the facility at the same time.*





*Benjamin Jacuk speaks at a forum on boarding schools during the Alaska Federation of Natives annual convention in October.*

emotional abuse and, in some cases, died.

Benjamin Jacuk, a Kenaitze Indian Tribal Member, is a researcher at the Alaska Native Heritage Center and has become a subject matter expert on boarding schools in Alaska. Jacuk's grandfather, Mack Dolchok, attended boarding schools.

Jacuk participated in a panel discussion on the subject at the Alaska Federation of Natives Convention last fall.

"It's a really large history that has impacted not just me, not just the people on this panel, but every single person in this room," Jacuk said.

The investigation found more than 400 federal boarding schools across 37 states or then territories, including 21 schools in Alaska.

Another panelist, Theresa Sheldon, Director of Policy and Advocacy at the National Native American Boarding School Healing

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Coalition, said that in addition to boarding schools, more than 170 facilities have been identified in Alaska that were not included in the definition of boarding schools, but served the same purpose.

Jacuk noted that about 40 percent of the federally recognized tribes in the country are in Alaska, making the state an important piece of the boarding school discussion.

"That means Alaska is ground zero for a lot of the structures of violence that we see that had taken place throughout the United States, then exported to Canada and the rest of the world," Jacuk said.

Jim LaBelle Sr., a panelist and First Vice President for the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, said that the legacy of boarding schools remains.

"Echoes of boarding schools in Alaska are still with us today," LaBelle said. "All we have to do is look at our national suicide rate that's higher than any other ethnic group in America. All we have to do is look at the 40 percent Native incarceration rate in Alaska, when we only make up 15 percent of the population. We need to also look at the echoes that are still with us today relative to the 60 percent of children in foster care (who are Alaska Native). I really want to emphasize that these echoes are primarily the result of the many generations of people like yourselves and myself experiencing boarding school."

Jacuk said that many Alaska Native people, and Indigenous people across the country and around

the world, have difficulty talking about what happened.

"We talk about a lot of the good stuff, but every now and then, there would be a point of clarity where they couldn't talk anymore," Jacuk said. "A big part of what healing looks like for me, for our own communities, is to be able to speak the truth, to tell the story of those who came before us and were never able to.

"Because whenever we start to speak these truths, we not only find healing for ourselves and our community, not only for those who come after us, who don't ever have to question who they are as a Native person, their importance, their identity, but also in telling the stories of people who went through a lot of this, through boarding schools, we're able to find healing."

Trulove described gathering in a talking circle as a path toward healing as an "ancestral gift."

"The wisdom of sharing our struggles and pains through talking and listening has a long tradition in our ancestral past," Trulove said. "... By attending a healing circle, exploring our history and talking with other survivors, confronting historical trauma, understanding the trauma, releasing our pain, and transcending the trauma, we can make sure that our descendants don't inherit this terrible legacy."

To learn more about the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, visit <https://boardingschoolhealing.org/>.

To learn more about the traditional healing circle, contact Karen Trulove at 907-335-7500.



# Tribe in need of foster families

The Kenaitze Indian Tribe is looking for Tribal Member and Alaska Native families to serve as foster families for children in need of foster care.

"We want to ensure that Native children have the opportunity to be placed in a healthy Native home," said Maria Guerra, Director of the Tribe's Na'ini Family and Social Services.

Guerra said that when moving cases from state court to tribal

court, one of the Tribe's biggest challenges is not having a licensed foster family ready to care for the child. With its Title IV-E plan approved last summer, the Tribe is able to license foster families, as well as provide stipends comparable to what the state provides.

Guerra said it is critical that children remain connected to their culture and community when they can't remain in their

home. There's no substitute for experiencing traditional foods, dancing and drumming, fishing at the Tribe's Waterfront, or Native Youth Olympics first-hand, Guerra said.

"It's not the same to see a video of it as it is to see it live and be able to participate in it," Guerra said.

To learn more about becoming a foster care licensed home, contact Na'ini Family and Social Services at 907-335-7600.

## Smith earns degree from APU

Brenda Smith has graduated Magna Cum Laude from Alaska Pacific University in Anchorage. Brenda earned her bachelor's degree in Business Administration, with a double concentration in Health Care Management and Non-Profit Management. Brenda also earned an Alaska Rural Management Certificate.

Brenda is the recipient of a number of scholarships, including a Kenaitze Tribal Member Scholarship, CIRI Foundation Competi-

tive Scholarship, ANTHC Board of Directors Competitive Scholarship, Bureau of Indian Affairs Higher Education Scholarship, and Native Forward Scholarship. She is also in the Rising Native Graduates Academic Coaching Program.

Brenda is pursuing her master's degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Health Services Administration at APU. She will also start the Alaska Native Leadership Program in the fall.



## Are you covered?

### You may be eligible for Tribally Sponsored Health Insurance!

**The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium is offering Tribally Sponsored Health Insurance for Alaska Native and American Indian people.**

- No cost to those who qualify.
- More services available to you and your family.
- Coverage for medical care when traveling or away from Tribal health facilities.

**You and your family may qualify for Tribally Sponsored Health Insurance if you are:**

- Alaska residents;
- Eligible for services at a Tribal health facility;
- Not covered or eligible for other health care coverage; and
- Meet certain other criteria.

To learn more, contact the Dena'ina Wellness Center Un'ina Navigator at 907-335-7500. Visit [www.anthc.org/tship](http://www.anthc.org/tship) for more information.





# Bequsilna, 'those who are gone'

## Ronald Isam Hilleary



Ronald Isam Hilleary, 65, passed peacefully on Nov. 11, 2022, at Central Peninsula Hospital. After a long illness, he spent his last days surrounded by the people he loved.

A Celebration of Life was held on Nov. 19 at Tyotkas Elder Center. A viewing was held at Peninsula Memorial Chapel on Nov. 16.

Ron was born in Anchorage on June 30, 1957. He moved to Nikiski with his family in 1963 and spent the rest of his life as a true North Roader.

Ron was preceded in death by his father, Isam Hilleary; his brother, Russel Hilleary; his mother, Olga Hilleary; and his beloved nephew, Ricky Smith.

He is survived by his best friend since grade school, Tom Huhndorf; two children, Jennifer Johnson, and Kyle Hilleary; their mother, Pat Hilleary; his three grandchildren; and his brother and sisters, Jeanne Smith, Richard Hilleary, Deb Little and Pam Moeglein; as well as many nieces and nephews and

Winter 2023

countless friends who thought the world of him.

Read his full obituary at <https://legcy.co/3ZiCDEG>.

## Julia Lorraine Wilson



Kenaitze Tribal Member and lifelong Alaskan Julia Lorraine Wilson, 72, passed away Dec. 27, 2022, at Central Peninsula Hospital in Soldotna after battling cancer.

Funeral services were held Jan. 5, 2023, at the Holy Assumption of the Virgin Mary Orthodox Church in Kenai. Burial followed the service at the Kenai City Cemetery. A celebration of her life took place at Tyotkas Elder Center.

Julia was born July 12, 1950, in Seward. She was a loving mother, sister, grandmother and auntie. She was a member of the Holy Assumption of the Virgin Mary Orthodox Church. She enjoyed knitting, crocheting, playing darts

and harvesting Native foods.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Paul and Elizabeth Wilson; brothers, Paul, Rudy, and Bobby; sisters, Esther, Doris and Dolly; and her son, David Lee Segura Jr.

Julia is survived by her daughter, Sandy K. (Emil) Wilson; her faithful companion, William Segura Sr.; grandchildren, Jonathan, Marissa, Julianne (Roan), Andrew, Samiel, Emilee, Savana, and William Wilson, all of Kenai, and Hanna Wilson of Canyon Lake, Texas, and Blake, Paige and Matthew Walker all of Boise, Idaho; a sister, Dorothy Lecceardone of New York; great-grandchildren, Everly Walker of Boise, Idaho and Ezra Taplin of Canyon City, Texas; and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins.

Read her full obituary at <https://bit.ly/JuliaWilson>.

## Mae Demidoff



Lifetime resident of Ninilchik, Mae Demidoff, 91, passed away on Feb. 3, 2023, at Central Peninsula Hospital in Soldotna.

Mae was born on June 8, 1931, in Ninilchik. She attended grade school in Ninilchik, junior high school in Seattle, and graduated from West High School in Anchorage in 1949. She worked as a secretary for the Department of Agriculture in Homer, before she married her sweetheart, Cecil Demidoff. They built their home and raised five children in Deep Creek.

Known fondly to many near and far as Auntie Mae, Grandma Chik, and Mom, Mae is survived and missed by daughters Mary Stokes (Peter), Cecilia Demidoff (Shane Blattler), Effie Taeschner (Kip), and son, Rueben Demidoff; grandchildren Sarah Stokes, Luke Stokes, Laura Paul, Zachary Liska, Alexandra Sutton, Jade Leon, Emelie Demidoff, Ivan Demidoff, Natalia Taeschner, Sophia Taeschner, and Adam Taeschner; and 16 great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her husband of 53 years Cecil, their son Adam, and infant grandson Cecil.

A funeral was held on Feb. 13 at the Holy Transfiguration of Our Lord Orthodox Church in Ninilchik. A reception with family and friends followed at the Ninilchik Native Community Center.

Mae's family asks that memorial contributions be made to her beloved church home, the Holy Transfiguration of Our Lord Orthodox Church, P.O. Box 39112, Ninilchik, AK 99639.

Read her full obituary at <https://bit.ly/MaeDemidoff>.

## In Memory



**Cheryl Letender**

Oct. 24, 1962 – Dec. 9, 2022



**Logan Showalter**

Feb. 26, 1992 – Dec. 11, 2022



**William Green**

Sept. 21, 1952 – Oct. 22, 2022

## Share your news

***Do you have  
any news you'd  
like to share?  
Graduations,  
marriages, or  
births? Any  
other personal  
milestones?***

Email  
[news@kenaitze.org](mailto:news@kenaitze.org)  
to be considered  
for inclusion in a  
future edition of the  
Counting Cord.

## ***Have you lost a loved one?***

For information  
about services and  
support provided by  
the Kenaitze Indian  
Tribe, please contact  
Jessica Crump, Tribal  
Member Services  
Supervisor, by phone  
at 907-335-7204  
or by email at  
[jcrump@kenaitze.org](mailto:jcrump@kenaitze.org).



**At the Dena'ina Wellness Center, you have access to valuable resources for your health and well-being.**



**Please promptly let us know if you can't make your appointment so we can share the resource with another.**

**Call 907-335-7500**

# **Cooking with Kenaitze**



**Hearty Winter Salad with  
Blackened Apples and Savory Meatballs**





Just because it's winter doesn't mean you can't enjoy some fresh greens and savory flavors. These recipes combine items easily found and in-season at local grocery stores with items you might have sitting in your freezer from last fall's harvest.

Servings: 8  
Prep time: 5 minutes, ready in 10 minutes  
Calories per serving: 195

### **Salad Ingredients:**

1 head radicchio, chopped  
3 large endives, chopped  
1 carrot, sliced or spiralized  
1 parsnip, sliced or spiralized

### **Dressing:**

1/2 cup olive oil  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
1 teaspoon ground black pepper  
3 cloves garlic  
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

### **Blackened Apples:**

2 apples, cored and sliced into 16 wedges  
2 tablespoons butter

### **Directions:**

1. In a bowl, add all the dressing ingredients and mix them together.
2. In a separate bowl, mix all the salad ingredients together. Add the dressing to the salad and toss together until salad is evenly coated.
3. Spread out the apple wedges on a cast iron frying pan or griddle. Place over medium-high heat. Toast the apple wedges until they release some juices. Turn up the heat and caramelize the surface of the apples until almost burned. Turn the wedges over and repeat on the other side. Remove from heat and add the butter to the pan. Mix the apples into the melted butter until they are evenly coated.
4. Mix the apple slices into the salad evenly and enjoy.

### **Tips and substitutions:**

Use a different leafy vegetable, such as spinach, kale, purple cabbage, or arugula, instead of radicchio or endives.

Registered Dietician Stephen Kronlage assists un'ina at the Dena'ina Wellness Center with medical nutrition therapy, which includes managing weight loss, diabetes, IBS, weight gain, Celiac disease, and other conditions through an individualized nutrition plan. To make an appointment, call 907-335-7500.

Thaw out frozen root vegetables and use them in place of the carrots and parsnips to save time on prep work and money on vegetables.

### **Savory Meatballs**

Servings: 6  
Prep time: 5 minutes, ready in 10 minutes  
Calories per serving: 160

### **Ingredients:**

1.5 pounds of ground moose, caribou, elk, or beef  
1 onion, finely chopped  
1/4 cup panko bread crumbs  
2 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper  
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder  
1/2 teaspoon cardamom  
1 egg

### **Directions:**

1. Preheat your oven to 400 degrees F.
2. In a large bowl, mix all the ingredients together until just combined.
3. Shape mixture into 1.5 tablespoon-sized meatballs.
4. Bake for 18-20 minutes until meatballs are cooked through.
5. Place four or five meatballs on a plate with the Hearty Winter Salad and your favorite mashed potatoes.
6. Enjoy!

### **Tips and substitutions:**

Substitute mashed potatoes with baked potatoes, a roll, or mac 'n' cheese.

Add a gravy sauce, fruit sauce, or Alaska wild berries, such as blueberries or lingonberries, to the meatballs for extra savory flavor.



# Dena'ina naqenaga

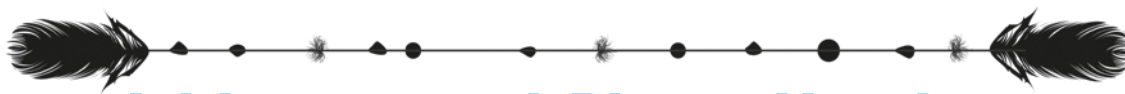


## Chulyin dashtl'ech' *Raven is black*

Dena'ina naqenaga is "our Dena'ina language." Find more Dena'ina language resources online at [www.kenaitze.org/education/denaina-language-institute/](http://www.kenaitze.org/education/denaina-language-institute/), including an interactive audio dictionary with this and many more Dena'ina words and phrases.







## 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**  
130 S. Willow St., Suite 3, Kenai  
907-335-7219



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



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



**KENAITZE**  
**INDIAN**  
**TRIBE**

**150 N. Willow St.**

**Kenai, AK 99611**

**[www.kenaitze.org](http://www.kenaitze.org)**

**907-335-7200**



Kenaitze Indian Tribe  
P.O. Box 988  
Kenai, AK 99611



TO

ASSURE

**KAHTNUHT'ANA DENA'INA**

THRIVE FOREVER

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