

The play's the thing Tribal Members contribute to story's evolution

"The Ballad of Kenai" tells a story – actually, several stories – about the impact of change on a community.

But the production itself also has a story, one to which several Tribal Members contributed during a 50th anniversary performance in November.

"The Ballad of Kenai" interweaves the story of a growing city of Kenai with the changes that come to the Dena'ina community with first contact from Russian

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Secretarial election delayed by shutdown Tribal Members updated at Quarterly Meeting

Much of the discussion at the Jan. 12 Quarterly Meeting revolved around the Secretarial election, which had been on hold due to the federal government shutdown.

Council Member Liisia Blizzard, who is also a member of the Secretarial Election Committee, said the process had been going well up until the shutdown.

"Our next step was to mail out the ballots," Blizzard said. "Then we had the government shutdown, so right now, we're in a holding pattern."

Under the initial election timeline, a notice of election was sent to Tribal Members on Nov. 26, 2018. Voter registrations were to have been returned by Dec. 17, 2018. Ballots were to have been mailed to voters on Jan. 3, to be returned and counted on Jan. 24.

However, the shutdown began Dec. 22, 2018. Because the Secretarial election is under BIA oversight, work on the election has been halted.

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Seal makeover



A new Tribal seal features Kahtnu – the Kenai River.

Tribe's emblem gets an update

Kenaitze Indian Tribal Members and employees will soon have a new Tribal seal and updated logo adorning their correspondence and clothing.

Tribal Council Members recently unveiled the new seal. The most significant change is the addition of the Kenai River and Cook Inlet to the design. Tribal Council Chairperson Wayne D. Wilson Jr. said that is important for the Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina.

"That's the biggest thing – because we're the River People," Wilson said.

The current seal came into use in 2008 and was based on the Tribal Court seal, which was first used after the court was established in 1986. The seal was inspired by the Tribe's original flag, which was designed by Tribal Member Elsie Maillelle in 1972.

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All fun and games

Yaghanen NYO team jumps into another season

The Native Youth Olympics are unlike other sporting events.

Competitors demonstrate impressive strength, agility and skill. But while athletes strive to jump higher and farther, they are also just as likely to help their fellow competitors do the same.

"NYO is different," Doug Gates, a Yaghanen Youth Program Youth Advocate, explained in a pep talk prior to a recent practice session. "NYO is about cooperation. There will be cooperation between teams. You might see an athlete from one team go up to an athlete from another team, and tell them how they can jump farther, or kick higher. So athletes will help each other."

The reason for cooperation, even in a competitive environment? Gates said he thinks it's because cooperation is crucial to the Native cultures from which the games have been passed down over generations.

"We want you to go out there, have a good time in the events, try your best, if you win a medal, awesome, we'll be proud of you. If you do not win a medal, well, if you tried your best, that's all we really want," Gates said.

The current NYO format includes 11

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Joseph Whittom competes for Kenaitze's Salamatof team in the one-hand reach during the Tribe's invitational in January.

MEETING, FROM P. 1

Among the concerns voiced at the meeting were voting rights for Tribal Members living outside Alaska; differences in voter eligibility between the Tribe's constitution and BIA regulations; and challenges to the list of registered voters.

Council Members shared some of their own concerns, but noted that none of them could be addressed until BIA staff return to work.

On the ballot, voters will be asked to remove the requirement that elections to amend the Tribe's constitution be overseen by the Secretary of the Interior.

One of the concerns is that a Secretarial election is open to all Tribal Members 18 and older per federal regulations, while Tribal elections are restricted to Tribal Members 18 and older living in Alaska.



Tribal Council Chairperson Wayne D. Wilson Jr. and Council Member Liisia Blizzard listen to comments about the Secretarial election during the Tribe's Jan. 12 quarterly meeting.

Should the measure pass, extending voting rights to Tribal Members living Outside would require an amendment to the Tribe's constitution.

"If it does pass, it would be up to Alaska residents to make that change," said Council Chairperson Wayne D. Wilson Jr.

Council Secretary Diana Zirul said it was an emotional question for her. She said she has heard

concerns from Tribal Members living Outside that they will lose their voice. She said the Council always counts people living Outside when it cites Tribal Membership in resolutions.

"They are our Tribal Members, they are our family," Zirul said.

Council Treasurer Clinton Lageson said he trusts "that Tribal Members will make the right choice at the right time" on changes to the constitution, and will correct any issues that may arise.

"I trust that process more than I trust the federal government," Lageson said.

Council Member Mary Ann Mills suggested a Tribal bill of rights.

"If we remove the Secretary of the Interior, I think it would be a good idea to have a bill of rights that would protect our people," Mills said.

During the meeting, Council



Royal Brown is introduced as the new Tribally Designated Housing Entity/Facilities Director during the Quarterly Meeting.

Vice Chairperson Bernadine Atchison provided an update on negotiations with the state on Office of Children's Services Child Welfare Compact, and federal Title IV-E funding for a foster care program.

Atchison said that funding under the OCS compact is uncertain due to the change in state administration. She said that the message relayed to the Tribe is that Gov. Mike Dunleavy is in favor of the compact and would like tribes to take on more services. The state also wants to work with tribes to identify other sources of funding.

Title IV-E may be another good source of funding, and the Council is moving forward with an application for a \$300,000 planning grant. The two-year grant would allow the Tribe to ensure that the necessary infrastructure, court code updates and implementation plans are in place before a foster care program is launched.

Royal Brown, who was introduced as the new Tribally Designated Housing Entity/Facilities Director, provided an update on the new harvest shop under construction at the Tribe's fishery site. The foundation work has been completed, and funding has been secured to

build a weather-proof structure that will be usable for the upcoming season.

Brown said finishing the interior will be funding-dependent, but plans include stainless steel counters and sink and a walk-in cooler and freezer, amenities that will help not just with processing the fish harvest, but also with the moose salvage program. Hot running water and a "real bathroom" also are part of the plans.

In response to a question, Brown said a grant application has been submitted to the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust to improve other facilities at the fishery site, including a new pavilion, larger smokehouse, and bigger storage shed.

Lageson reported that the Tribal Equal Rights Ordinance Commission had revised the job requirements for the Tribal Fishery Education Assistant positions, and is hoping to see Tribal Members interested in filling them. The job is posted on the Tribe's website at www.kenaitze.org.

Wilson encouraged Tribal Members to apply for the positions and is hoping to see them filled by April.

The next quarterly meeting is scheduled for April 13.

Moving soon? Please keep in touch

Please keep your contact information current so you don't miss important mailings from the Tribe.

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From the editor's desk

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

Find more information on the Tribe's website at kenaitze.org and like us on Facebook at facebook.com/kenaitze.

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



Mills named to Alaska Native Elders Council at APU

Tribal Council Member Mary Ann Mills was recently invited to join the Alaska Native Elders Council at Alaska Pacific University.

Alaska Pacific, located in Anchorage, is working to become a Tribal University, and is involving Elders from across the state in the process. The Alaska Native Elders Council will use their collective wisdom and knowledge to reinforce and exemplify the vision and mission of Alaska Pacific.

According to its strategic plan, Alaska Pacific's mission is to

provide a world-class, hands-on, culturally responsive educational experience in collaboration with its students, communities and Tribal partners. The school's vision is to honor Alaska's indigenous heritage, exemplify excellence and prepare paths.

Learn more about Alaska Pacific University at www.alaskapacific.edu.



Mary Ann Mills

NOTE FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON

Happy New Year,
I hope everyone had an excellent Christmas and happy New Year. 2018 has come and gone. There were many exciting changes that took place this past year that will help the Tribe continue to grow in the future.

I'd like to recap some of the accomplishments over the past 12 months.

The Council started 2018 off with a very successful strategic planning session that will help the Tribe move forward in a positive manner. We implemented a new Tribal-wide organizational chart that added several new director positions. The newly established Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina Health Board will allow us to become more effective and efficient as a Tribe.

One of the more noticeable changes was that we split the Executive Director role into two positions, Executive Director of Tribal Administration and Executive Director of Health Systems. Both positions were filled in the fall by Dawn Nelson and Julia Polinski, respectively.

We continue to make progress in filling other key positions. The Human Resources Director position has been filled by Geoff Miller, and the TDHE Facilities and Housing Director position has been filled by Royal Brown. New Finance Director Ed Keough and Education Director Rachel Gilbert will be coming in early February.

We also signed a letter of intent with a permanent physician for the Dena'ina Wellness Center, with plans to start in July.

The Council has been working hard on honoring our past Tribal Members who have been influential in our growth and success.

TERO is presently working on creating



five intern positions with the Council's commitment to succession and leadership planning. It is our hope that the future leaders of the Tribe will come from this program.

At the national level, Clinton Lageson, Tribal Council Treasurer and Alaska Area Vice President Alternate to the National Congress of American Indians,

attended the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe Save Our Sovereignty Walk in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 14, 2018 at the National Museum of the American Indian. Clinton gave a speech in support of tribal sovereignty and calling attention to the dangers facing our tribal homeland.

I'd like to thank all of our staff for the hard work and dedication you have shown in the past year. The Employee and Family Picnic in August had a record turnout and excellent weather. The Employee Christmas party also had a record turnout with great food. I appreciate the time and effort that went into planning those events.

I also want to congratulate some of the Tribe's longtime employees, who were recognized at the recent Years of Service celebration. We have three employees who reached 15 years of service in the past year: Brenda Trefon in Environmental Protection; Archie Minkler in Housing; and Michael Bernard in Yaghanen Youth Programs. Dental Supervisor Kris Smith is our first employee to hit 20 continuous years of employment at the Tribe.

We accomplished a lot in 2018, and I'm looking forward to being able to share even more accomplishments in 2019.

Sincerely,

Wayne D. Wilson Jr.

Wayne D. Wilson Jr.
Tribal Council Chairperson

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Tribal Fishery Education Assistant,
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for more information and to apply.

BALLAD, FROM P. 1

traders. The production explores the loss that can come with “progress” and “growth.”

“The Ballad of Kenai” was first staged in 1969 as a dance performance. It was expanded into a full-length musical in 1975, and later compressed into a one-hour performance in 1981. It was revived again in 1991.

For the 50th anniversary production, director Phil Morin revisited the 1975 two-act version, working with the original creators to revise the script and re-orchestrate the music for a contemporary audience.

Sharing Dena’ina Culture

Tribal Member Bunny Swan Gease served as a cultural ambassador for the production, a role Peter Kalifornsky filled in the past. “They were very conscientious about wanting to present our tribal communities with respect,” Swan said.

Morin said the evolution of the Dena’ina scenes was significant, intentional, and purposeful. In previous productions, the Dena’ina scenes actually occurred within the bar. The lights would fade out, Morin said, and Rapid Robert, an Alaska Native character, and the dancers and characters in his vision would come into the bar scene and transition back out.

One of his changes was to move those scenes out of the bar.

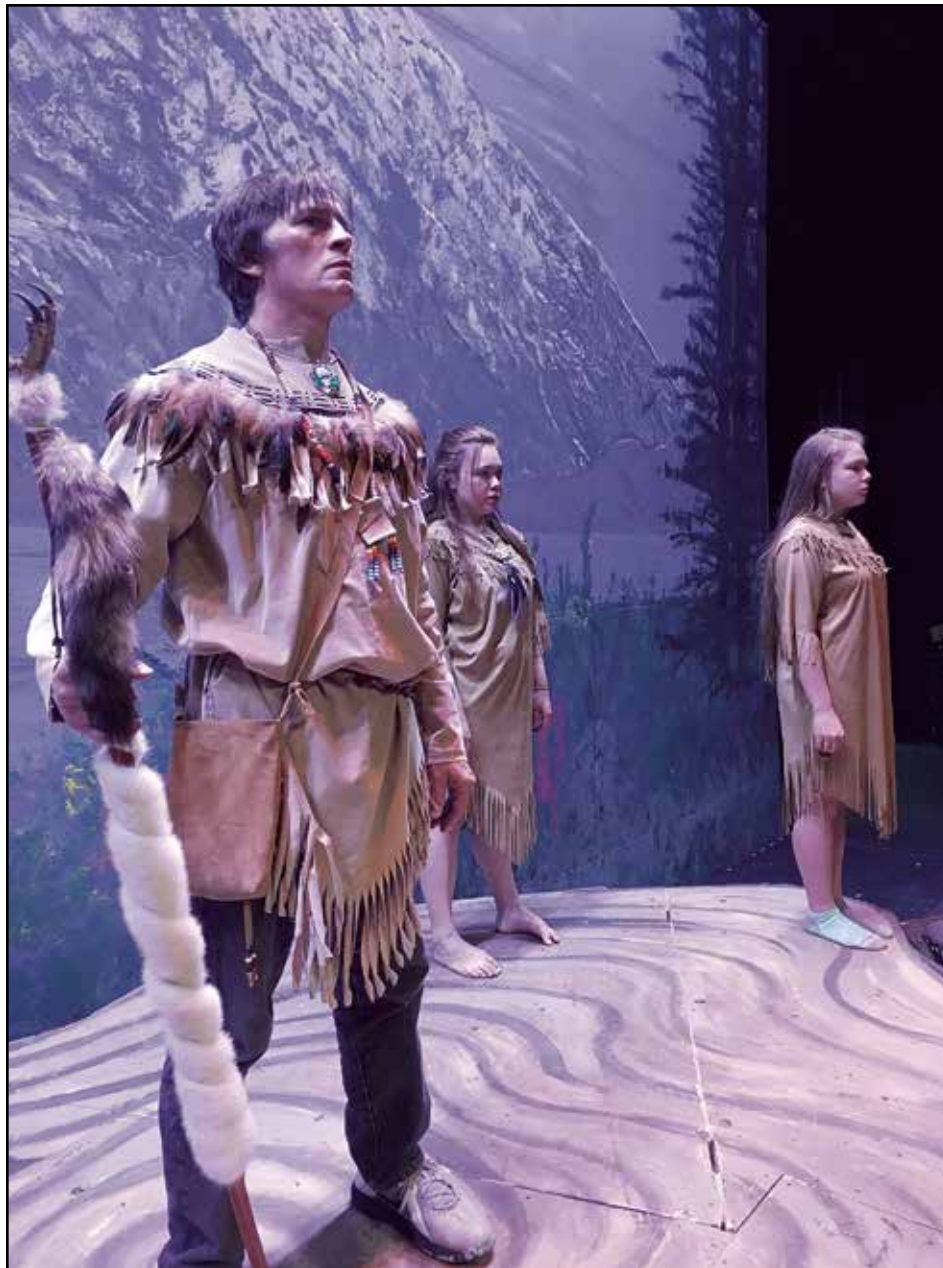
“So (the Dena’ina scenes) were shorter, and they were restricted by space as well. We expanded it to the main stage, and featured it,” Morin said.

Swan said she was especially pleased to see the way the set was designed, with the production’s bar scenes up front on the same level as the audience, and the Dena’ina scenes elevated on the main stage behind.

“The director placed the bar on the floor, so folks could feel like they were there at Joe’s (Bar), and then he gave this kind of middle ground for Rapid Robert, the Native man who is kind of lost in the cultures, between the two,” Bunny Swan said. “He’s looking at people partying and carrying on, but he could see that he needed this middle ground.”

“And then, beautifully, (the director) gave Mount Redoubt to Yaghanen. That was special. I heard this from others who have seen the play, and seen every version, that this time, Phil had really given a presence to the culture, a rich presence. Folks felt that they could really see that there was insight in the culture, and success in the Dena’ina culture.”

Morin said that staging the play that way was deliberate. He wanted



Jeff Swan, Hanna Wilson and Savanna Wilson rehearse a scene from “The Ballad of the Kenai.”

the distant past to be in the distance, and he wanted the middle ground to be a dark and vague transition area.

“I wanted it to represent the gap, the struggle I see the Dena’ina dealing with in the last few years and last few decades,” Morin said. “There’s that gap between the old ways and the new ways, which is sort of a universal theme. So I wanted the three levels, and distances, to emphasize time, and yet also represent the cultural struggle and vagaries. Robert was the Native narrator, voicing the thoughts and concerns and uncertainties of how was it, how did we get here and what’s going on now?”

Morin said that during his research, he found 11 versions of the script, written by Lance Petersen with original music by Robert C. Richardson. He said as the script evolved, the Dena’ina scenes became more predominant. He also discovered that in 1992 or 1993, Petersen wrote a play dedicated to the Native narrative, called “Raven’s Place.”

Bunny recruited her brother Jeff Swan to play Kazage, a Dena’ina leader from the past. Kazage has one of the most powerful moments in the production, when he laments the loss of his people due to the introduction of disease from contact with Europeans.

Jeff Swan said it was an emotional performance for him.

“When we listen to a song, either the emotion comes through, or not,” Jeff Swan said. “In this case, reading it, memorizing the lines and singing it, it was hard not to get a little choked up. I had to process it mentally. It is a pretty sad thing. The way I dealt with it was to say, OK, if you are a person who has lost your entire family and population, one of the things you might ask yourself is, how do I carry on? What do you do? Do you give up the entire memory of your civilization, or do you carry on? And I think the answer would have to be, you carry on if you could.”

For Bunny, singing songs in Dena’ina was especially powerful.

“We always had words, but now, there is great support, through people like Jon Ross, Sondra (Shaginoff-Stuart) and others who are inspired to perpetuate the language,” Bunny Swan said. “I think it really has given the young people something to hold on to, something more concrete. I think even Elders now are prouder. They had been quiet for so long, and now, here it is, time to honor and celebrate our heritage and our culture. Finally, it’s a celebration!”

The Tribe and the Dena’ina culture were represented in other meaningful ways. Bunny Swan said the regalia she wore for the performance was her own, some of it made by Tribal Elders, and she made the jewelry that Jeff wore.

Jeff Swan also crafted the spear

he carried on stage.

“It is a feeling that we should be the ones to make our own. That’s kind of a spiritual thing,” Jeff Swan said. “I actually went to the woods and cut that and peeled it, and put moose antler in the tip, and wrapped it in leather.”

“The Ballad of Kenai” also provided an opportunity for some younger Tribal Members to show off their talents, portraying Dena’ina men and women. The cast included Jenna Yeoman, Emilee Wilson, William Wilson, Hanna Wilson and Savanna Wilson.

“The kids were shy at first, and we kind of brought them out of their shell a little bit,” Jeff Swan said. “There were times when we were practicing, and there wasn’t as much energy coming from the kids, and maybe us, too. But on opening night, when we had an audience to play to, it was almost like lightning struck.”

“I think Peter would have been very proud of the kids,” Bunny Swan said. “And it thrills me to know that there’s 54 more people (the cast, orchestra and crew) who may not be Tribal Members who know ‘Di Ya Du Hu,’ they know Dena’ina songs.”

Savanna Wilson said it was cool to have Dena’ina people portraying Dena’ina people on stage.

“The scene where we were all doing real Dena’ina things – passing fish and putting them on the rack, sharpening spears – it actually made me feel like it was back then, and real, and I was actually a part of it,” Wilson said.

Wilson said that she learned about Dena’ina history, too.

“I learned a lot of little details, things I didn’t know about my history,” Wilson said.

Adding to the story

This version of “The Ballad of Kenai” also included Bunny Swan’s song “Where Are the Drums,” which she wrote for Tyonek in 1984, a time when that community was struggling with change.

Morin explained that in his research, he found that “Kazage’s Lament” and Kalifornsky’s “Song of the Lonely Man” appeared in different sequences in the various scripts, and in some cases, even in different acts. However, he said that in working with Bunny and Jeff, he detected a greater sense of optimism about where the Tribe is now and wanted the end of the play to be more uplifting.

“I wanted to end the show with Peter’s being the last voice, but I needed something else to go (with ‘Kazage’s Lament’),” Morin said. “And Bunny goes, ‘Well, I have a song I did for the Tyonek folks.’”

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William Wilson, Hanna Wilson, Savanna Wilson, Jenna Yeoman, Emilee Wilson, Bunny Swan Gease and Jeff Swan are part of the cast of “The Ballad of Kenai.”

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“Where are the Drums” was a perfect fit.

“The story was virtually the same, except it was about oil and the community, and it never really came to fruition for them,” Bunny Swan said. “They were suffering over there because they had idle hands. It was really perfect for this story.”

Bunny Swan said she didn’t know much about earlier productions, but had heard the play generated some controversy in the past.

“I’d heard all kinds of

different things – that folks didn’t want to come see it because it either portrayed Native peoples in a bad light, or the city council and the community in a bad light,” she said. “I think they were generous in having a little fun with each. You know, we need to laugh at ourselves, my goodness, and do better.”

Morin said the play does address some “harsh truths,” with the goal of sparking a conversation.

“The play isn’t saying it’s good; the play wasn’t intended to say it was bad. The play was intended to report

and have us discuss,” Morin said.

One of the things he tried to represent through the character of Rapid Robert, played by Corin Cooper, was the past marginalization of Alaska Native people.

“Robert only had two or three lines with everyone else,” Morin said. “That’s why I had Robert sit in the corner, in the shadow kind of out of the way.”

But the character also shows what Morin sees as the Tribe re-establishing its identity and culture.

“We tried to get him to reflect a little bit of the recognition of being

able to reach into the past and bring it out,” Morin said.

Bunny Swan said she hopes that idea resonates with the young people in the cast.

“To have the kids come and perform who are in the (Jabila’ina) dance group currently, I shared with them that when they return to the dance group, they need to be leaders, because they’re not only dancing and singing for themselves and their parents and the audience, but they have information to deliver, and we owe it to our ancestors to do it properly and proudly,” she said.

SEAL, FROM P. 1

The new Tribal seal maintains the elements from the previous version. It depicts Yaghanen, the Good Land. Mount Redoubt represents the strength, endurance and steadfastness of the Kenaitze people. The splashing salmon represents the spirit of the Kenaitze people. The snowshoes show that the Kenaitze people continue to walk with surety on the Earth.

The river means forever, and its representation is enhanced in the new design.

Also in the new design is Kalgin Island, and the seal gives the impression that it’s springtime, with green in the landscape but some snow still left on the ground.

The coloration along the side of the salmon is a traditional Dena’ina bead pattern.

Wilson said Kalgin Island was added because it’s what you see



The Tribe’s original flag was designed by Tribal Member Elsie Maille in 1972.

when you look toward Mount Redoubt from the bluff in Kenai.

“When you look out, you see Redoubt and you see Kalgin Island, and you think of home,” Wilson said.

Discussions to update the

Tribe’s seal grew out of a request to create a new logo for a Tribal program. The number of different logos currently being used was brought to the Council’s attention, and a decision was made to make things uniform across the Tribe’s

operations. One of the goals is for each program to be easily identified as a Kenaitze Indian Tribe program.

Tribal Council Members worked together with the Tribe’s graphic designer, Charles Atkins, to create the new seal.

“It was a group effort to come up with the final product,” Wilson said.

The Kahtnuht’ana Dena’ina logo, which depicts three volcanoes and includes the Tribe’s Mission “to assure the Kahtnuht’ana thrive forever,” was also updated.

Two versions were created, one that will look good on light colored material, and one for dark colored material.

The Council also approved a new standardized business card for all employees.

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events. Some of the events showcase an essential hunting, fishing or survival skill; others help develop strength and coordination.

Athletes in the Yaghanen program explained the events, and shared their thoughts on what they like about their favorites.

Alaskan High Kick

The Alaskan High Kick “just seems pretty cool,” said William Vaudrin.

Athletes start seated on the floor, and balance on one foot while reaching across their body to hold the opposite foot. Athletes lean back on their free hand, thrust the foot they were balancing on straight up to kick a suspended ball, then land on the kicking foot – all without losing their balance.

Vaudrin said the event is a test of strength and balance.

“You need to have pretty good leg strength to kick yourself up, and good arm strength so you can pull your other leg up and kick higher,” Vaudrin said.

Arm Pull

Samiel Wilson said the Arm Pull was his favorite event as a junior competitor, because he was able to use his strength and leverage to his advantage.

In the Arm Pull, competitors sit on the floor facing each other, with one leg over and one leg under the opponent’s legs. Competitors lock arms at the elbow, placing their free hand on the opponent’s foot. With a signal from the official, competitors pull straight back without jerking or twisting until their opponent’s arm straightens or they pull their opponent toward them.

Eskimo Stick Pull

Competitors sit on the floor facing each other with their feet touching and knees at a 45-degree angle. They grip a stick placed over their toes, and when the pulling begins, each athlete tries to pull the competitor toward them with a steady effort – no jerking the stick. If a competitor is pulled over or loses their grip, they lose the pull.

Samiel Wilson said the Eskimo Stick Pull is his favorite event, because it gives him the opportunity to use his strength and leverage. The key, he said, is that there’s more to it than just pulling with your arms.

“You have to push with your legs, too, and keep a straight back,” Wilson said.

Indian Stick Pull

In the Indian Stick Pull, competitors stand next to each other, facing opposite directions. They each grab an end of a foot-long dowel, tapered at each end. The dowel is greased with Crisco-type lard, simulating the slippery skin of a salmon. When the official gives the signal, competitors try to wrest the stick from their opponent’s hand by pushing, pulling, twisting and jerking the stick. Intentional body contact is not allowed.

“You want to have a good grip,” said Corbin Stuve. “If you lose your balance, or let go of the stick, that’s how

you lose.”

Cooper Bernard said that because of the grease, you might not even realize when you’ve lost your grip.

“When you actually get it out of their hand, you can barely feel it in your hand,” Bernard said.

Kneel Jump

Kya Ahlers is a fan of the Kneel Jump – scraped up feet and all.

“I have scars on my feet from rubbing on the wood floor. But once you’re doing it, you don’t really think about that. You just think about doing your best and having fun,” Ahlers said.

In the Kneel Jump, competitors start in a kneeling position, with the tops of their feet flat on the floor. From there, they jump up and forward, landing on both feet. The event tests an athlete’s leg strength and balance.

Abby Semaken explained that to do it well, you have to really swing your arms and get your upper body into it.

“And when you jump, you have to stick the landing,” Semaken said.

One-Foot High Kick

In the One-Foot High Kick, competitors launch themselves off both feet, kick a suspended ball with one foot, and land on the kicking foot without losing their balance. While it sounds straightforward, doing it well requires a combination of strength, flexibility and good technique.

Keisha Connor said she’s working on putting her whole body into her launch, rather than jumping off her toes.

“I have to bend down and swing my arms,” she said.

Doug Gates, Yaghanen Youth Advocate, has one other piece of advice: Always stick the landing. Competitors sometimes think they’ve missed the ball while they may have just brushed it, but if they put their other foot down, it won’t count.

“Always stick your landing – even if you think you’ve missed,” Gates said.

One-Hand Reach

The One-Hand Reach requires athletes to balance their body weight on one hand and reach with their free hand to touch a suspended ball. Athletes must then place their free hand back on the floor while keeping the rest of their body off of it.

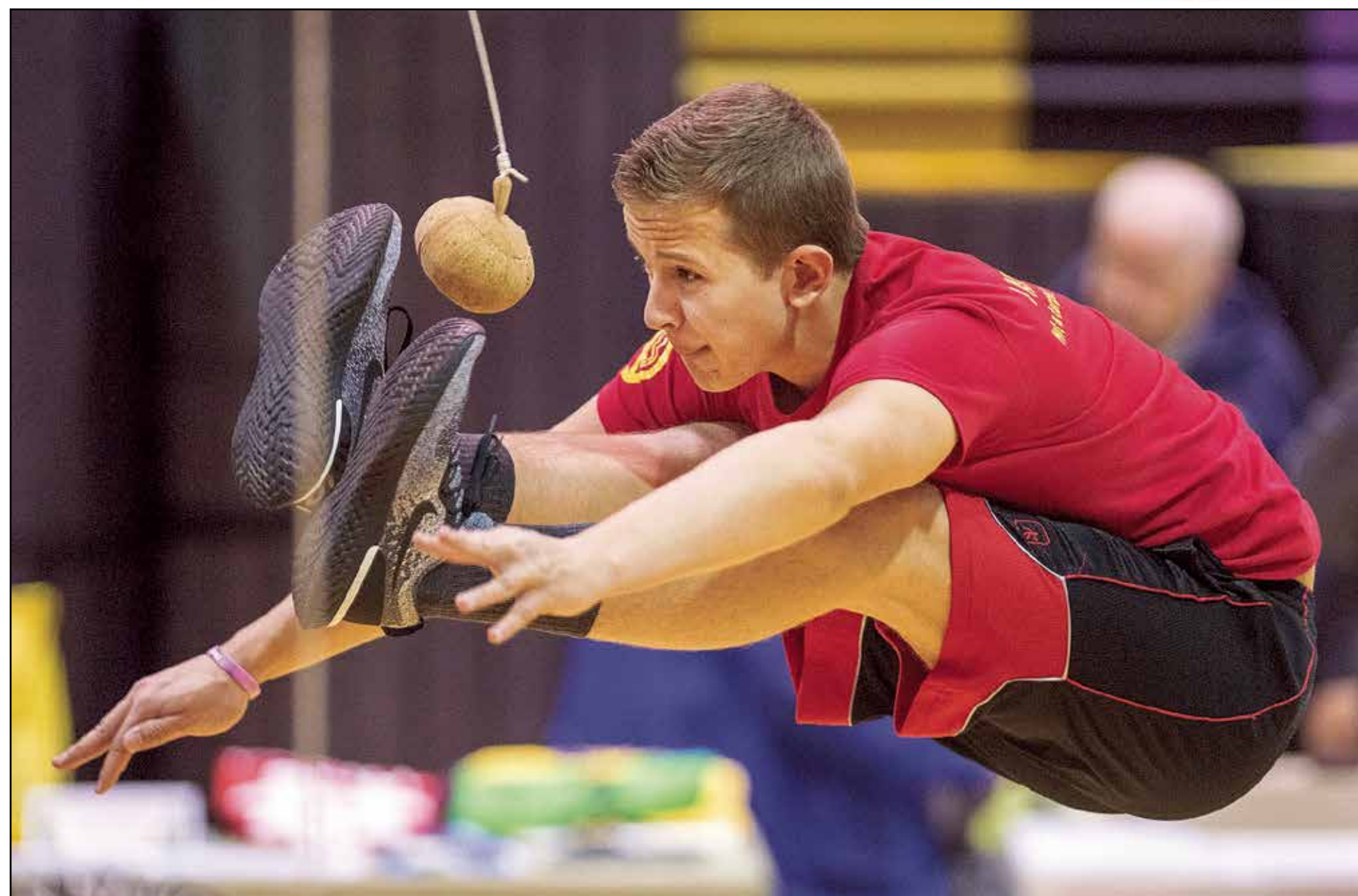
“I think it’s a lot fun,” Kya Ahlers said. “You don’t have to do much for it, but you need strength and a lot of core and balance to do it.”

Ahlers said the One-Hand Reach is something you can do at home with friends. In fact, she got a ball at the Alaska Federation of Natives convention and has it hanging from a stair railing.

“All it takes is a ball and a string,” Ahlers said.

Scissor Broad Jump

The Scissor Broad Jump simulates the balance and technique necessary to jump from ice floe to ice floe – a skill William Vaudrin said he has put to use



Judah Eason competes for Yaghanen Youth Program’s Salamatof team in the two-foot high kick event.

in Chevak.

Athletes start standing on both feet. They leap forward onto one foot, swinging the other leg behind their landing leg, shift their weight to that foot, and jump forward again, landing on both feet. Athletes compete to see who can jump the farthest.

“If the river is frozen but breaks apart, you have to jump on ice floes to get home,” Vaudrin said.

Vaudrin said he was able to pick up the motion fairly easily, but it takes beginners some practice to get the technique down.

Seal Hop

Emilee Wilson shared the key to being good at the Seal Hop: “Abs!”

In the Seal Hop, competitors assume a push-up position and hop like a seal on their hands and toes. The goal is for competitors to go as far as they can without stopping or touching the floor with their knees or stomachs. Junior competitors and senior girls keep their arms straight and palms flat; the senior boys competitors use a lowered push-up position and support their weight on the heel of their hands and their knuckles.

“I like that it makes me tough, and I like what the backstory is,” Wilson said. “Our ancestors would hop so the seals wouldn’t be startled when we hunted them.”

The reason boys hop on their knuckles is to simulate stalking a seal while holding a spear.

Wilson said developing skills in other events helps her in the Seal Hop.

“I rarely practice (the Seal Hop), but the other events make me good at it,”

she said.

Two-Foot High Kick

William Wilson likes jumping, so the Two-Foot High Kick is a natural fit.

“It’s fun to do, kind of like the One-Foot High Kick,” Wilson said.

The two-foot version tests a competitor’s strength and balance. Competitors must jump with both feet, kick a suspended ball, and land on both feet without falling backward.

Wilson said the challenge is to get your footwork down.

“You want to make sure that you’re jumping in the correct place,” he said.

Wrist Carry

Andrew Wilson said his first attempt at the Wrist Carry didn’t go so well.

“It was during practice. I didn’t get very far, and I cried,” Wilson said.

Since then, he’s improved quite a bit at the event in which competitor hooks his or her wrist around a long pole held by two carriers. Competitors then must hold themselves up off the floor for as long as they can while the two carriers walk or run through a course.

Wilson said that during a competition, he keeps his focus on “just trying to hold on as long as I can.”

The event is a test of strength, endurance and toughness.

“Your hand just stays in a fist for a few seconds,” Wilson said of the muscle fatigue that sets in. “When you try to open it, it gets stuck, and your wrist gets red.”



Jalyn Yeoman competes in the one-foot high kick.



At top, Eli Gordon (Homer Halibuts), Joseph Whittom and Judah Eason (Yaghanen Youth Program’s Salamatof team) and Porter Rockwell (Team Seward) celebrate their accomplishments in the one-hand reach from atop the winner’s podium during the Kenaitze’s Indian Tribe’s Native Youth Olympics Invitational.

Center, Kenaitze’s William Wilson competes in the wrist carry event.

Bottom, children from several different teams bond during a break in the competition. Native Youth Olympic events stress sportsmanship.

Learning starts in the home

Tribe launches Early Head Start program

Samuel Semaken is a bundle of energy.

On this particular Wednesday morning, that energy is focused on applying paint to paper. The lesson had started with painting ice cubes before moving to painting paper, and Samuel is loading his canvas with color. Throughout the lesson, Samuel's sing-song "ha-ha" fills the room.

Samuel, age 2, and his family are participants in the Tribe's new Early Head Start program. Working with Samuel are Abby Hanna and Vicky Glick, Early Head Start home visitors. And the classroom is a very familiar one for Samuel – his own living room.

Early Head Start serves pregnant mothers, infants and toddlers up to age 3. The home-based program provides support and encouragement for parents to be their child's primary teacher.

"I love Kenaitze's Head Start, the people over there," said Sandi Semaken, Samuel's mother.

Semaken said her older children attended Head Start's preschool program and it helped prepare them for school. So, when she heard about the Early Childhood Center's newest program, she jumped at the opportunity.

"I really wanted that with Samuel, too," Semaken said of the benefits she sees with Head Start. "You can't get any better with children than to start them early with education. This is such a positive program."

A closer connection

Semaken said she's noticed the change in Samuel just in the four months since home visits started in September. For starters, he's excited to see Hanna and Glick, instead of hiding around the corner.

"Now we see him glued to the window when we pull up," Hanna said.

Samuel's home visitors say that the home-based aspect of the program has allowed them to get to know the family in a way that isn't possible in a classroom setting, and to tailor an individualized learning plan that fits his specific needs.

"We have a philosophy that parents are a child's first teacher, and we support them with tools to do that well," said Glick. "(With home visits) we are able to have a deeper relationship with parents themselves, and when that trust relationship is built, then you can individualize even more."



Sandi Semaken laughs as Abby Hanna and Vicky Glick of the Tribe's Early Head Start program help her son Samuel paint during a home visit.



Sandi Semaken said Samuel has lost a lot of his shyness and is eager now to see the Early Head Start home visitors.

Hanna and Glick say they have seen positive changes in the families they're working with, not just with the children, but also with their parents.

"There's a shift in the whole family," Hanna said.

During their home visit, while Samuel and Glick are painting, Hanna is able to go over some paperwork with Semaken, and discuss ways to work on some of Samuel's challenging behavior. "They help me with issues he has," Semaken said. "It's really about building him as an individual. They come up with so many good ideas."

Part of what home visitors do is to show parents how to make any activity into a learning opportunity. With Samuel, as the visit moved from painting to playing with oversized dice to rolling balls, he was still identifying numbers and colors, and using words to communicate.

"We use things people have in their home, instead of a bunch of

fancy toys that they don't have," Hanna said.

The program also uses a gathering space in its Na'ini building office for meet-ups and parenting sessions. For babies, that might just be tummy time while toddlers can work on motor skills or learn a traditional dance or song. Toddlers can also start to develop the social skills they'll need when they get into a classroom setting, such as sharing with others.

The meet-ups allow parents to reach out to other parents, too, forming an informal support network.

Helping with transitions

Once a child reaches 30 months, Glick said they begin to talk about transitioning, whether it's to Kenaitze's Head Start preschool, or a different preschool program in the area. The Early Head Start staff is a part of that process, too.

"We don't want to give them the tools and then just leave," Hanna said. "We want to make sure they know how to use those tools, too."

Hanna said home visitors use some of the same techniques as the preschool staff, so things will seem familiar when a child makes that transition. Home visitors also will accompany a child on their first day or two of preschool, so they see a familiar face.

Semaken said she thinks Early Head Start will help Samuel when he transitions into a classroom setting.

"It will be interesting to see how it goes with him," Semaken said. "I think the connection he's got to the

school and the teachers, is going to be an asset – building that bridge with his teachers."

In his home visit, Samuel moves on to jumps worthy of a Native Youth Olympics competition, before things wrap up with an intense game that involves rolling a ball through the legs of a line of chairs. Hanna and Glick are able to talk with Semaken about what will come next for Samuel, and they also ask about things Semaken would like to work on for the next week's visit.

"We want to make sure he can be successful with where he goes next," Hanna says.

Information about Early Childhood Center programs, including Early Head Start, Head Start, and the After-School program, can be found at www.kenaitze.org/programs/early-childhood-center.



Samuel and his mom Sandi Semaken cuddle during a break in the play. The Early Head Start program uses home visits to provide support and encouragement for parents to be their child's primary teacher.

Event celebrates indigenous culture

Like the people who wear them, no two pairs of moccasins are the same.

"Each pair is custom not only to the person who is wearing them, but also to the person who constructed them," explained Estelle Thomson, a Traditional Healer with the Tribe.

Thomson said that traditionally, a tape measure was never used in making a pair of moccasins. There are some people so skilled, they can make a perfectly sized pair just by sight.

"For those of us that do need a little extra help, we do use our hands" to measure, Thomson said.

The uniqueness of traditional footwear, from moccasins to mukluks, has made it an important part of the culture of indigenous peoples. The Tribe celebrated that culture with a Rock Your Mocs event on Nov. 16. Participants gathered at the Dena'ina Wellness Center for drumming, food, and a group photo opportunity. Those who weren't able to attend in person were encouraged to post photos of their traditional footwear on social media.

In fact, Rock Your Mocs has its roots as a social media event, founded in 2011 by Jessica Jaylyn Atsye, then 19 years old, of the Laguna Pueblo tribe in New Mexico. Atsye had just attended a ceremony



Participants in this year's Rock Your Mocs event show off their footwear at the Dena'ina Wellness Center.

ny with her family, and asked her mother why they didn't wear their moccasins more often than just for ceremony days.

Atsye launched Rock Your Mocs to provide American Indian and Alaska Native people an opportunity to celebrate their culture. Participants were encouraged to share pictures on social media using the hashtags #ROCKYOURMOCS or #RYM2018.

According to the Rock Your Mocs Facebook page, "By doing so, participants create an online photo album for the world to see and others to enjoy."

Bessie Phillip, a Wellness Assistant at the Dena'ina Wellness Center, said traditional footwear patterns have been shared for generations.

"There's families that have

patterns coming from their ancestors and have been handed down," Phillips said.

That tradition has made moccasins and other types of footwear an important and identifiable part of Alaska Native culture.

"Depending on which culture, you can tell by the style," Thomson said. "Typically, with villages and families, we have our own patterns. If you're familiar with different villages, you can identify which culture, which village, even which family you come from. Some of the patterns you see on footwear are thousands of years old."

Virginia Wolf said her moccasins date from 1982, when she was commercial fishing in Unalakleet and the tribe there wanted her to stay permanently. A lady there made them – even after she knew

Wolf wouldn't be staying.

Wolf's mocs were made with moose hide, seal skin and mouton, and crafted entirely by hand.

"I did acquire a moose hide, so my granddaughter and I are going to see if we can replicate them," Wolf said.

Sassa Peterson's mukluks were made by her mother, with a little help from a neighbor, when Peterson was in high school. Because they are so soft, Peterson says she wears them for special occasions. Peterson said she was actually talking with her mother on the phone before heading over to the Rock Your Mocs event.

"I said, 'Guess what I'm looking for? The mukluks you made for me. I'm going to show them off at the clinic,'" Peterson said.

Rose Huston Anowlic said she doesn't know the origin of her moccasins – she found them at a local second-hand store. She said she wishes she knew who made them, but enjoys the opportunity to wear them.

"It just makes me feel like I'm a part of being here," Anowlic said. "I wear them a lot at Tyotkas in the winter. Just to be able to wear something made by somebody, likely a Native person here in Alaska, is amazing."

Feeling it still in Washington, D.C.

There is strength in unity, and Tribal Council Treasurer Clinton Lageson sees cooperation between tribes from around the country as a way to address the challenges facing Alaska Native and American Indian people.

Lageson, who also serves as the Alaska Area Vice President Alternate to the National Congress of American Indians, was asked to support the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe of Massachusetts during a rally in Washington, D.C. last November.

The Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe is protesting the revocation of its trust status by the federal government, and was marching from the Museum of the American Indian to the U.S. Capitol in support of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe Reaffirmation Act. The legislation would reverse that decision and reaffirm the tribe's trust status.

"From Alaska to the East Coast, one tribe's problems are tribal problems, and as a people, we need to stick together," Lageson said of why he felt it was



Tribal Council Treasurer Clinton Lageson, second from right, stands with other Alaska Native and American Indian leaders from around the country in front of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. last November.

important to show his support. "If the Mashpee Wampanoag people are affected negatively there, it's only a matter of time before we're affected here."

Lageson said he isn't advocating for or against tribes putting land into trust, just that they should be able to exercise their sovereignty and self-determination to make that decision.

In addition to members of Congress who support the legislation,

Lageson said a number of key Alaska Native and American Indian leaders were in attendance. He said the groundwork for the show of unity was laid last year when he sought support from other tribes for a resolution regarding Bureau of Indian Education funding in Alaska.

"Through cooperation with other tribes, if we work with them on their issues, they can work with us on our issues," Lageson said.

The Washington, D.C. rally also attracted support from some other prominent Alaskans – members of the band Portugal. The Man were there as well. The band has provided a platform for Alaska Native and American Indian issues, frequently inviting leaders from local organizations on stage during concerts.

Several of the band's members, including lead singer John Baldwin Gourley, grew up in Alaska, an experience that gave him an appreciation for Alaska Native culture.

"In talking with John, he said that growing up in Alaska, you have to respect the culture," Lageson said.

Lageson said he sees an opportunity to use the band's platform to discuss Alaska issues, such as sovereignty and suicide.

Lageson also hopes to continue to partner with other tribes across the country, and to see the results of that cooperation.

"I'm looking forward to see if the work with the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe comes to fruition," Lageson said.

Yaghali Nusdlan

He or she got well



No slowing them down

On a recent Wednesday morning, Michael Dotomain, a Personal Trainer at the Dena'ina Wellness Center, was across campus at Tyotkas Elder Center to lead a "Move with Michael" exercise class.

On this particular day, a half dozen people participated in the class, which involved some gentle movement combined with easy stretching. This group was on the small side; Dotomain said he's had as many as 20 people take part.

The program promotes wellness by providing an opportunity and motivation for Elders to keep moving, especially during a time of year when many people are sedentary.

Dotomain said that when planning the workout, he focuses on exercises to improve mobility and flexibility.

"Some people come with arthritis, or they may have shoulder pain, so we're trying to get them to move in a safe way," Dotomain said.

Laura Hobson said she enjoys regular exercise, though it's something she didn't take up until after she retired.

"I wish I would have started earlier," Hobson said.

In addition to Move with Michael, she enjoys Tai Chi classes.

"It helps your balance," Hobson said.

Hobson said exercising with a group helps.

"I'm glad to see a lot of people that do it," she said.

"It's more fun," Noelita Lopez said about exercising with a group. "And you do a better job when you do it with a group."

Lopez said she feels good after exercising, though she said she should start doing more at home, too.

"Once a week is not enough," she said.

Dotomain said Wellness staff had discussed a Strong People class for Elders in the past, but getting Elders over to the Wellness Center gym never caught on. So, they figured, why not bring it to them? Dotomain stops by Tyotkas



Participants in a "Move With Michael" fitness class get fit together in the library at Tyotkas Elder Center.



Personal Trainer Michael Dotomain leads participants through a stretching routine.

every week to collect steps, and leads the exercise class every other week.

There's also about 30 Elders participating in the Step-It-Up Challenge, which runs until March 20. Elders are provided with pedometers

and encouraged to track their steps.

Dotomain said the challenge started off quietly, but the first time he put the leaders' names and progress on the big whiteboard by the Tyotkas entrance, it generated a lot more interest.

Dotomain said creating a challenge is a good way to get people moving, especially over the winter.

"Having the challenge helps," Dotomain said. "A lot of their health care providers will

tell them they need to walk more. The challenge helps to hold them accountable."

Hobson said that before the challenge, she didn't realize how much she was moving.

"You don't think you take that many steps in a week," Hobson said.

Elders interested in participating in the Step-It-Up Challenge can contact Dotomain at 907-335-7588. The contest includes prizes for reaching goals.

The Move with Michael schedule is posted at Tyotkas. For more information, call 907-335-7280.

Lost and found at DWC

Have you misplaced an item during a visit to the Dena'ina Wellness Center?

Front desk staff have collected a number of lost and found items. In addition to the usual hats, gloves and scarves, there are also pieces of jewelry that staff would like to reunite with its owner.

Reach the front desk at 907-335-7500.

Cooking with Kenaitze: Warm up on a cold winter day

As the temperature drops outside, there's nothing better than warming up inside with a hot, hearty meal. On this page, find a tasty way to serve up moose meat, a recipe to add a rich boost to ramen noodles, and an easy recipe for stew.

What's cooking in your kitchen? Do you have a favorite recipe to share? We'd love to hear from you! Email hottopics@kenaitze.org. You can also use the "Contact Us" button on the Tribe's web page, www.kenaitze.org.

Watch the Tribe's Facebook page for announcements for upcoming cooking workshops at the Dena'ina Wellness Center. Visit facebook.com/kenaitze.

CARBONARA RAMEN PASTA

In January, Dena'ina Wellness Center Registered Dietician Caraline Tompkins conducted a workshop on "Ramen with a Boost." Here's one of the recipes she prepared.

Ingredients

4 slices bacon, cut into 1/2 inch pieces
2 tablespoons salted butter
1 1/2 cups half-and-half
2 (3-ounce) packages ramen
2 tablespoons water
2 tablespoons grated Parmesan
1 egg, beaten
1 tablespoon chopped parsley

Directions

1. In a skillet on medium heat, add bacon. Cook until crispy, about 5 to 7 minutes. Remove and set aside. 2. Add butter and half-and-half. Whisk until butter is melted. 3. Gently break ramen into a single layer and add to milk mixture. Turn heat to medium-high and let milk boil, gently stirring the ramen to break it up. If milk evaporates too quickly and ramen is not soft, add 2 tablespoons of water at a time. Sprinkle with cheese. Turn off heat, add egg and stir quickly until cooked. 4. Stir in cooked bacon and parsley. 5. Divide between two plates. Sprinkle with more Parmesan to serve.

WINTER STEW

Eat your vegetables in this delicious chunky stew. Serve it by itself or with cooked rice, mashed potatoes, or macaroni. Serves 6.

Ingredients

1/2 pound winter squash, diced (or 1/2 can, about 8 ounces, low-sodium sweet potatoes, drained)
1/2 pound turnips, diced (or 1/2 can, about 8 ounces, low-sodium sliced potatoes, drained)
1/2 cup onions, diced
2 1/2 cups low-sodium tomato juice
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1 tablespoon paprika (if you have it)
1 can (about 24 ounces) canned beef
1/4 cup (about 2 ounces) canned apricots, drained and diced

Directions

1. In a large pot, combine squash, turnips, onions, tomato juice, and pepper. If using paprika, add that too. Mix well.
2. Cook over medium to high heat and bring the pot to a boil for 5 minutes.
3. Lower heat and cook over low to medium heat for 30 minutes. Stir the pot every 15 minutes.
4. Add beef and apricots to the pot and mix well.
5. Cook over low heat for 10 minutes.

Recipe from "A Harvest of Recipes with USDA Foods," a publication of Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). Download at <https://whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/>.



MOOSE MEAT, GRAVY AND RICE

Ingredients

1 pound moose meat
1 tsp garlic powder
Salt to taste
Pepper to taste
3 to 4 cups water
1/4 cup soy sauce
1 bunch broccoli
1/2 bunch cauliflower
1 small can mushrooms
4 tbsp cornstarch or flour
1/2 cup water

Directions

Cut meat into bite size pieces and brown in large fry pan. Add salt, pepper, garlic powder. When meat is well done and brown, add water and soy sauce, bring to a boil, let simmer for 45 minutes to 1 hour. Cut vegetables into bite size pieces and add to meat. Let simmer for 15 minutes. Mix cornstarch into 1/2 cup water. Mix very well and add to meat, and vegetables, stirring constantly until desired thickness. Cook for about 5 minutes or until gravy is done. Serve over steamed rice.

This recipe is from the "Traditional Food Guide for the Alaska Native People," published by the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. The guide contains nutritional information and preparation tips for wild Alaskan meats, fish, seafood and plants that are part of our Alaska Native cultures across the state. To order a copy, email cancer@anthc.org.

The Big Picture



Participants in this year’s Rock Your Mocs event show off their footwear at the Dena’ina Wellness Center. See story, p. 9.

Our Mission

To assure Kahtnuht’ana Dena’ina thrive forever.

Our Values

These are the beliefs and principles that define our people and will assure our future as a tribe:

- **Family:** Honoring and sustaining health and happiness of family as a first responsibility
- **Stewardship:** Respectful use of land, resources and all creations
- **Spiritual Beliefs:** Acknowledging the existence of a higher power and respecting spiritual beliefs
- **Education:** Passing down cultural knowledge and traditions and supporting formal education

Our Vision

By 2025, the Kahtnuht’ana Dena’ina have enhanced and strengthened the prosperity, health and culture of their people and tribe by:

- working toward united effort with Native organizations and other governments that impact our people.
- developing and implementing a tribal education system.
- living our traditional values and practices.
- empowering our sovereignty.
- continuing to demonstrate resiliency.
- striving for excellence in all of our programs.
- elevating the wellness of our people.
- using our talents and resources to ensure we are able to take care of ourselves and share with others.

Addresses and phone numbers

Administration Building

150 N. Willow St., Kenai, AK 99611
907-335-7200
855-335-8865 fax

Early Childhood Center

130 N. Willow St., Kenai, AK 99611
907-335-7260

Tyotkas Elders Center

1000 Mission Ave., Kenai, AK 99611
907-335-7280

**Yaghanen Youth Program,
Education and Career Development**
35105 K-B Dr., Soldotna, AK 99669
907-335-7290

Environmental Program

1106 Mission Ave., Kenai, AK 99611
907-398-7933

Dena’ina Wellness Center

508 Upland St., Kenai, AK 99611
907-335-7500

Na’ini Family and Social Services

510 Upland St., Kenai, AK 99611
907-335-7600

Tribal Court

508 Upland St., Kenai, AK 99611
907-335-7219

On the Web: kenaitze.org

On Facebook: facebook.com/kenaitze

