

## Paid in full



Members of the Tribal Council and Finance Committee pose July 27 with a ceremonial check at the Dena'ina Wellness Center. Pictured are Kenneth Oder, Council Chairperson Wayne Wilson Jr., Sharon Isaak, Council Member James O. Segura, Linda Ross, interim Executive Director Dawn Nelson, Council Secretary Diana Zirul, Ben Baldwin, Council Member Liisia Blizzard, Council Member Jennifer Showalter Yeoman, Director of Financial Services Michael Dixon, Council Vice-Chairperson Bernadine Atchison and Council Treasurer Clinton Lageson.

## Tribe pays off Wellness Center loan 16 years early

The tide indeed is coming back in. As planning and construction for the Dena'ina Wellness Center progressed, the tribe focused on the concept of Naqantughedul, the idea that the tide has turned, and with it, a return of the culture that had been eroded over the years.

Friday, July 27 marked a major milestone for the tribe as the Wellness Center construction loan was paid off in full. Tribal Council Chairperson Wayne Wilson Jr. and Treasurer Clinton Lageson signed a check for \$9,462,511.19, covering the remaining balance on the \$11 million loan.

"It's an awesome day," Wilson said after he and Lageson hand-delivered the check to First National

Bank Alaska's Kenai branch.

"I think it's exciting that we're paying off something we didn't even envision being able to do when we started the project," Wilson said.

Wilson said that when construction of the Wellness Center was under way, some wondered if this day would ever come – never mind that it came just four years in to the 20-year term of the loan.

"We had a strong vision, strong goals and a great plan, but there was still some doubt," Wilson said.

Wilson emphasized that it has been a group effort for the tribe to be in a position to pay off the loan while still maintaining a healthy savings account. The early payoff

will save the tribe \$3.8 million in interest.

Wilson said one of the tribe's concerns is sustaining services at the Wellness Center after the Indian Health Service Joint Venture expires. Joint Venture funding covers staffing costs for the Wellness Center for 20 years. The tribal council has made a motion to put the \$834,829 per year that would have gone toward paying the loan into an account to be used for future projects which will continue to fund Wellness Center operations when the time comes.

"We need to be saving it for what happens in the future," Wilson said.

As part of the Indian Health

Service Joint Venture, Kenaitze Indian Tribe is wholly responsible for providing the facility. Because of this, Wilson explained, the Director of Financial Services and the Finance Committee have been exploring ways to manage the tribe's assets that best maintain programs and services by passing a Treasury Policy, committing to long-term planning goals, and paying off the loan.

A number of factors allowed the tribe to be able to pay off the loan early. The tribe saw savings from careful budgeting, experienced greater-than-anticipated revenue growth, and favorable federal contract negotiations. Other factors include an increase in Medicaid

See **LOAN**, p. 4



## MESSAGE FROM THE TRIBAL COUNCIL

Congratulations to all of you for the hard work and dedication which has allowed the tribe to pay off the Dena'ina Wellness Center loan! This early payoff will result in a \$3.8 million savings in interest payments.

Summer is half over, many of us have been able to use the Tribal net to fill our freezers with fish and many of us are getting ready for the hunting season. The Tribal Council hopes that you have had the opportunity to enjoy the summer by going camping, hiking and taking nice walks along the beach.

### TRIBAL COURT

The Council has recently appointed Russell Wilson Sr. as a Tribal Court Judge which now means that all of the vacancies have been filled. Chief Judge Susan Wells along with Evelyn Huf, Rusty Swan, Kimberley Sweet, Mary Ann Mills, Virginia Wolf and Russell Wilson Sr. will work together to ensure that the Tribal Court continues to be successful into the future.

The Council has approved the Judicial Code of Conduct which establishes a Judicial Review Board. Tribal members who are interested in serving on this board should submit letters of intent by September 7.

### ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

The Council has been working on the tribe's strategic plan which has included evaluation of the management of the tribe and its programs. As part of this process, the Council has restructured the organizational chart to improve the management and focus of each of the tribe's main responsibilities. There will now be two Executive Directors who will report directly to the Council, one whose primary focus will be the Health Systems while other will focus on Tribal Administration. The Council has also created the Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina Health Board whose responsibility will be to advise the Council on all matters related to the health care services.

Both Executive Director positions are currently vacant. Dawn Nelson has been selected to serve as the Interim Executive Director as the Council pursues the recruitment and hiring process. Dawn has served in the capacity as the Director of Human Resources for the past two years and has extensive experience in the health care field, which the Council feels will assist in this transition.

Recognizing the tribal members' concern about the permanent placement of a physician, the Tribal Council has partnered with a physician recruiting firm to hire a physician whose focus will be adult primary care.

### STRATEGIC PLAN

The Council has developed four long-term visionary statements to guide staff as they develop a detailed strategic and operations plan.

- **Campus vision:** To provide a culturally appropriate home that provides a sense of belonging that fulfills the needs of the future growth of the Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina.
- **Education vision:** To provide a culturally appropriate educational environment that facilitates lifelong learning for all Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina.
- **Health Vision:** To provide a culturally appropriate, sustainable and accessible health care system that empowers wellness throughout the generations.
- **Economic Development Vision:** To provide economic means to ensure self-determination through opportunities for all Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina.

Through the support of the tribal membership, we have a strong foundation to assure that Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina thrive forever!

Duk'idli – Respectfully,

Wayne D. Wilson Jr.  
Tribal Council Chairperson

# Changes discussed at quarterly meeting

Tribal members received a number of updates during the July 7 quarterly meeting, including progress on the upcoming Secretarial Election and strategy for asserting the tribe's fishing rights.

The Secretarial Election is an effort to allow the tribe to amend its constitution without needing Department of Interior review. The tribe has been working through the process with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The tribe is responding to a BIA request for the exact language of the amendment to be voted on, and an electronic list of tribal members eligible to vote.

The tribe will appoint two members to an election committee, which will then meet to set an election date.

Regarding tribal fishery rights, it was reported that the proposal for a rural determination for the Kenaitze Indian Tribe had been rejected by Federal Subsistence Board staff. The tribe is working on an appeal and will argue that subsistence board staff were in error and should have advanced the proposal to the board.

The tribe is looking at the board's rural subsistence determination for Saxman, a community near Ketchikan, and seeking a new determination for the Kenai area based on a similar argument.

At the same time, the tribe is preparing a proposal for the state's Joint Board of Fisheries and Game, with an eye on the appeals process. It was noted that courts have ruled in favor of tribes in a number of recent cases.

Council Vice-Chairperson Bernadine Atchison said that the process is slow but necessary.

"We still have to show that we went through these steps, and it takes us to a higher place where we can fight for our fishing rights," she said.

In other fishing news, Council Member James Segura reported that as of July 7, 2,000 fish had come to the tribe's net near the mouth of the Kenai River, of which only four were king salmon.

The meeting opened with a presentation on the Henu' Community Wellness Court, a joint jurisdictional court operated by the tribe and the Alaska Court System.

Tribal Court Chief Judge Susan Wells introduced five of the program's eight current participants, who shared their background and the impact that Henu' has had in their lives. They talked about being stuck in a revolving door between substance abuse and the court system. They also shared the positive changes they have been able to make through participation in the program, from maintaining sobriety

to finding employment, being able to get a driver's license, and even getting visitation and custody of their children. The program, which requires a minimum of 18 months for participants to complete, will see its first graduates in the coming months.

"Henu' gave me the resources to help myself," Eli Darien, a program participant and Kenaitze Elder, said. Darien hopes to become a drug and alcohol counselor.

Also during the meeting, Executive Director Bart Garber provided an overview of changes made to the tribe's organizational structure, and goals for a new health board.

With the reorganization, the positions of Director of Operations and Director of Health Systems were eliminated. A new Dena'ina Wellness Center Executive Director will manage health care operations under the oversight of the health board. The executive director will continue to support Dena'ina Wellness Center operations and oversee other tribal programs.

One other structural change moves Na'ini Family and Social Services under the Dena'ina Wellness Center, and creates a new department for education and training.

During discussion of the new structure, concerns were raised as to whether changes are adequate to address recent growth of the tribe's services while still meeting needs of tribe members.

Garber said changes are "step one," and that "we've got soft clay to work with now."

Council Chairperson Wayne Wilson Jr. said he feels things are moving in the right direction.

"We're early in the ballgame, but splitting things up like this should help out across the tribe," Wilson said. "(Being on the council) feels a lot like being a firefighter. We spend all of our time jumping around, putting Band-Aids on things. You can see the positives, but you can also see the fires, and there's not enough firefighters to put them all out."

Wilson said the council is in the process of writing health board by-laws, but anticipates a seven- to nine-member board with an equal number of council members and tribal members, and one representative from Salamatof Native Association.

In response to a question about qualifications to serve on the board, Wilson said the Council would like to see the most qualified board possible. Garber said he would like to see training available, not just for the future health board but for all of the tribe's committees.

# A unified voice at NCAI

When Tribal Council Treasurer Clinton Lageson spoke on the floor of the National Congress of American Indians to present a resolution, the hardest part of the job was already done – working with representatives from other parts of Alaska to present a unified voice.

Lageson, who was elected the Alaska Area Vice President Alternate last fall, was presenting a resolution on subsistence use of Chinook salmon that originated with the Kuskokwim Delta. The resolution calls for NCAI support for a request for reconsideration of the federal subsistence board's decision to effectively delegate management of Kuskokwim River Chinook in federal public waters to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The resolution states that Fish and Game does not have the authority to enforce the subsistence priority set forth in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.

Lageson said that in the past, delegates to the NCAI might push issues or resolutions that pertain only to their area, but saw in this resolution an issue that affects Alaska Native people across the state.

"I don't think any of us are exempt from this fight right now," Lageson said.

Lageson said that there can be tension and competing interests between regions of Alaska, but he was able to bring everyone involved together to agree on resolution verbiage before presenting it on the floor. That organization led to great support, he said.

Resolutions like this one are important, Lageson said, when taking on issues with federal, state or local governments or agencies.

"It shows we have support at the national level," Lageson said. "If you're going up against the state Board of Fisheries, or the federal board, they understand that you've got a game plan down, and you're not just coming to them willy-nilly."

Lageson said he felt good about taking his first steps on the national level, and credited fellow tribal council members Wayne Wilson Jr. and Bernadine Atchison for their advice and support throughout the process.

"I wasn't on my own. It felt good to have their support," he said.

He also was pleased to see that the NCAI executive board noted and was impressed with the professionalism shown on the floor.



Tribal Council Treasurer Clinton Lageson speaks during the National Congress of American Indian's Mid Year Conference and Marketplace in Kansas City, Missouri.

Lageson said being able to collaborate on an issue is a big step forward for the Kenaitze Indian Tribe.

"I think for us to not have to debate with other regions (of Alaska) is the most positive part about it," Lageson said. "Instead, we were able to get all the right people to the table."

In past, when representatives from the different regions of Alaska couldn't work together, issues would end up being tabled.

"And then nobody would be helped," Lageson said.

Now, he's developing connections around the state that he can reach out to. Likewise, he said others from around the state have been reaching out to him.

Lageson was elected to the position in October 2017. He was told that an Elder was interested in seeing him run for the seat, and had support for it. Wilson helped rally support for him, too, he said.

"They wanted to engage the younger generation coming in, and not hold seats hostage," Lageson said.

The NCAI calendar includes the mid-year meeting, the annual meeting, a winter session and monthly call-ins.

"There's a lot of time put in to study on national-level issues. It's a lot different than the local and state level and what we know here," Lageson said.

Lageson said it's been neat to be a part of the process.

"Anything to help move things further along for Alaska Natives, I'm on board with," Lageson said. "I think the marginalization of our people only stops when we stand up for ourselves."

## TRIBAL COUNCIL

Wayne Wilson Jr.  
Chairperson  
wwilson@kenaitze.org



Bernadine Atchison  
Vice-Chairperson  
batchison@kenaitze.org



Clinton Lageson  
Treasurer  
clageson@kenaitze.org



Diana Zirul  
Secretary  
dzirul@kenaitze.org



Liisia Blizzard  
Council Member  
lblizzard@kenaitze.org



James O. Segura  
Council Member  
jsegura@kenaitze.org



Jennifer Showalter  
Yeoman  
Council Member  
jyeoman@kenaitze.org



## Apply now for open committee seats

Would you like to be more involved with the tribe?

Applications are being accepted for open seats on committees that help inform and guide decisions made by the Tribal Council.

Kenaitze Indian Tribe members interested in applying for a committee seat should submit a letter of intent to Sasha Jackson, Tribal Member Services Coordinator, 150 North Willow St., Kenai, AK 99611, sjackson@kenaitze.org.

### Finance Committee (one seat)

The purpose of the committee is to provide advice and recommendations regarding financial matters and financial policies.

### Education Committee (one seat)

The purpose of the committee is to provide culturally appropriate, Kenaitze Dena'ina support and guidance during the design, planning and implementation of a Tribal Education System.

### Traditional Healing Committee (one seat)

The purpose of the committee is to provide education and planning for traditional healing services.

### Constitution Committee (two seats)

The purpose of the committee is to review and consider revisions to the Kenaitze Indian Tribe's Constitution and make recommendations.



## LOAN, FROM P. 1

payments, as well as an increase in other insurance payments.

Construction costs for the Wellness Center were just shy of \$30 million; furnishing and equipping the facility was another \$4 million. The tribe received a \$20 million grant from the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development. Contributions also came from the Rasmuson Foundation, the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, Cook Inlet Region Inc., and The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority.

The Dena'ina Wellness Center had been decades in the making, with planning and design of the building beginning in earnest in 2009. In 2011, the proposal put forth by the tribe was one of three nationwide to receive a highly competitive Indian Health Service Joint Venture Award.

The tribe acquired the necessary parcels in Old Town Kenai, a significant location as it was an original village site of the Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina people.

Construction on the 52,000-square-foot building began in fiscal year 2011, and the Dena'ina Wellness Center began seeing un'ina in April 2014. The tribe marked the opening with three days of celebrations in June 2014.



Council Vice-Chairperson Bernadine Atchison; Secretary Diana Zirul; Finance Committee member Linda Ross; Accounts Payable Specialist Christine Uribe-Koivisto; Director of Financial Services Michael Dixon; and Finance Committee members Kenneth Oder, Ben Baldwin and Sharon Isaak watch as Council Chairperson Wayne Wilson Jr., and Council Treasurer Clinton Lageson sign the real check.

# Gathering sparks connections

There is strength in community, and rebuilding those connections is a crucial part of community healing.

That was a clear takeaway for participants in the Gathering of Alaska Native People, hosted at the Dena'ina Wellness Center over three days in early June.

"That's the way we as indigenous people have survived, the interdependence we have with each other," Estelle Thomson, a Traditional Healer at the Dena'ina Wellness Center, said. "It's what gives us resilience and keeps our families and communities together."

Audré Gifford, Project Coordinator in the Behavioral Health program, said it was the first Gathering of Alaska Native People held in this community. The curriculum for the event was adopted from the Gathering of Native Americans curriculum, developed in the early 1990s by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

The goal of the program is to encourage community engagement by building on four themes: belonging, mastery, interdependence, and generosity. Discussions serve as a guide for prevention planning and community healing.

"We saw a need for healing in this tribe," Gifford said of her inspiration to organize the event.

Funding for the event came from a Native Connections grant from SAMHSA. The Ninilchik Traditional Council partnered for the event, and people came from Ninilchik to participate.

Gifford said the Alaska Native version of the curriculum includes a greater focus on spirituality, plants and animals. Instead of a medicine wheel, there is a wellness circle more specific to Alaska Native values.

A recurring theme of the gathering was how to repair fractures in families and in the community.

"A lot of the focus was on community. Nowadays, that's one of the fractured pieces. We're not as interdependent as we used to be," Gifford said.

Participants spent the first part of the event – Saturday in particular – taking a deep dive into the issues that have led to fractures within families and the community. Sunday was dedicated to pulling the pieces back together.

Gifford described an exercise in which participants laid out a blanket and placed some sage in



Gary Neumann, facilitator for the Gathering of Alaska Natives, leads participants in an exercise aimed at exploring healthy family structures. The sage in the middle of the blanket represents spirituality, and participants were arranged to represent family and community, and then removed to symbolize loss. (Photo courtesy Maureen Todd)

the middle, representing the community's ritual. Around it, people were arranged to represent children, parents, and grandparents. The exercise was symbolic of a healthy family, with spirituality at its center, surrounded by family.

Gifford said that's something that's become fractured, whether it be from children being sent to boarding school, mothers forced to work outside the home, or fathers lost to alcohol or drug addiction.

**'Even though there were different cultures together, it felt like one big family. I think that's what everyone should be feeling like.'**

– Nina Weatherly

"It was a really good visual representation of how our community was broken. Everyone said it was one of the most powerful exercises because you could see it, feel it, it was tangible."

Thomson said she was drawn to the gathering for the discussion of historical and intergenerational trauma.

"For the work I do, it's important that people are aware that it exists, and how it can manifest in your body and in your community," Thomson said.

Nina Weatherly said she wasn't sure what to expect from the event, but the phrase "gathering of Alas-

ka Natives" grabbed her attention. She said many of the issues that were discussed, including suicide and substance abuse, touch close to home for her.

"It's things that we need to know. ... Instead of hiding it behind closed doors, and keeping silent, we're trying to bring it out in the open," Weatherly said. "... I wish there would be more (events) like this. ... The awareness of suicide, drug and alcohol abuse is a big factor, and I think belonging

er gathering, Thomson said the group's size had benefits.

"The intimacy of the event allowed us to get to know one another on a deeper level than a larger gathering," she said.

Gifford said she was excited to see how the group was open to sharing and committed to helping their community.

"Everybody made a personal commitment to the community to what they believe their responsibility will be. We made personal commitment to help move toward healing," Gifford said.

Gifford said her goal is to ensure youth are more involved in the community.

"My commitment is to bring back the coming-of-age ceremony," Gifford said. "When youth are supported by Elders, they know their place, they know their role, they have a better foundation to stand on."

A good foundation, she said, means youth are less likely to engage in other risky behavior.

Thomson said she would like to see gatherings on a regular basis, perhaps annually, and would encourage others to attend.

"I think education is really important to help people understand the ramifications of trauma in our lives, how it affects us and changes us, and things we can do to heal our bodies and our spirits," Thomson said. "I encourage people to attend things like this to learn more about themselves."

# Enroll Your Child Today!

Located in Kenai

No fees

The Early Childhood Center is currently accepting applications for the 2018-19 school year. The program serves families from many different backgrounds, regardless of income, as well as children with disabilities.

- Home-based program for pregnant mothers and children up to age 3
- Classroom program for children age 3 or 4 by Sept. 1

For more information, please call 907-335-7260



# Shovel ready

## Archaeology camp gives youth a look at the past

Sometimes digging into the past can give us insight into how we live today.

Participants in the recent Susten Archaeology Camp, part of the Yaghanen Youth Program, were able to make that connection as they explored a site near the Swanson River and Rainbow Lake for possible future study.

“It’s definitely an important part of my heritage,” Judah Eason, a camp participant, said. “There’s so little we can find from remnants – (the Dena’ina) were such a clean type of people. It really opens up your eyes to how people need to focus on recycling – don’t pollute our area, don’t leave things behind that are going to be here for hundreds of years.”

Camp participants had just learned about “leave no trace” principles from Kenai National Wildlife Refuge Ranger Amber Kraxberger-Linson, including details on how long it takes for everyday items, from banana peels to aluminum cans, to decompose.

But for prehistoric Dena’ina

people, of whom camp participants were trying to find evidence, it was a very different story.

“Their possessions, their things, when they were done with them, they would burn them or put them back in the ground or the water,” Kya Ahlers, another camp participant, said. Under the

direction of archaeologist Debbie Corbett, camp participants spent part of their week mapping and recording in an area she thinks has a high probability of Dena’ina habitation. The site is on a knoll about 4,000 feet from the Swanson River and just above Rainbow Lake.

The high school-age campers make good archaeologists, Corbett said.

“They’re young enough to crash through the brush and crawl around to look for things,” Corbett said.

Corbett said that in the past, potential sites could be hard to identify, but for this site, she was able to use LIDAR imagery to help hone in on good locations to search. LIDAR stands for Light Detection and Ranging, and generates three-dimensional imagery of the Earth’s surface.

Corbett theorizes that the area around the Swanson River was heavily utilized by the Dena’ina, but the area has not received as much attention from researchers as the larger settlements along the Kenai



River corridor.

As such, research contributed by camp participants is all new.

“It’s interesting; it’s a new site we’re looking at, so it’s never been done before,” said Hanna Wilson, a camp participant.

Prior to looking for a new site, campers visited a known site to get a feel for what to look for.

“It was hard to identify some of the cache pits because there was so much vegetation,” Ahlers said. Their work mapping and recording the new site will give future Susten camp participants a good idea of where to start excavating.

“We’re taking the long view,” Corbett said of the

year-to-year nature of the camp. “We do this every year, but we really only have three days for the field work and research.”

Corbett said five known habitation sites have been located in the Swanson River area. She theorizes that Dena’ina in the area lived on small homesteads with extended family groups, differing from the large villages located along the Kenai River.

“We’re putting together a picture of prehistoric use of this area – very, very slowly,” Corbett said.

In addition to mapping potential cache pits or dwellings, camp participants identified the plants found around the site. When people inhabit a site, Corbett said, they alter the soil.

“By identifying the plants, and identifying their Dena’ina names, they can look into traditional uses of those plants,” Corbett said.

Campers spent one morning studying soil samples taken during



At left, Hanna Wilson practices digging a cathole as part of a “leave no trace” activity during the Susten Archaeology Camp near the Swanson River on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. Above, Hanna Wilson examines material she found in a soil sample during a Susten Archaeology Camp activity at the Kenai National Wild.

a previous Susten camp. Samples revealed fragments of charcoal, part of an insect, other yet to be identified substances, and as Eason put it, “more dirt.”

The camp schedule included

planned presentations on Dena’ina culture, but camp participants were just as engaged in the informal discussions during and between activities.

“I think we had more of that this

At left, Susten Archaeology Camp participant Samiel Wilson and Yaghanen Youth Advocate Jonny Wilson lead off a “leave no trace” relay race during a camp activity at the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge’s Outdoor Education Center. Campers had to run the recommended distance away from a campsite to dig a cathole – a 6- to 8-inch-deep hole to dispose of human waste – then hand off their trowel to the next camper.



At top, Judah Eason weighs a soil sample during a camp activity. Campers found charcoal, a part of an insect, and yet to be identified substances in the soil samples. Above, archaeologist Debbie Corbett talks with Eason as he sorts a soil sample. Campers analyzed soil samples taken during a previous Susten camp.

year,” Corbett said of the campers’ questions about Dena’ina and other Alaska Native cultures. “Being able to sit down with the kids, and the people running Yaghanen, talking about what we do – that informal discussion is really important.”

Other camp highlights included a seminar on bear safety, an exercise in predicting wildland fire behavior, and a canoe trip across Dolly Varden Lake.

Ahlers said she appreciated the presentation on bear safety because it went beyond the basics. Kraxberger-Linson delved into bear behavior and tactics for brown bear and black bear encounters.

“We learned how you can tell

what a bear might do by its body language,” Ahlers said.

Camp wrapped up with a trip to the K’beq’ Interpretive Site in Cooper Landing. The archaeological site there includes a house pit and a couple of cache pits.

Kraxberger-Linson, who grew up on the Kenai Peninsula, said her time at the Susten camp provided depth to her knowledge of the area’s past.

“It brings the whole area to life,” she said. “This is much more than a tourist destination. It’s home, and it’s been home for thousands of years and supported people. ... We’re very fortunate to live here.”



Kya Ahlers, Julianne Wilson and Andrew Wilson canoe on Dolly Varden Lake off Swanson River Road in the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. Campers learned some basic canoe strokes before setting off across the lake.



## Tribe now taking Early Head Start applications

The Kenaitze Indian Tribe's Early Childhood Center is accepting applications for its new Early Head Start program.

Early Head Start is a home-based preschool program serving pregnant mothers and children up to age 3. The program promotes the healthy development of children, and helps families build skills and confidence. Early Head Start staff schedule home visits on weekdays between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. year-round.

The once-a-week visits typically last 90 minutes. Home visitors will work with children, watching for developmental milestones, and teach families how to be advocates for their child. Opportunities for socialization with other families will be available every other week.

The Early Childhood Center serves families from many different backgrounds. Early Head Start services are open to Native and non-Native children, regardless of household income. Early Head Start staff are available to answer any questions about enrolling your child in the program.

Early Head Start applications are available at the Early Childhood Center, 130 North Willow Street in Kenai, and online at [www.kenaitze.org/programs/early-childhood-center/](http://www.kenaitze.org/programs/early-childhood-center/).

For more information, call the Early Childhood Center's main line, 907-335-7260.

## Learning skills to pay the bills

What does it take to find a good job – and then keep it?

Participants in the Education and Career Development Program's Youth Employment Camp, held in June, got a hands-on look at some of the skills needed to join the work force.

For example, staff from Na'ini Family and Social Services talked with camp participants about incorporating traditional values into customer service practices. Roberta Turner, Social Services Administrator, pointed to five values in particular to guide staff: henu (willingness to work, cooperation, helpfulness); ada (love, sharing, humility); qiz'unch' (forgiveness, openness, honesty, truth); yinihugheltani (respect for yourself); and nagh'utdalt's'ina (respect for our neighbors and others).

Applying those values to the workplace includes a focus on listening to un'ina (those who come to us); showing compassion; observing confidentiality rules; maintaining credibility; and showing a respectful attitude.

Raven Willoya-Williams, Daggeyi Program Assistant with the Education and Career Development Program, based the curriculum on last year's camp, with a few updates for this year. She drew on people and resources from around the tribe to share experience and insight with camp participants.

Participants started the camp by learning about employer expectations and goals, and visited the Kenai Peninsula Job Center for a workshop on resumé writing.

Sonja Barbaza, Housing Representative, led a session on workplace communication.



Raven Willoya-Williams and Roberta Turner, standing at back, lead camp participants through a game during a break in learning.

Shannon Dodge, Student Services Coordinator, talked about the importance of knowing your tribe and Native corporation affiliation. She conducted a quick survey before her presentation, and found just one camp participant knew their corporation, and just a handful knew their tribe.

Misty Klodt, Daggeyi Intern Supervisor, did a presentation on college and career readiness to give camp participants an idea of steps to take during high school to be ready to pursue a degree or a place in the work force.

Audré Gifford and Chrystal Wright from the Behavioral Health program discussed the importance of mental health and self-care with camp participants.

And Communications Department Technical Writer Will Morrow went over some of the dos and don'ts of social media for job hunters and employees.

The camp wrapped up with a trip to Cooper Landing. The plan had been to hike to Russian River

Falls, but due to inclement weather, it was shortened to a stroll along the boardwalks by the river and finished off with a stop for ice cream at Wildman's.

Ben Spinka of Kenai, headed into his freshman year of high school, said he found the camp to be informative and fun.

Among the things he said learned were "how to make a resumé and apply for jobs, how to present yourself, what clothes to wear, how to talk and act during an interview or talking to your supervisor ... I had a lot of fun, but I learned a lot, too."

Spinka said he'd like to land an internship with the Daggeyi Internship Program next summer.

Shawna Tickett, also of Kenai, is interning with the Early Childhood Center this summer. She said she learned more about writing a resumé than she had known, such as how to include your work history. She also learned about teamwork, she said.

## Campers go Squiggly, Wiggly and green

One of the goals of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe's Environmental Program Janteh Science Camps is to provide the tools for the next generation to live sustainably. At the "Growing Green" camp in early June, those tools included a trowel, gardening gloves, and worms.

"We're teaching about sustainable living, and all the tools we want this generation to have to keep the Kenaitze people independent and self-sufficient," Environmental Program Coordinator Brenda Trefon said.

During the three-day camp, participants learned about growing their own food from start to finish. Camp activities included planting potato starts, planting an herb garden, making bagels from scratch and pairing them with some smoked fish, learning about

traditional uses of plants, and comparing the flavors of different types of honey.

One of the camp highlights, though, was making small worm composters. Participants used small, 5-gallon plastic totes and added some coconut fiber and torn-up newspaper to create a bed for "Squiggly" and "Wiggly" – the worms that will compost household garbage. Trefon told campers that about 20 percent of household garbage is compostable.

"You could have one in every kitchen on the Kenai," Trefon said. "We've had one in the office. They really don't smell bad if maintained properly."

Trefon talked about how compost can help plants grow while campers mixed soil and peat moss for their potato starts.

"It's like a recipe. Did you guys know you need a recipe for dirt?" Trefon said.

Camp participant Jalyn Yeoman, age 11, was surprised to learn that the purple potatoes they were planting are edible.

"Kind of like rainbow carrots?" she asked.

Brianna Blankenship, age 11, said it was her first time growing potatoes, but she had grown strawberries and cucumbers in the past and was looking forward to the harvest.

Laural Schadle, Environmental Program Assistant and a student at Kenai Peninsula College, has been helping with science camps for about a year. Other science camps this summer cover earth science and marine biology. Schadle said she hopes camp participants develop a deeper appreciation for science.

## Program puts student on the right path

Nadia Walluk is headed to college next fall to study nursing.

Before she found nursing as her calling, she picked up valuable job skills and training as part of the Daggeyi Internship Program through the tribe's Education and Career Development program.

For example, she learned she was a very goal-oriented person. And through the internship program, she learned how to set goals – and how to take the necessary steps to achieve them.

The internship program is about two years old, said Misty Klodt, Daggeyi Internship Supervisor, and Nadia was the second intern in the program.

"We're providing mentorship and support, whether the path is higher education or career training," Klodt said.

Last summer, Walluk participated in a nursing camp at the University of Alaska Anchorage through the Recruiting and Retention of Alaska Natives into Nursing (RRANN) program. She learned some of the basics, such as how to diagnose a patient, take vitals and administer injections.

It was also where she made up her mind that she wanted to be a nurse.

Walluk's involvement in the Daggeyi program has led to an externship at Heritage Place, a continuing care facility owned and operated by Central Peninsula Hospital in Soldotna. She began the summer working on her Certified Nursing Assistant certification at Heritage Place. With her externship, she's helping out with activities for residents.

Submit the completed application and proof of enrollment to the Education and Career Development Department, 510 Upland Street, Kenai, AK 99611. For more information, call 907-335-7600.

"So far, I've done a lot of bingo – I'm getting good at that – and (doing) nails on Saturdays," Walluk said.

Walluk has been active in the tribe's Yaghanen Youth Program, including the Jabi-la'ina Dance Group and "a little" Native Youth Olympics.

She also participated in "all the camps" Yaghanen offers, and has been involved in the Yinihugheltani program. She's a member of the Youth Council, and is headed to San Diego in July for the National Unity Conference.

She said she had a little bit of trepidation about her future plans, but is looking forward to attending classes in the fall.

"At first I was really excited. Then I graduated from high school, and got a little scared. Now I'm getting excited again," Walluk said.

Walluk joined the Daggeyi program in July of 2016, where Klodt helped her fine-tune her application. Her first internship was with Ts'ilq'u Circle. She followed that with internships with the Yaghanen



Nadia Walluk takes Heritage Place resident Laura Lee Curl for a stroll through Soldotna in June.

Youth Program, Tribal Government, and Housing.

Among the many things she's learned through her internships are interpersonal skills. She said her position with Tribal Government really helped with those skills as she was in charge of scheduling the tribe's fishing net all summer, and had to work with all types of people to do that.

The Daggeyi program works with youth ages 14-24. Klodt said the program is fully staffed at five interns. Openings are posted on the tribe's website, and those interested follow an application process, just as they would for any other opening. Internships are meant to be long-term, and end when an intern either leaves for college or moves into a new position.

Interns also gain experience they can put on a resume or add to a portfolio. "We work rotating 10-week internships to build job skills and career expectations," Klodt said. "(Internships) provide exposure to different areas, whether it be customer service, administrative work – it gets them ready for their future."

"A lot of kids think science is boring, but once you get into it, there's so much you can do with it," Schadle said.

As they planted potatoes, participants learned techniques for maintaining their plants, such as watering techniques to encourage roots to grow in the right direction. They mounded the dirt over the potato starts "like a little sand castle."

"They like to grow in little hills," Trefon told campers.

Trefon also asked campers who they would share their potatoes with after they're picked – grandparents and Elders was the answer.

"In the fall, we're going to have a harvest day," Trefon said. "They can come back, dig them up and give them to Elders."

Klodt has regular check-ins with interns where they discuss things like setting goals, and go over an intern's progress in school. Klodt said that in Walluk's case, they looked at what she could do in her last two years of high school to get a leg up on getting into the college program of her choice. Klodt and Walluk said that Walluk's mother, Jennifer Showalter Yeoman, provides some input as well.

Support from the Daggeyi program can also be financial. The program can help with expenses such as books, participation in a summer camp or training, transportation, even equipment or clothing an intern might need. The idea is to take down as many of the barriers that might prevent a young adult from succeeding as possible.

"We want to make sure they have the tools, but also the resources" to be successful, David Knight, Education and Career Development Administrator, said.

With Walluk, Klodt said they meet regularly to set goals, and to identify opportunities – such as the RRANN camp – to build on her goal of becoming a nurse. That process has led to her externship at Heritage Place, and her decision to attend Montana State University in Bozeman in the fall. Klodt was able to connect Walluk with Montana State's Caring for Our Own Program (CO-OP), a student support program for Native American and Alaska Native nursing students, an opportunity that helped Walluk make her decision.

"Every step we've taken with her has been with that big goal in mind," Klodt said.

## New scholarship available for Kenaitze youth

Just ask any parent of a middle-school or high-school student: the costs associated with school activities, cocurriculars, field trips and other opportunities can really add up.

To prevent those costs from becoming a barrier to participation, the tribe's Education Committee and the Education and Career Development Department have developed a new Education Enrichment Scholarship.

"It opens up opportunities for educational experiences that are really pertinent to a young person's development, how they set their path, who they meet along the way," said David Knight, Education and Career Development Administrator. "... That's what we're trying

to promote."

The scholarship is available to Kenaitze Indian Tribe members enrolled full time in grades seven through 12. Education Enrichment Scholarship funds may be used for activities and supplies approved by the Education and Career Development Department when other funding sources or waivers are not already available. Examples include classroom supplies; books; online courses necessary for graduation; uniforms or equipment; cocurricular activities, including Native Youth Olympics, music, drama, debate, forensics, art, and related supplies; field trips; school-sponsored club memberships, dues and activity fees; and after-school programs and summer school for students in

need.

Knight said the tribe has scholarship opportunities available for post-secondary and vocational education, but has had limited funding available for middle- and high-school students. However, over the years, there have been regular requests for that type of assistance.

"The Education Committee and the Education and Career Development Department asked to create this new scholarship to fill that gap," Knight said. "There are educational experiences that come up every year, but they have expenses associated with them."

Knight said the goal is to ensure that students don't miss out on an opportunity because they can't

afford to participate.

To apply for the scholarship, students must submit a completed, signed and dated application, available on the web at [www.kenaitze.org/assistance/scholarships-job-training/](http://www.kenaitze.org/assistance/scholarships-job-training/) or in the Education and Career Development Department office. Signatures of a parent or guardian and a school academic counselor or teacher also are required, along with a copy of the student's Kenaitze Indian Tribe member card.

Submit the completed application and proof of enrollment to the Education and Career Development Department, 510 Upland Street, Kenai, AK 99611. For more information, call 907-335-7600.



# Yaghali Nusdlan

*He or she got well*



## Good to grow: Tribal greenhouse opens

The grand opening of the new greenhouse on the Dena'ina Wellness Center campus was just last month, but fresh produce harvested from the facility already is finding its way into Tyotkas Elders Center meals.

"It's exciting to see the fruits of our labor being used," said Levi Sutton, a Wellness Consultant at DWC.

In fact, as of the June 20 grand opening and blessing, sweet basil, cilantro and kale had been harvested from the greenhouse.

A stroll around the greenhouse reveals a smorgasbord of growing produce: onions, peppers, carrots, beets, squash, tomatoes, potatoes, snap peas and more.

"This is the perfect growing environment," Keri Stout, an Elder Advocate at Tyotkas Elders Center, said as she tended to one of the planters. "There's no bugs, no nothing – you just pull it and eat it."

Stout said she is particularly intrigued by some purple cauliflower she's growing for the first time – the color will provide some visual appeal for salads and other dishes.

Named Ch'kdenlyah yuyeh, meaning "we grow something inside," the new greenhouse builds on past efforts. A pair of smaller greenhouses previously supplied Tyotkas with fresh produce but were removed to make way for DWC construction. Prior to that, the tribe operated a commercial greenhouse at its Ames Road location.

Sutton said that it's been exciting to watch the greenhouse take shape, from the initial construction last fall to watching seeds sprout in recent weeks. He said he's been able to watch the blank canvas gradually become full. Some traditionally used plants were planted during a winter workshop, and some herbs. Planter boxes were constructed in the spring, and then soil was delivered and the planters filled.

"It's a calming space," John Willis, who works with the Elders program, said as he watered a planter. "You get to grow vegetables for Elders, and get Elders to come over and have their own garden spot."

Maddy Morris said she comes



At top, George Holley performs during the opening ceremony for the tribe's new greenhouse held in June. Above, Wellness Director Deb Nyquist talks about how the facility will be utilized.

to work in the greenhouse twice a week, but that's not always enough. "I come and look in the window every day," she said.

Morris said she's amazed at how fast plants are growing. Peas that were "just this big last week" she said, gesturing to indicate seedlings just a few inches tall, are now almost 2 feet tall and may be in need of a little more support.

Sutton's duties include designating planters for different programs' use, and monitoring the greenhouse temperature, what's planted and what's harvested. Produce from the greenhouse will go to Tyotkas

and other tribal programs.

Sutton is learning about greenhouse gardening alongside the facility's other users.

"I got to plant my first garden – I've never done that before," he said.

Greenhouse visits have been incorporated into other programs. For example, Sutton brings participants in tobacco support or diabetes prevention programs in to the green space. The greenhouse also will host the Dena'ina Wellness Center weekly tea time, serving iced tea when the weather gets warm.



The greenhouse is open twice a week for anyone to come visit: Tuesday from 1 to 2:30 p.m.; and Friday from 10 a.m. to noon. Tyotkas has greenhouse time scheduled Tuesday from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. and Friday from 10 to 11 a.m.

"They can help us weed, water, or just give us advice," Sutton said.

Sutton also appreciates the visitors from Tyotkas.

"It's exciting to see our Elders come out here, help water the plants and share their stories about how they gardened or how they grew up," Sutton said.

## Cooking with Kenaitze: Fireweed



For thousands of years, Dena'ina people have hunted and gathered food across Yaghanen, the good land. From moose to salmon to wild berries, food harvested from the land is important to Dena'ina life.

Cooking with Kenaitze highlights ingredients and recipes relevant to Dena'ina culture. This time we focus on fireweed recipes.

Fireweed (nildghuligi) flowers and leaves are used in salads, soups, casseroles, teas, jams and honey. Stems and shoots can be boiled, steamed, and covered with

a cream sauce similar to asparagus. Fireweed shoots can be bundled and hung to dry for a few days. Wilted fireweed can be preserved in seal oil.

Fireweed is an excellent source of vitamins A and C, and a good source of fiber.

Harvest fireweed shoots in early spring, leaves in late spring, buds and flowers in summer and root-stalks in the fall.

Learn more about cooking with fireweed on Aug. 15 from 3 to 5 p.m. at the Dena'ina Wellness Center's Skilak Lake Kitchen.

### FIREWEED JELLY

#### Ingredients

2 1/2 cups fireweed juice  
1 teaspoon lemon juice  
1/2 teaspoon butter  
1 (1 3/4 ounce) package dry pectin  
3 cups sugar

#### Directions

For fireweed juice: Harvest about 8 packed cups of fireweed flowers. Rinse thoroughly and put in 2-quart pot. Add just enough water to make water level just below top of packed flowers. (Juice should be a deep purple color when finished. If too much water is used in boiling process, juice will be a brownish color. More water can always be added after flowers are boiled to increase amount of juice.) Boil flowers in water until color is boiled out and petals are a grayish color. Ladle juice into jar through cheesecloth to strain. Warm fireweed juice, lemon juice and butter on stovetop. Add pectin, bring to boil and boil hard for one minute. Add sugar and bring to full boil for one minute. Skim top of jelly. Pour into pitcher (makes it easier to fill jars) and skim again. Fill sterilized jars leaving 1/8 inch space at top. Process in hot water bath for 10 minutes.

### FIREWEED PICKLES

#### Ingredients

1 pound fresh fireweed shoots  
For the brine:  
1 tablespoon mustard seeds  
1 teaspoon peppercorns  
3/4 cup water  
3/4 cup apple cider vinegar  
1/4 cup sugar  
2 tablespoons sea salt (or canning or pickling salt)

#### Directions

In a saucepan, combine all brine ingredients and bring to a boil. Then remove from heat. Rinse fireweed shoots well. Sterilize your jars, either one quart jar, two pint jars, or four half-pint jars. Pack your jars tightly with the fireweed shoots and cover with brine to 1/2 inch from the top of jar. As you add the brine, you might be able to fit in more fireweed. Cover and cool in the refrigerator. Serve pickles with cheese and crackers, or salmon and cream cheese, or add to an omelet. Store jars in the refrigerator, and use within one month for best quality.

*Recipe courtesy of [ediblealaska.ediblecommunities.com/recipes/fireweed-pickles](http://ediblealaska.ediblecommunities.com/recipes/fireweed-pickles)*

### FIREWEED TEA

#### Ingredients

Fireweed leaves

#### Directions

Gather fireweed leaves before the plant flowers. Wash and dry. Lay leaves flat out on the counter or cutting board and break the middle vein with a rolling pin. Once the vein is flattened, take 3 to 5 leaves depending on size and layer on top of each other. Roll the layered leaves together and make into a ball between your hands. Leave the balled leaves out to dry, but covered from any flavor containingments. Once dry, usually 3 to 5 days, the tea is ready to use!

*Recipe courtesy of Tia Holley*



# The Big Picture



Children from the tribe's Yaghanen Youth Program drum and sing from Kenaitze's float during Kenai's Fourth of July Parade. Little people from the Early Childhood Center walked alongside the float on the sun-filled holiday.

## 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 Elder 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](http://kenaitze.org)

**On Facebook:** [facebook.com/kenaitze](https://facebook.com/kenaitze)

