

# The Counting Cord

Nitnuqeyishi



March-April 2019

KENAITZE INDIAN TRIBE NEWSLETTER

## Secretarial Election results approved

The Kenaitze Indian Tribe sent Resolution No. 2018-22 to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in May, 2018. The resolution requested the Bureau of Indian Affairs to call a Secretarial Election to amend the constitution of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe. The resolution also requested the Secretary of Interior to conduct an election to permit the Kenaitze Indian Tribe Members to vote on the ratification or rejection of the proposed amendments.

The election took place on Feb. 28, 2019. The Alaska Regional Director's office has approved the results of the election and the decision is final. One hundred thirty-nine registered voters cast their ballots in accordance with Section 16 of the Indian Reorganization Act of June 18, 1934, as amended.

The ballots included three amendments that remove Department of Interior approval to amend the Tribe's constitution.

The results of the election, in which 30 percent of the 139 registered voters cast their ballots, are as follows:

Amendment A – 54 in favor 34 against, 10 spoiled ballots. This allows the Tribal Council to call for an election to amend the constitution. Amendments may be passed by a majority vote of at least 30 percent of the Tribe's eligible voters.

Amendment B – 55 in favor, 34 against, 10 spoiled ballots. This allows the Tribal Council Chairperson to call for a vote on a proposed amendment at the request of either four of the seven Tribal Council Members, or by petition of at least 30 percent of the Tribe's qualified voters.

Amendment C – 55 in favor, 34 against, 10 spoiled ballots. This amendment requires that the constitution, and any amendments to it, when adopted by a majority vote of at least 30 percent of the Tribe's qualified voters, be submitted to the Kenaitze Election Board

See **RESULTS**, p.2



This artist's rendering shows a conceptual design for the Tribe's Education Campus.

## A learning opportunity Tribe to break ground on Education Campus

Education is one of the Tribe's guiding principles, and it provides services to support learning from birth through adulthood. With the recent purchase of property in Kenai, all of those programs will soon be housed on a dedicated campus.

The Tribe has closed on the purchase of five acres of land at the corner of South Forest Drive and the Kenai Spur Highway, just across from the National Guard armory. A groundbreaking ceremony is planned for April 27.

The new campus will house the Early Childhood Center's Early Head Start, Head Start and After-School programs; the Yaghanen Youth Program; and Education and Career Development.

Tribal Council Chairperson Wayne D. Wilson Jr. said Council Members are eager to see the project take shape. Wilson said the Tribe has sought a single location for all of its educational programs for a long time. Currently, the Early Childhood Center is on North Willow Street, Early Head Start is in the Na'ini building on the Dena'ina Wellness Center Campus, while Yaghanen and Education



The cleared land at bottom center, on the southwest corner of the Kenai Spur Highway and Forest Drive in Kenai, has been purchased by the Tribe. The 5-acre lot will house the Tribe's Education Campus. and Career Development share warehouse space off of Kalifornsky Beach Road.

In January, the Council gave serious consideration to a plan to convert the Administration building to an education building. But, Wilson said, the location near the airport and Kenai's commercial area "never felt like home" for an education building.

The location on South Forest is ideal for an education campus, Wil-

son said. The parcel is near city of Kenai land and a municipal park, and is an easy walk from the Kenai beach.

"The beach is what our Tribe is known for – the water, the river, the mountains. Everything is right there," Wilson said.

The Council has approved a preliminary design. The Tribe is working on permitting, with site preparation to begin soon. A Re-

See **EDUCATION**, p. 2

## Tribe acquires Beluga Lookout property

The Tribal Council continues to work toward its campus vision with the acquisition of two parcels in Old Town Kenai.

The Tribe has purchased the 2.57-acre Beluga Lookout Lodge and RV Park. The property is on the bluff next to Toyon Villa. It is accessible from Mission Avenue, across from the Dena'ina Wellness Center campus.

The Tribe also purchased an

**'Our goal is to buy back Old Town, to buy back our history.'**

– Tribal Council Chairperson  
Wayne D. Wilson Jr.

adjacent 0.19-acre parcel that will provide additional access to the property from Overland Avenue.

Tribal Council Chairperson

Wayne D. Wilson Jr. said that acquiring property in Old Town Kenai has been a long-term goal of the Council.

"Our goal is to buy back Old Town, to buy back our history," Wilson said.

Wilson said the process began when the Tribe purchased the building where Tyotkas now stands.

See **PARCELS**, p.2

# Na'ini move to Toyon frees up space for Behavioral Health

In the coming months, a portion of the Tribe's Toyon Villa apartment building will be remodeled and converted into office space to house Na'ini Family and Social Services, as well as the Tribe's Security department.

The move will allow Behavioral Health department staff to move into the current Na'ini building. The workspace in the Dena'ina Wellness Center is bursting at the

seams, and freeing up space there allows Primary Care and Wellness staff some room to grow.

While their offices will be in the Na'ini building, Behavior Health services will still be provided in the talking rooms at the Dena'ina Wellness Center.

The Early Head Start program staff will remain in the "foundation" at the Na'ini building.

The renovation to Toyon Villa

will create about 4,000 square feet of office space for Na'ini programs and Security staff. In addition to offices and workspace for staff, plans include lobby, reception and intake areas, an interview and exam room, and a family meeting room. A space for the Food Cache program and a storage room also are part of the plans.

The space to be remodeled is on the ground floor of the complex, at

the end of the building closest to Tyotkas Elder Center. Some of the affected apartments are already vacant; tenants in other affected apartments are on short-term leases and will move soon. The Tribe is helping with relocation for those who need it.

The Tribe is working with the city of Kenai on permitting. Work will begin as soon as permits have been approved.

## EDUCATION, FROM P. 1

quest For Proposals for an architect will go out soon, with the goal of having the facility ready for use for the fall of 2020.

The conceptual design includes two buildings, totaling about 30,000 square feet. A two-story building will have space for classrooms and offices. The second building will include a large multi-use space of between 6,500 and 8,000 square feet that will meet Yaghanen and ECC needs. It will also be able to host a banquet or gathering for up to 300 people. A commercial kitchen will be included

in the design.

Royal Brown, Director of Facilities and Housing, said the Tribe did all the due diligence it could to ensure that there are no issues with the property, such as past industrial use. The property is flat, making it easier to build on, and city services are available.

Brown said access to the facility will be from South Forest and the Spur Highway. A buffer will be created between the new building and the adjacent residential neighborhood. Setbacks from the street will also be required, but five acres should be plenty of space to allow

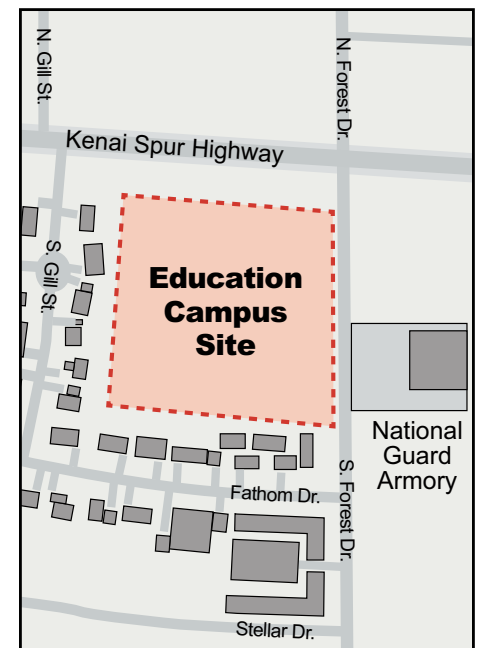
for future growth.

While the building will be just up the street from a park, it will have its own play area.

"We're probably going to build the two nicest playgrounds anyone has seen," Brown said.

One of those playgrounds will be indoors, allowing children to be active regardless of the weather.

Wilson said he's looking forward to seeing the project come to fruition. "Council is super happy, and I hope, when it gets built, I think everybody will be excited," Wilson said.



## Russian River Tech engages anglers

While the word "fish" is in the job title, the most important skill for a Russian River Fish Technician is engaging people.

"A lot of people from all over the world come to the Russian River," said Tribal Harvest Manager Jake Kooly.

Job duties for the position include raking fish waste into the current and picking up trash and fishing line in the area around the confluence of the upper Kenai and Russian rivers, near Cooper Landing.

But the Russian River Fish Technician also shares information about conservation and bear safety with the thousands of people who visit the area.

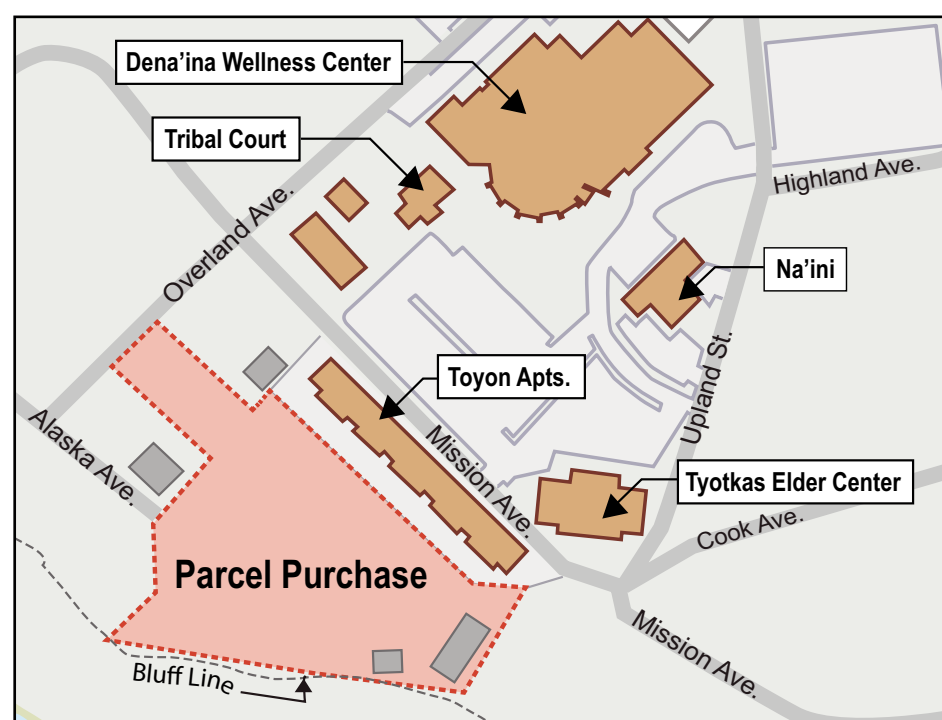
"You go up and down the Russian River, talking to people about the rules. The big thing is keeping the area clean, and teaching bear safety," Kooly said. "... Not only are you teaching people about bear safety, we want to teach people to keep the river bank restored."

To learn more or apply, visit <https://kenaitze.applicantpro.com/jobs/>.

## RESULTS, FROM P. 1

for certification, and the Tribal Council for final approval.

Liisia Blizzard  
Constitution Committee  
Chairperson



## PARCELS, FROM P. 1

"It's just another piece of the puzzle," Wilson said.

The RV park will remain in operation this summer while the Tribe continues to develop its vision for the property.

Structures on the Beluga Lookout site include a lodge, guest cabin and pavilion. During the offseason, the lodging will be used to accommodate visiting professionals and short-term Dena'ina Wellness Center staff.

The additional space also eases parking issues that have cropped up on the Dena'ina Wellness Center campus.

## Tribal Members named to Health Board seats

At the Quarterly Tribal Membership meeting in January the Health Board announced the hiring of Dr. Robert Mitchell as the latest member of our health care provider team at the Dena'ina Wellness Center.

Dr. Mitchell and his wife Kelsie will join us in July, and he has signed a five-year contract. Dr. Mitchell has also agreed to serve as the Medical Director of Primary Care. Further information regarding Dr. Mitchell is included in this edition of the Counting Cord.

The Health Board is also pleased to announce the appointment of Evelyn Boulette, Harriet Seibert and Maria Sweppy as Tribal Members of the Board.

Evelyn and Harriet joined us at our March meeting while Maria will join the Board in May. Each

member brings a variety of experience to the Board as un'ina, Tribal Members/Elders as well as their prior experience in the health field. We look forward to working with each of them.

The next step for the Health Board will be to appoint members to the four standing committees which include the Credentials Committee, Compliance Committee, Behavioral Health Committee and the Traditional Health Committee.

Each Committee will serve in an advisory capacity to the Health Board and in turn to the Tribal Council.

As the Tribal Council's primary representative to the Alaska Native Health Board (ANHB), I participated in the 50th anniversary celebration for ANHB which was held in

Juneau in February. ANHB works collaboratively with the Tribes and Tribal Health Organizations throughout Alaska to advocate for the health and well-being of Alaska Native/American Indian people by monitoring health policy issues at both the federal and state levels.

While in Juneau, we participated in numerous meetings with the Alaska delegation and provided input on such issues as the Medicaid work requirement, safe drinking water and sewer issues, etc. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to discuss these issues further.

Respectfully,

Diana L. Zirul,  
Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina  
Health Board Chairperson

## NOTE FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON

Hello,  
Spring has finally arrived and the snow is melting fast, so make sure your feet are wearing proper Alaskan footwear – Xtratufs! With summer just around the corner, the Tribal Council and employees have been working super hard preparing for all the projects that we have in store for everyone.



Wayne D. Wilson Jr.

exciting to the Council, has been facilities. In late January, the Council had a facilities workgroup that worked on future expansion. One of the projects that was looked at was a new school for the Early Childhood Center, Headstart, and the future Tribal school program. The Council purchased the land a few weeks back and is planning a groundbreaking ceremony for April 27.

Over the past few months, the Council has put lots of focus on a few projects that will lead us into the future. The first and biggest one was the removing the Secretary of Interior from our Tribal Constitution amendment process. This will give our Tribal Members the ability to make the changes they think will be best for our people.

The second major project that the Council worked on was branding. The Council felt it was time to give the Tribe a new look, and to be consistent throughout the Tribe with all branding items. With the help of our graphic designer, Charles Atkins, the Council successfully updated the Tribe's email signatures, business cards, logo and seal.

The last project, which has been very

Two friendly reminders: the first is to remind you that the Council is always looking for members to sit on various committees with seats that need to be filled. You can find a list of committees and commissions, as well as an online application form, on the Tribe's website at [www.kenaitze.org/tribal-government/executive-council/committees/](http://www.kenaitze.org/tribal-government/executive-council/committees/).

The second is to make sure you sign up for fishing time at the Tribe's net. You can reserve time at the net by calling Tribal Member Services at 335-7200.

I hope to see you all soon at all of our upcoming events.

Sincerely,

Wayne D. Wilson Jr.  
Tribal Council Chairperson

## Policies, Ordinances and Procedures Committee reviews code of conduct

The POP Committee was established as a workgroup of the Tribal Council to "solicit, develop and review policies, ordinances and procedures of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe" based on requests from the Tribal Council and Administration.

Currently, the Committee is reviewing the Council and Committee Code of Conduct to clarify the roles and responsibilities of Council, Committee, Commission and Board members. The Committee is also drafting a policy for the release of documentation to clarify how requests

will be processed in accordance with the Tribal Records Ordinance. Each month, the Committee also reviews and makes recommendations to the Council regarding revisions of existing and/or new policies and procedures that are forwarded by the Administration's Policies and Procedures Committee.

Respectfully,

Diana L. Zirul  
POP Committee Chairperson

## Finance Committee tackles billing

The Tribal Council and Finance committee have been working hard to ensure our Tribe's money is working for our people by diversification of funds.

Through our work with the mission vision and values in mind, we have working hard to refine our billing processes at the Dena'ina Wellness Center with the goal of capturing as much third party revenues as possible.

The Tribal Council wants the freedom to design and implement our own programs for Kenaitze Citizens. The Tribal Council has been in full support of the work Chair-

man Wayne Wilson and I have been doing on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., which includes advocating for the Bureau of Indian Education to be reinstated and fully funded in Alaska for all Tribes. We are also advocating and educating to change the federal amendment that removed Tribes in Alaska.

This year has been a great year of achievement for our people by our Council for our people.

Clinton Lageson  
Finance Committee Chairperson

## From the editor's desk

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

Find more information on the Tribe's website at

[kenaitze.org](http://kenaitze.org) and like us on Facebook at [facebook.com/kenaitze](https://www.facebook.com/kenaitze).

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# Touching the past

## Student explores culture through school project

Ryder Lageson didn't realize just how old Dena'ina culture is until he had an opportunity to re-create a piece of it with his own hands.

Lageson, a 10-year-old Tribal Member, made a replica of a caribou bone flesher as part of a school project. That type of scraping tool had been in use by Alaska Native cultures for 12,000 years.

"It's used to scrape moose hide and meat," Lageson, a fifth-grader at Kaleidoscope School of Arts and Science in Kenai, explained.

The artifact Lageson used as a model is a caribou leg bone sliced lengthwise, sharpened at one end. Lageson hand-crafted his replica using clay.

"I liked making this out of clay, and painting the shading and putting the sharp points on it," Lageson said. "You can even see a little fingerprint right there."

As part of the project, Lageson also learned more about Dena'ina culture. He was able to talk with Dr. Alan Boraas, a Professor of Anthropology at Kenai Peninsula College and an honorary Tribal Member.

"It's a really good tool for cleaning the fat off the inside of an animal skin. Some people still use it today," Boraas said of the flesher.

Lageson learned that it is unusual to find intact Dena'ina artifacts.

Lageson said he learned about the Dena'ina concepts of *beggesh* and *beggesha*. According to those beliefs, good or bad information could be absorbed by an object and detected by other people, animals and spirits.

Because of that, personal items were burned when a person died, "because they didn't want the animals they killed to be mad or angry," Lageson said.

Boraas elaborated on the concept. *Beggesh* refers to negative information, sort of like a scent, that is carried by an object. *Beggesha* denotes the absence of bad information.

"So from the standpoint of this, Dena'ina were very careful about leaving things lying about," Boraas said. "Good and bad were thought to be in all things. Any given artifact, reflecting one's life, would have good and bad exuding from it. That's what caused the general practice of not leaving things lying about."

Boraas said that prior to the



Ryder Lageson talks about the fleshing tool replica he created for a school project.

influence of the Russian Orthodox Church, Dena'ina people were cremated when they died. Personal artifacts were added to the pyre and purged of the good or bad information.

The act of not leaving things lying around tended to change with the passage of time and the arrival of white men, Boraas said.

Lageson's project was part of a school unit that looked at the past, present and future of Alaska Native cultures. Students researched Ath-

abascan, Tlingit, Yup'ik, Alutiiq and Inuit cultures. They learned about traditional foods, shelters, clothing, ceremonies, tools, art and transportation.

Staff from the Tribe's Yaghanen Youth Program visited with students to share Dena'ina dancing and ceremonies, Native Youth Olympics games, and day-to-day skills, tools and clothing.

Lageson said he also learned that in traditional Dena'ina culture, men and women shared the work,

so both would have used the flesher. He said it was hard to imagine a culture that old, but found it "super exciting" to learn about.

Respect for the land and its use made the Dena'ina a truly sustainable culture, Boraas said.

"Prehistoric, meaning pre-contact, Dena'ina culture, I think is one of the most sustainable in the world – sustainable in terms of using resources from the land in a never-ending way. This is a culture that could have operated in perpetuity," Boraas said.

Lageson said his family carries on some traditional practices.

"We gather berries, and we go fishing," he said.

He said he's interested in learning more about Dena'ina culture, especially Dena'ina tools. He'd like to attend one of the Tribe's Susten Archaeology Camps, offered through the Yaghanen Youth Program.

One of the more important benefits of Lageson's project, Boraas said, is raising awareness of Dena'ina culture for the next generation.

"His classmates, whether they're Dena'ina or not, will get the message from one of their own that there's a Dena'ina presence in the area, and be encouraged to learn more," Boraas said.

For information about Yaghanen camps, visit [www.kenaitze.org/programs/yaghanen-youth-programs/camps/](http://www.kenaitze.org/programs/yaghanen-youth-programs/camps/) or call 907-335-7290.



Lageson displays the artifact, left, on which he based his fleshing tool replica, right.

# Yaghali Nusdlan

## *He or she got well*



## Physician to join staff on permanent basis



Dr. Robert Mitchell, right, and his wife, Kelsie, will soon be moving to Kenai. Dr. Mitchell will join the Dena'ina Wellness Center staff as a permanent Primary Care physician.

The Dena'ina Wellness Center will soon have a new, permanent primary care physician.

Dr. Robert Mitchell, DO, currently serves as a physician at the Stephenville Medical and Surgical Clinic in Stephenville, Texas. His duties include inpatient medicine, outpatient clinic and obstetrics. Dr. Mitchell has held a number of leadership roles, and is the Neonatal Medical Director and a voting member of the Physician Advisory Committee for Texas Health Resources.

Dr. Mitchell said that he and his wife, Kelsie, had always talked about living in Alaska. When he was approached about the opportunity at the Dena'ina Wellness Center, they thought it would be a good fit.

Dr. Mitchell said his training as a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine fits with the Dena'ina Wellness Center's Dene' Philosophy of Care, which takes a whole-person approach to wellness.

"It meshes well with the osteopathic philosophy of medicine, which is also centered on a whole-person approach," Dr. Mitchell said via email. "In osteopathic medicine, you are encouraged to treat the whole person, as some medical symptoms can be caused by problems elsewhere in a person's life."

Dr. Mitchell attended medical school at the University of North Texas Health Science Center and completed his residency with the Corpus Christi Family Medicine Program. During his studies, he was recognized for his com-

munity service and received an award in his residency for women's health.

While in medical school, Dr. Mitchell trained in rural areas around Texas, which he says gave him a good broad view of medicine.

Dr. Mitchell said he was inspired to pursue a career in health care from a young age.

As a child, I met an astronaut who was also a doctor, and hearing him speak made me very interested in pursuing medicine," Dr. Mitchell said.

When he's not in the office or volunteering, Dr. Mitchell enjoys reading, hiking, photography and playing with his dogs May and Riker.

Dr. Mitchell is expected to start his tenure with the Tribe July 1.

## Pharmacy 4-1-1

### Get answers to medication questions

Have you ever had a question about your medication, but weren't sure who to ask?

Dr. Meredith Mayfield, the Clinical Pharmacist at the Dena'ina Wellness Center, has the answers.

"It's like solving a mystery to me," Dr. Mayfield said.

Dr. Mayfield is available for one-on-one consultations where un'ina, those who come to us, can talk about their medication, ask questions and learn more about how it works.

Medication Therapy Management is part of Dr. Mayfield's role, one she says she truly enjoys. As part of the team of care providers, she is able to help un'ina make informed decisions about their medication.

Frequently, a care provider will prescribe a medication, but isn't always available for a follow-up conversation, Dr. Mayfield said. That's where she steps in.

"I can go through the 'why' – this is what your doctor is thinking, this is what your labs show," Dr. Mayfield said. "I can go through the process and see if that makes sense to you."

Dr. Mayfield said the conversations aren't limited to prescription

medication; she's happy to discuss over-the-counter medication and supplements, too.

"It's a comprehensive medication review," Mayfield said.

In fact, Dr. Mayfield said she loves it when un'ina bring all their pill bottles when they meet with her. Un'ina should bring any medication prescribed by a health care provider outside of the Dena'ina Wellness Center, too. It allows her to get a full picture of an un'ina's specific situation.

"It's always better if they bring in all of their medication, including vitamins and supplements," Dr. Mayfield said.

Dr. Mayfield said the most common question she gets is, "Why did my doctor give me this?" Other frequently asked questions include "Why do I need to take this?" and "What can I do to get off of this?"

One of the most common issues un'ina encounter is not being able to take medication in the way it was prescribed. Dr. Mayfield said that's something she can help simplify.

Dr. Mayfield also might find that an un'ina no longer needs to take a particular medication, or that a dosage could be adjusted. She can talk about possible side effects, and look for potential interactions with other medications. If a medication comes with a device, such as a glucose monitor, she will show un'ina how to use it.



Dr. Meredith Mayfield, PharmD, talks with Gary Engelstad about the medications he has been prescribed during a visit to the Dena'ina Wellness Center. Dr. Mayfield is an important resource for people who receive services at the center.

Dr. Mayfield said she enjoys helping un'ina with any questions they have about their medications.

"I love talking to people, and one leads right into another," she said.

Dr. Mayfield works closely with care providers at the Dena'ina Wellness Center, reviewing charts and serving as a resource for staff as well. She started with the Tribe when the Dena'ina Wellness Center opened in 2014. At the time, there wasn't a Pharmacy department.

Now, the Pharmacy department includes two pharmacy technicians. Dr. Mayfield refers to them as "pharmacy facilitators" who can help un'ina with prescriptions, which are filled via mail-order service through the Southcentral Foundation.

Dr. Mayfield said research shows benefits to having a pharmacist as

part of the care team, including reduced costs and, more importantly, better health outcomes.

"When we get that buy-in, un'ina are more likely to take their medication," Dr. Mayfield said.

Dr. Meredith said all of the consultations she's done have been good experiences.

"Every single one I've done has been positive. They're not necessarily earth-shattering, but we're able to come away with something good," she said.

The Pharmacy department is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. Dr. Mayfield said she always makes herself available for questions – she likes "to solve the problem before it becomes a problem."

To schedule a consultation with Dr. Mayfield, call the Dena'ina Wellness Center at 907-335-7500.

# Peer support: Living well a group effort

David Stroman has a powerful story he wants to share: If you are living with Type 2 diabetes, there are things you can do to improve your health.

“If you let it go, it’s going to catch up with you,” Stroman said during a recent peer support group meeting at the Dena’ina Wellness Center.

Stroman speaks from personal experience after coming close to losing a toe.

“It put a scare into me like you wouldn’t believe,” Stroman said.

Stroman has been diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, but admits that he didn’t pay much attention to the health and nutrition advice he was getting. Then, when a callous wore off of one of his toes, he found a diabetic ulcer.

He was sent to a podiatrist. There were two other patients in the waiting room. One noticed his medical boot and asked Stroman if he was a Type 2 diabetic, and whether his blood sugar was out of control.

The first said he was Type 2 as well, and had to have three toes removed. The second patient had to have his whole foot removed.

“They both looked at me and said, ‘You need to listen to your doctor,’” Stroman said. “It put the fear of God into me.”

Stroman made changes in his lifestyle. He cut back on the less-than-healthy foods he was eating, especially soda. His A1C – a test to measure blood sugar levels – had been at 12.8 percent. A1C levels in a person without diabetes is 5.7 percent or lower; 5.7 to 6.4 percent is considered prediabetes; and 7 percent is a common goal for people with diabetes.

Through lifestyle changes, Stroman has managed to reduce his A1C to 6.7 percent. Just as significantly, his toe was able to heal, and Stroman has become passionate about sharing his experience, leading him to suggest a peer support group at the Dena’ina Wellness Center.

“That’s what it’s all about – being able to be there for people who need it,” Stroman said.

## Resources for wellness

The peer support group is just one resource available to help un’ina, those who come to us, manage diabetes. A diagnosis of prediabetes or diabetes may come from a primary caregiver, but symptoms may be detected from a dental or eye exam, too.

When an un’ina comes to the Dena’ina Wellness Center with a diabetes diagnosis, many of them meet with a nutritionist. If they are a smoker, tobacco cessation help

is an option. Un’ina can schedule a consultation with a pharmacist to ask questions about their medication, and they may meet with a Wellness Consultant to talk about lifestyle changes. There are classes and workshops to help with self-management of chronic health conditions.

Wellness department staff offer a diabetes self-management class. The Better Health, Better Choices class, geared toward living well with a chronic condition, was well-received. Wellness staff plan to repeat the diabetes prevention class, aimed at helping un’ina prevent prediabetes from becoming Type 2 diabetes.

Because lifestyle and wellness play important roles in managing diabetes, making changes in those areas is a long-term process.



David Stroman talks about his experience living with diabetes during a peer support group meeting at the Dena’ina Wellness Center in December.

“I tell people that it takes a minimum of 21 days to make a new habit – and those 21 days can take a year. There are people I’ve worked with since I first started here, and it’s still a struggle,” said Caraline Tompkins, a Registered Dietician and Diabetes Coordinator at the Dena’ina Wellness Center. “If you’re 55, you’ve created habits over the last 35 or 45 years, so they’re not easy to break.”

Estelle Thomson, the Traditional Healer, said her work with un’ina helps them become more cognizant of the things they’re doing – and the things they’re not doing.

Thomson encourages relaxation techniques as part of self-care – stress can be a factor that influences blood sugar levels. She also might perform body work to aid with digestion or circulation.

“A lot of traditional medicine practice is common-sense advice about listening to your body,” Thomson said. “My Elders would say, ‘Treat your body the way a small child would.’”

In other words, if you’re tired,

make sure you’re getting enough sleep. If you’re thirsty, drink more water.

The Fitness staff at the Wellness Center can help with lifestyle changes. Nick Finley, the Fitness Supervisor, said the process starts with a phone call to set up a time to meet with a personal trainer.

Un’ina will do an initial fitness evaluation with one of the personal trainers, Michael Dotomain and Katrina Pierce. They can also try out the InBody, a body composition analyzer.

Finley said personal training comes as a 12-session package – 10 training sessions with fitness evaluations at the beginning and end. Many un’ina will schedule sessions for once a week, while others might schedule them more

does it keep your hands busy, doing it in a group provides an opportunity to make connections. Holley said she tries to find crafts that use traditional materials or plants that were harvested over the summer.

“Doing things with your hands and staying connected to the land are big stress reducers and spirit builders,” Holley said.

A diagnosis of a chronic condition can be emotionally challenging, too. Thomson said she stresses to un’ina that “they are not their diagnosis.” She said one thing that Western medicine doesn’t always take into account is the effect a diagnosis can have on a person’s spirit.

“It can have a huge effect on our mental, emotional and spiritual self,” Thomson said.

Stroman emphasized the need to pass on a healthier way of living to the next generation with the goal of helping young people avoid Type 2 diabetes in the first place.

“This is where we need to defeat diabetes,” Stroman said.

## Building a community

There is a collaborative approach among Wellness department staff to help un’ina.

“We don’t have all the answers, but we will help them find the path that’s right for them, and support them on that path where we can,” Holley said.

In addition to connecting un’ina with resources, connecting people with each other can be an important part of that path.

“Sometimes just having that encouragement and support can make a huge difference about how you attack the challenges you face,” Thomson said.

That’s the reason Stroman is so passionate about helping others and an advocate for the peer support group. There are support groups for coping with things like alcohol and drug use – but not for people living with diabetes, Stroman said. The Wellness Center also provides great resources, but Stroman sees a need for – and value in – support available outside of structured programs. With the peer support group, people can drop in to talk about their challenges, and connect with others who are going through the same thing.

“It’s nice to have somebody there to say, ‘Hey, how are you doing today?’” Stroman said. “That little bit of support was enough to help me get over the hump of what I was going through.”

The Diabetes Peer Support Group will meet once a month to start with. For details, call Caraline Tompkins at 335-7582.

frequently over a shorter period of time. For those who might not be interested in working with a personal trainer, fitness staff are happy to provide suggestions and instruction. The gym offers classes and monthly challenges to provide motivation and add some fun.

Finley said that people starting a new exercise routine often see big changes in a short period of time.

“Even if they come once a week or twice a week, they see a huge change,” Finley said.

At the peer support group meeting, Stroman shared his experience with others who are working to manage their diabetes. The discussion turned toward many of other factors that can impact a person’s health, and therefore, play a role in managing chronic conditions like diabetes. Stress from work or a personal challenge can be a factor. Eating healthy can be a challenge, especially around holidays and special occasions.

Tia Holley, a Wellness Consultant, said that’s where activities like Arts and Crafts can help. Not only

# Cooking with Kenaitze:

## Pickled produce packed with probiotics

In March, Dena'ina Wellness Center Registered Dietician Caraline Tompkins took a look at gut health, and how what you eat can improve your overall health. Fermented food, such as yogurt and sauerkraut, were long valued because of their improved shelf life, safety, and enhanced flavors. It has more recently become understood that fermented foods have enhanced nutritional properties. According to research posted by the National Institutes of Health, fermented foods can be an important dietary source of live microorganisms, which may contribute to health in a manner similar to probiotics.



### PICKLED CAULIFLOWER WITH PROBIOTICS

These crunchy cauliflower bites are excellent for snacking and pack a probiotic punch. Serve this fermented cauliflower on an appetizer platter, alongside a sandwich, or straight out of the jar.

#### Ingredients

4 cups water (see recipe notes)  
2 tablespoons sea salt or pickling salt  
1 head of cauliflower  
3 hot peppers  
3 cloves garlic

#### Directions

1. Mix water and salt to make brine; set aside. Place one pepper and one garlic clove in each jar.
2. Cut cauliflower into bite sized pieces and divide between jars, then divide brine to cover. (If you don't have quite enough brine, you can add water to top off each jar.)
3. Place glass weight on top of the cauliflower to assure it's submerged. Set Fermentools rubber ring and lid in place, screw on a band (from your stash), then place the airlock into the hole.
4. Set on a tray in an out-of-the-way place to ferment for 3-5 days.
5. Test the cauliflower after a few days; if you're happy with the level of fermentation, replace the Fermentools lid with a regular canning lid and refrigerate. Not quite ready? Leave out on the counter for another day or two. Be sure to use a clean utensil to remove cauliflower — using fingers could contaminate the brine.

#### Recipe Notes

Tap water can contain chlorine, which can inhibit fermentation. Use spring or distilled water instead. Salt with iodine can inhibit fermentation. Four cups of brine is enough for approximately three pint jars of cauliflower. It's critical that the veggies remain completely submerged in the brine.

*Recipe courtesy Kris Bordessa, Attainable Sustainable, <https://www.attainable-sustainable.net>.*

### SUBMIT YOUR FAVORITE RECIPE

*Chiqinik* to those who submitted these recipes. Have a recipe to share? Email it to M. Scott Moon at [smoon@kenaitze.org](mailto:smoon@kenaitze.org)

### SAUERKRAUT

#### Ingredients

1 ½ to 2 pounds cabbage  
1 ½ to 2 tsp. sea salt (not iodized salt)

#### Directions

1. Rinse the cabbage and discard the outer leaves. Remove and rinse a few unblemished leaves; set aside. Rinse cabbage again.
2. Quarter the cabbage and remove the core. Thinly slice the cabbage and transfer to a large bowl.
3. Add 1 teaspoon salt and massage it into the cabbage. When the cabbage starts to look wet and shiny, taste it. Add more salt, if needed, to get a "salty but not too salty" flavor and a good amount of brine. Massage until the cabbage becomes wet and limp and brine begins to pool. When you can squeeze the cabbage and the brine runs freely, go to Step 4. If you don't have much brine, cover the bowl and let sit for 45 minutes, then massage again.
4. Transfer the cabbage to a clean 1-quart mason jar or crock a few handfuls at a time. Press the cabbage into the bottom of the jar to work out any air pockets. Repeat until all of the cabbage is tightly packed. You should have some brine on top of the cabbage. Leave 2-3 inches of headspace in the jar for the next step. Top with 1 or 2 of the reserved leaves, gently tucking them down the sides to keep the cabbage under the brine.
5. Place a quart-size, zip-top freezer bag into the jar and spread it out so

that it covers the cabbage leaf. Fill the bag with cool filtered water and seal it while pressing out the air. Tuck the top of the bag into the jar. If using a lid with an airlock, screw lid on tightly, fill airlock with water and snap airlock cap in place. If not, very loosely screw lid onto jar so that gases created during fermentation can escape, or cover with a clean kitchen towel.

6. Place on a baking sheet out of direct sunlight to ferment for 4-14 days. Check daily to be sure everything is under the brine.
7. If you see air pockets or notice the brine is not completely covering the cabbage, carefully remove the lid and zip-top bag and with clean hands, gently press the cabbage down to return everything to below the brine.
8. Taste test starting at Day 4. Use a plastic or wooden fork to gently push the cabbage leaves aside and remove a small taste. It's ready when it has a pickle-y flavor without the strong acidity of vinegar, the cabbage has softened but retains some crunch, and is more yellow than green and slightly translucent. If it's not ready, rinse and replace the bag so that all of the cabbage is below the brine. Taste again in another day or two.
9. When the flavor is pleasing (and/or less than a pH of 4.6 as measured with a pH strip), skim any scum from the surface and transfer kraut into a clean glass jar, tamping it down with your clean hand, a tamper or handle of a wooden spoon. Pour any leftover brine into the jar. Tighten the lid and refrigerate for up to 6 months to 1 year.

*Recipe courtesy The Real Food Dieticians, <https://therealfoodrds.com>.*

# The Big Picture



A moose meanders through the Dena'ina Wellness Center campus in March, shortly after the winter breakup began.

## 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)

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