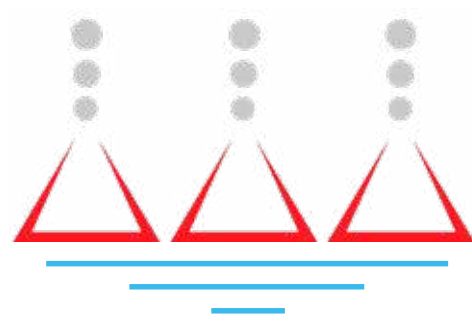




The Counting Cord

Nitnuqeyishi



November-December 2019

KENAITZE INDIAN TRIBE NEWSLETTER

Tribal Council Members re-elected

Tribal Members updated at annual meeting

Tribal Members voted to re-elect five members of the Tribal Council during the Annual General Membership Meeting in October.

The Tribe also honored three original Tribal Members who laid the groundwork for the current education and language revitalization programs. Vera Tschoepel, Frances Lindgren and Charlotte Korpinen organized the Dena'ina Quenagha'ne Quedatl', or Dena'ina Language Society, in 1973. A plaque recognizing their efforts will hang in the new education campus in the near future.

This year, five Council seats were up for election. In addition to four two-year seats, a one-year seat was open due to a Council Member resignation earlier this year.

Bernadine Atchison was the top vote-getter among the eight candidates. The two-year terms went to Atchison, who received 137 votes; Liisia Blizzard with 116 votes; Wayne D. Wilson Jr. with 114 votes; and Clinton Lageson with 106 votes. Sharon Isaak won the one-year term with 96 votes.

Ben Baldwin received 92 votes, just missing a seat on the Council. Floor nominees Virginia Wolf and Ramon Fulton received 62 votes



Valery Haney and Steve Boling hug after registering for the Annual General Membership Meeting in October. For many, the meeting is an opportunity to reconnect with family and friends.

and 37 votes respectively.

Following the annual meeting, Council Members met and decided to keep the same slate of officers for the coming year. Wilson will continue to serve as Tribal Council Chair, with Atchison as Vice Chair, Lageson as Treasurer, and Diana L. Zirul as Secretary.

The seats held by Zirul, Isaak

and Mary Ann Mills will be up for election next year.

Prior to the election, Tribal Members heard reports from the Tribal Council and administration.

Wilson highlighted some of the Tribe's accomplishments over the past year in his remarks. He noted that the Tribe is now debt free after paying off the loan on Toyon Villa

last spring. He said that while the results of the Secretarial Election allow the Tribe to change its constitution without needing approval from the Interior Secretary, making any changes will still be a long, involved process – “if we decide to change anything at all.”

Wilson recognized the success

See **ANNUAL MEETING**, p. 4

Group classes put the fun in fitness

Whether you're looking for variety in your workouts, some extra motivation, or other people to work out with, the Activity Area at the Dena'ina Wellness Center has a group fitness option for you.

In addition to extending gym hours, fitness staff also have added more classes, providing plenty of opportunities for people working on health and wellness goals.

“It gives me motivation,” said Crystal Hooper after a recent group fitness class.

Hooper said that when she first started coming to the gym, she wasn't sure what to do. She took advantage of the 10 one-on-one

sessions with a personal trainer available to un'ina, but found herself stuck doing the same thing. Taking part in group classes has added variety to her exercise routine.

“When I do the classes, I get a lot of different workouts,” Hooper said.

The gym is now open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The group fitness class schedule is aligned with many typical workday schedules. Classes are scheduled

See **FITNESS**, p.5



Michael Dotomain, a Personal Trainer at the Dena'ina Wellness Center, coaches Crystal Hooper through a workout in the Activity Area.

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NOTE FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIR

Hello,
Brrr! The cold is here and snow is just around the corner. I'm sure everyone is prepared for winter and is ready to pull out the snowmachines, snow tires, and skis. Something about shoveling snow always makes me appreciate the summer months even more.

We had another successful annual meeting. The excellent food was prepared by two different caterers. The Hearth Eatery, owned by Tribal Member Virginia Frasse, prepared the delicious peroke, and Kenai Catering prepared lunch. I'd just like to apologize that we forgot ketchup and I promise it will not happen again.

The Tribal Council was super excited about providing \$100 gift cards and North Face vests with the new seal and logo for Tribal Members who came to the annual meeting.

Tribal Members voted to keep the same Council members who ran for office. After the election, the Council voted to keep the same officers.

At the Alaska Federation of Natives conference, the Council worked hard to pass the resolution for Compacting of Bureau of Indian Education Funds for the five focus areas in Alaska, and forwarded the resolution to the National Congress of American Indians for their review and approval.



Wayne D. Wilson Jr.

This year, the 76th National Congress of American Indians conference was an exciting one for the Tribe. I was voted in as the Alternate Vice President for the Alaska Region and Clinton Lageson was voted in as Treasurer of NCAI, which is a huge accomplishment. The resolution for BIE funding for the five focus areas in Alaska was passed at NCAI.

Thanksgiving is near, and I hope everyone enjoys their meal.

Sincerely,

Wayne D. Wilson Jr.
Chair, Tribal Council



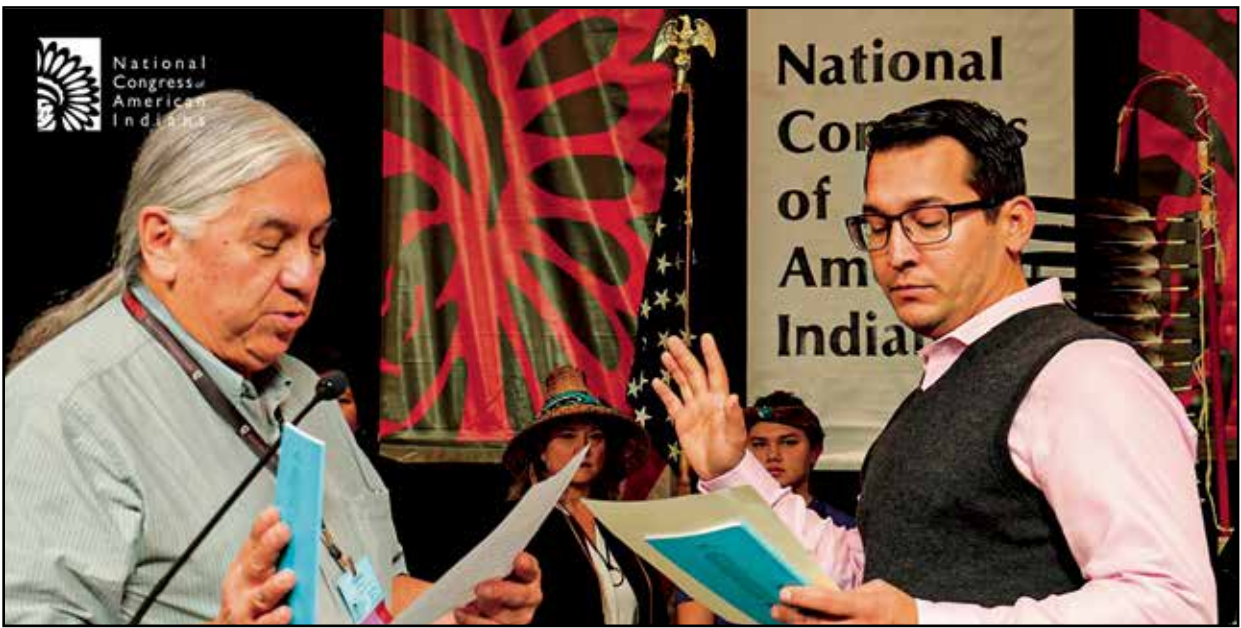
Tribal Council Vice Chair Bernadine Atchison, at right, poses with other attendees of the National Indian Education Association's 50th Anniversary Convention in Minneapolis. Among those pictured are Representative Deb Haaland (in pink) and Representative Sharice Davids (blue scarf). Both were elected last year and are the the first American Indian women to serve in Congress.



Evelyn Huf takes the oath of office as she is sworn in as Chief Judge of Kenaitze Tribal Court by Tribal Council Member Mary Ann Mills during a Council meeting in September. The ceremony took place in front of a plaque that recognizes Huf's father, Emil Dolchok, and other Tribal Elders' contributions to the Tribe.

Lageson elected to NCAI Treasurer

National Congress of American Indians Election Co-Chair Patrick Anderson swears in Kenaitze Tribal Council Treasurer Clinton Lageson to the role of NCAI Treasurer on October 25, after Lageson was elected to the two-year position in Albuquerque, New Mexico, during the NCAI Annual Convention and Marketplace. Tribal Council Chair Wayne D. Wilson Jr. was elected Alternate Vice President for the Alaska Region. (Photo courtesy NCAI)



Health Board works to meet changing needs

As we move into the Holiday season, be sure to check out the new hours and classes at the gym in the Dena'ina Wellness Center. At the Annual Meeting, it was announced that the gym is open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Tuesday and Thursday. There are special group fitness classes at 5:15 p.m. each day, and classes starting at 6 p.m. on Tuesday and Thursday. Personal Trainers Katrina Pierce and Michael Dotomain have recently completed additional certification in group exercise programs and are available throughout the day to assist you with developing a training program that will meet your individual needs. We appreciate your feedback on other ideas regarding the fitness programs and gym offerings.

The Health Board and Tribal Council wish to express their appreciation to the staff in the Dental Department during the transition until the permanent dentist positions can be filled. Dr. Stapp continues to assist by providing an additional clinic day to his schedule, and Dr. Dunham is currently filling in one day a week as well. Again, we appreciate their support. Administration also plans to hire a locum tenens dentist, which is a temporary position, while continu-



Diana L. Zirul

ing to work with a recruiting firm in identifying candidates for the permanent positions. The Health Board and Tribal Council are pleased to announce that a full-time Behavioral Health Clinician has been dedicated to serve Kenaitze Tribal Members in need of behavioral health services in a timely fashion. This clinician began seeing new un'ina on Oct. 14. Dr. Mitchell and his staff will also be offering same-day evaluations to those Tribal Members who contact primary care in order to ensure that Tribal Members who seek behavioral health services in an urgent manner are evaluated and/or referred appropriately.

Please join us in welcoming Erica Long who has agreed to serve as the Interim Clinical Director of Behavioral Health. Ms. Long has worked in the Department as a Behavioral Health Clinician for more than four years. Ms. Long and her staff are continuing to evaluate the current behavioral health services and developing other opportunities to ensure that each un'ina's behavioral health needs are addressed in a timely fashion.

The Tribal Council also authorized

Administration to enter into a short-term contract with Spectrum Medical Billing Services to address the past behavioral health billing issues that were previously identified. The billing company will assist in ensuring that third party billings and reimbursement from Medicare, Medicaid and other commercial insurances are processed in a timely and appropriate fashion. Spectrum will not only assist with these past billing issues and ensure that future billing backlogs do not occur but will allow the clinicians to focus on their un'ina in a much more efficient manner.

The Health Board and Tribal Council recently reviewed the proposed renovation plans for relocating Behavioral Health into the "old" Na'ini building across the street. These plans are currently being reviewed by the City of Kenai and it is anticipated that a budget will be presented at the November Tribal Council meeting. Once these plans are finalized, the Health Board and Tribal Council will continue looking at plans for expansion of other services within the Dena'ina Wellness Center. As stated in the last issue, we welcome your thoughts on areas of need that the Tribal Membership feels would prove beneficial to all beneficiaries.

Members of the Health Board, Tribal Council and Administration attended the National Indian Health Board, Alaska Federation of Natives and the National Congress of American Indians. We provided testimony regarding Medicaid funding, diabetes education funding, the opioid crisis, our aging population and other health issues on both a state and national basis. Again, the significance of the upcoming 2020 Census was stressed at these meetings due to the impact on Indian Health Service and grant funding. It is critical that each of the beneficiaries, which includes all Tribal Members, Alaska Natives and American Indians, who live in the Tribe's service area participate in the census process. The Tribe's service area includes those who live on the north side of the Kasilof River to Cooper Landing. The demographics produced from the 2020 Census is what will support the Tribe's requests for funding through IHS and the various grant programs on both a state and national level.

Have a safe and happy holiday season!

Respectfully,

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

Youth and Elders select representatives



Taylor Drevas, Ryann Estaban, Anya Tyrrell and Kenaitze Tribal Member Danielle Mills were named in October to the 2020 Statewide Elders and Youth Council for the Southcentral region during a caucus meeting at First Alaskans Institute's Elders and Youth Conference in Fairbanks. Kenaitze Elders Sharon Isaak and Bobbie Oskoloff were chosen for the Elder Council Member and Elder Alternate, respectively.

From the editor's desk

The Counting Cord is a publication for members of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe and the people served by the Tribe. Find more information on the Tribe's website at kenaitze.org and like us on Facebook at facebook.com/kenaitze. For story suggestions or questions about content, contact editor M. Scott Moon at 907-335-7237 or by email at smoon@kenaitze.org.



ANNUAL MEETING, FROM P. 1 of the Henu Community Wellness Court over the past year, including one of its first graduates, Eli Darien, a Tribal Elder.

Wilson also listed the updated Tribal seal and logo among the year's accomplishments.

He thanked Council Members for their work over the past year, noting that while they might not always agree, they always find a way to work together.

"The one thing we do have in common is our passion for our people," Wilson said. "... As long as we stay focused and stay positive, our future is bright."

Zirul, the Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina Health Board Chair, updated Tribal Members on Dena'ina Wellness Center campus activity. Na'ini Family and Social Services have moved into renovated space in Toyon Villa, clearing the way for Behavioral Health staff to move into the former Na'ini building. The move will provide room to grow for Behavioral Health, as well as Primary Care and Wellness in the Dena'ina Wellness Center.

Zirul touched on the importance of third-party billing as grant and Indian Health Service funding have been flat. Third-party billing allows the Tribe to charge Medicare, Medicaid and private insurance companies for services.

"Increased funding means increased services, which means increased health and wellness for our people," Zirul said.

Zirul stressed the importance of participating in the upcoming 2020 U.S. Census.



Kenaitze Tribal Court Chief Judge Evelyn Huf administers the Oath of Office for re-elected Council Members Clinton Lageson, Sharon Isaak, Bernadine Atchison, Wayne D. Wilson Jr. and Liisia Blizzard.

"It's really important to gather the number of Alaska Native and American Indian people living in our service area," Zirul said.

Lageson went through the Tribe's financial report for Tribal Members. Lageson highlighted a number of areas in which the Tribe has received significant grants, or the Council has allocated funding.

Final numbers for Fiscal Year 2019 show that Council allocated \$146,000 in scholarships for 52 students. Of that funding, \$141,234.75 went to 50 Tribal Members, something Lageson said will help to ensure Tribal Members are qualified for good paying jobs. The Council also has established an internship program that allows Tribal Members to train under and



Bonnie Juliussen makes sure her ballot made it all the way into the ballot box during the election.

learn from division directors while also attending school.

Council also established a \$16.01 per hour "living wage" for the Tribe's entry-level employees and will continue to fund snow plowing and sanding for Elders, assistance for Elders and Tribal Members with home repairs, and an enrichment fund.

Grants include \$1 million for Healthy Homes and \$8 million for the education campus. A Tribal Housing block grant for an Elders housing project is pending, and the Tribe was recently awarded a grant for improvements to the fish site to establish a harvest program campus.

"That was a whole lot of good stuff, and I'm proud to be able to report that," Lageson said. "I know that in the (Finance) department, that's the most important, because that is the way we support Tribal Members."

Dawn Nelson, Executive Director of Tribal Administration, highlighted expanded hours at the Dena'ina Wellness Center. In addition to scheduled appointments from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, Primary Care now has new hours for walk-in or same-day appointments: 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Tuesday through Friday, and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday.

The gym also has expanded hours, and is open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Tuesday and Thursday. New group fitness classes have been added to the schedule as well.

Nelson also introduced the five full-time Primary Care providers: Dr. Robert Mitchell, Dr. Heather Callum, Dr. Stuart Marcotte, and Nurse Practitioners Andrew Fuhrman and Marion Ruth.

During the Tribal Member comment portion of the meeting, the Council heard concerns and compliments. The sharpest criticism involved staff turnover at the Dena'ina Wellness Center, particularly in the Behavioral Health department. Other speakers noted that with the Tribe's rapid growth comes change, which can be difficult, and that the work of the Council to manage and facilitate that growth was appreciated.

Also at the meeting, the Tribe approved enrollment for 22 new Members, bringing the total number of Tribal Members to 1,685.



During the business meeting, a plaque was unveiled honoring Vera Tschoepel, Frances Lindgren and Charlotte Korpinen for organizing the Dena'ina Language Society in 1973.

FITNESS, FROM P. 1

weekday mornings from 7:15 to 8 a.m.; during lunch, with classes at 11:30 a.m. and noon; and evenings, with classes at 5:15 p.m. Monday through Friday, and foam roller classes at 6 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The gym also offers Gentle Yoga one Saturday per month. Personal Trainers Katrina Pierce and Michael Dotomain continue to pursue additional training to be able to offer even more classes.

Hooper said it’s nice to have other people to work out with. She works a little harder with a group to push her, and the camaraderie – along with some good-natured teasing – makes it fun.

Diane Roach said she also appreciates the group classes.

“That’s the only thing that keeps me coming back – not the only thing, but a big part of it,” Roach said.

Maria Sweppy said the variety of classes offer a good compliment to each other, as do the training styles of Pierce and Dotomain.

Gloria Wik said the personal trainers are a big part of why she enjoys the classes.

“Seriously, that’s half of it,” she said. “And the social aspect is



Crystal Hooper, Michael Dotomain, Gloria Wik and Diane Roach take a break from circuit training with Dotomain, a personal trainer at the Dena’ina Wellness Center.

wonderful.”

While they said they have their favorite classes, Hooper, Roach, Wik and Sweppy said they also come to gym on days they’re not doing classes to use the equipment, such as the treadmills. The gym also includes locker rooms with showers, for those who need to wash up after their workout.

The gym is open to all who receive services at the Dena’ina Wellness Center as well as their children ages 12 and older when accompanied by a parent. Group fitness classes are open to un’ina; spouses and children ages 12 and older may accompany them. Tribal employees also have access to the gym and fitness classes. A brief Activity Area orientation must




be completed before using exercise equipment or participating in a class.
Find the monthly fitness class schedule online at www.keanitze.org/denaina-wellness-center/wellness/. Find more information by stopping by the gym or calling the Wellness Activity Desk at 907-335-7588.

Arts and Crafts Bazaar

Find unique gifts by Alaska Native artists


More dates for the holidays!

Nov. 22nd
Dec. 6th, 13th, and 20th
10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
at the Dena’ina Wellness Center



Flu Season Is Here, Be Prepared and get a shot!

Flu shots available at the Dena’ina Wellness Center



To schedule an appointment Call **335-7500**



Moose Camp about learning, friends

This year's Yaghanen Youth Program Moose Camp was a success – even before a moose came to the group.

William Vaudrin, a camp participant, said the best part of Moose Camp is the camaraderie.

"Friends – actual friends to hang out with," Vaudrin said.

The two-day camp was held in October at Spirit Lake near Kenai. Campers gathered at the Yaghanen facility before heading to Spirit Lake, where they would stay in a heated cabin.

Their first sweep of the area didn't reveal any moose, so the group moved on to some of the other planned activities. One of the activities was using an atlatl, an ancient hunting tool in which a handle is used to launch a spear or dart.

"They're found all around the world," explained Michael Bernard, Yaghanen Recreation and Prevention Manager. "The idea is that this becomes an extension of your arm and helps you get more velocity on your throw."

Camp participants gave the atlatl their best shot, taking aim at a deer archery target. They started from about 30 yards away, moving back and then forward again while figuring out the technique. The stationary target proved elusive, and it took several rounds of practice before Judah Eason was able to hit the deer.

Eason said he was happy to finally connect with the target.

"I've had experience with atlatls before, but I've never used a modern version," Eason said of the carbon-fiber atlatls campers were trying.

Other activities on the schedule included hunter and firearm safety, putting together a survival kit, and emergency fire and shel-



Andrew Wilson throws an atlatl during the first day of Moose Camp at Spirit Lake. As one of the camp's lessons, participants used the ancient hunting tool to shoot at a deer archery target.

ter building.

The fire-building can get competitive, Eason said. Fellow camper Andrew Wilson said he has a knack for building a fire.

"I'll show them how it's done – hopefully," Wilson said.

Corbin Stuve said breakfast is one of the highlights of camp – right up there with taking a moose.

"Eggs and sausage – it's really good," said Whittom. "Breakfast is the best time of the day."

Later in the day came word that a bull moose had come to the group.

Eason said he appreciates the work that goes into harvesting a moose.

"It's fun being able to skin a moose, feeling how heavy the hind quarters are, and how much meat comes off of it," Eason said.

Samiel Wilson said he likes the process of field dressing a moose.

"Being out here with friends, and if we get a moose, gutting it, doing stuff like that," he said of why he likes coming to Moose Camp.

Joe Joe Whittom also said he appreciates butchering a moose, especially how warm the inside of a moose can be.

"They're so warm, so when you stick your hands in there, they warm up," Whittom said.

After spending about an hour and a half field dressing the moose, camp participants were treated to some of the backstrap and heart for dinner.

Stuve said he liked the taste of the meat from the heart.

"It tasted kind of gamey and it was chewy, but it was just a different kind of taste," Stuve said.

The hunter and firearm safety sessions place an emphasis on respect – both for firearms and for wildlife. Part of the curriculum – which camp participants can earn high school credit for completing – includes a workbook with questions about ethical hunting practices. Campers have to complete the workbook and put together a final project to earn 0.5 elective credits with the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District.

Camp participants talk about hunting regulations, safety not just with firearms, but also with knives and ulus, and the importance of a quick, clean kill.

"I think it's cool that they're sharing that – respect for the



Campers process ground moose meat in the Tribe's harvest shop at the Tribal fishery. animals, not just shooting it and leaving it in the woods, but using as much of the moose as you can," Whittom said.

About two weeks after Moose Camp, participants gathered at the harvest shop to process the moose and distribute some of the meat to camp participants, and the rest to Elders.

Stuve said it was his first time helping to process a moose – he wasn't old enough to use a knife that last time. He said he appreciated being able to participate in that task.

Vaudrin said he has processed moose before.

"I have gone on moose hunts in my home village, so I have some experience," Vaudrin said.

As for his favorite way to have moose?

"I just go with what I get," Vaudrin said.



Jonny Wilson, a Youth Advocate at Yaghanen Youth Program, talks about firearm safety during one of the camp's education sessions. Youth were not allowed to handle firearms during the camp.



More than a quiet space to study

Departments collaborate on Learning Lab

At first blush, the evolution from Yaghanen Youth Program study hall to Education and Career Training Learning Lab might seem minor.

But with the future move to a new education facility in mind, the changes are laying the foundation for expanding education services for the youth the Tribe serves.

“It’s been good for us to integrate our two departments,” said Michael Bernard, Yaghanen Recreation and Prevention Manager. “As we’re looking forward to moving (to the new education campus), it gets folks used to the idea that we are one, all working toward the same goals when serving our youth.”

Heading into this school year, staff in the Tribe’s Education department looked at ways to improve Yaghanen’s study hall. Generally, youth who attend Yaghanen’s after-school programs spend an hour studying before they move on to the day’s activities, such as Native Youth Olympics, Del Dumi and Chuda Cuya drumming, Jabi-la’ina dance, and Healthy Choices activities.

Yaghanen and Education and Career Training programs have been sharing space in a warehouse building on K-B Drive, just off of Kalifornsky Beach Road and Poppy Lane. One of the first steps in creating the new Learning Lab was



Yaghanen Youth Advocate Shovaughnna Wilson helps Brianna Blankenship with a school assignment in the new Learning Lab. Staff and students were wearing costumes for Halloween.

to rearrange the staff work areas to free up the lobby, an area that’s more conducive to quiet study than

available for students to use. The dedicated study space also puts into practice what has been an infor-

‘There’s a lot of learning that will take place beyond traditional homework and school work.’

— David Knight

the open warehouse in the back.

The Learning Lab has been furnished with work tables, comfortable chairs, and several computers

mal policy at Yaghanen: extending study time for students who need it.

“With study hall, kids would have a snack and then hit the

books,” Bernard said. “If kids have a lot of homework, my policy has always been, if they want to work on their homework, that’s encouraged.”

By moving the Learning Lab responsibilities to Education and Career Development, Yaghanen staff are able to supervise other activities, while Education and Career Development staff provide tutoring.

The dedicated space also lends itself to much more than study time.

“Our vision is that this is a lot more than a quiet place to study. It’s a resource,” Bernard said.

For example, participants in Yaghanen’s summer camps have been able to use the computers to complete a final project, such as a PowerPoint presentation, which is required to earn high school credit for the camps. And participants in Education and Career Development’s Employment Camp used the computers to build resumés, write cover letters, and access the Alaska Department of Labor’s ALEXsys job database.

“There’s a lot of learning that will take place beyond traditional homework and school work,” said David Knight, Education and Career Development Administrator. “It will evolve over time, and as we move into our new space, the integration and collaboration will benefit our programs.”



Timothy Hedrick relaxes with a book in the Learning Lab.

‘So much more positive now’

Soldotna woman celebrates smoke-free anniversary

Kandy Dushkin has overcome many challenges in her life. She can add quitting a 40-year habit to the list.

Dushkin recently celebrated a year of being smoke-free with a gathering at the Dena’ina Wellness Center.

“I had been trying since 2004,” Dushkin said. “... I’ve tried two weeks, a day, I even made it four months back in 2017.”

Dushkin said she started smoking when she was 15. She had a rough childhood, and she said smoking provided a sort of release. She says she didn’t actually like smoking, and was embarrassed to smoke in front of other people. But she also couldn’t stop.

“I smoked outside, but I was like a chain smoker. I was outside constantly having a cigarette. If I wasn’t busy doing something, I was smoking,” Dushkin said.

Still, Dushkin said she was determined to quit before smoking led to major health complications. Her father, a smoker, has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Dushkin said she offered to quit with him, but he’s still smoking.

Dushkin said she’s used the Alaska Tobacco Quit Line, but found the face-to-face support from Wellness staff at the Dena’ina Wellness Center to be invaluable.

“Tia, Levi and Gavan, they’ve all been great,” Dushkin said.

Tia Holley and Levi Sutton are Wellness Consultants and Tobacco Treatment Specialists. Holley also earned her National Certificate in tobacco Treatment Practice earlier this year. Gavan Ivanoff is a Wellness Management Technician.



Kandy Dushkin talks about being free from tobacco for a full year during a celebration of her success at the Dena’ina Wellness Center in October.

Dushkin said they’ve always been supportive and uplifting when she stops by for visits or needs to talk on the phone.

“I would call Tia and talk on the phone, and then when I come in for visits, I talk with her,” Dushkin said.

Dushkin said her children have also been her inspiration. She has lost two sons, but one was able to see her quit for four months back in 2017.

“I know he looks over us in heaven and is smiling down on me,” Dushkin said. “... My children are my first loves. They’re my number one fans.”

Sandra Simons, one of Dushkin’s two daughters, was able to join her for the anniversary celebration.

“She didn’t know if she could quit smoking, but I knew she could,” Simons said.

Dushkin said it’s hard to believe it’s been a year since she’s had a cigarette. Sometimes, she’ll encounter a trigger that makes her think about having a cigarette, but has found that she’s able to overcome those urges.

For example, last Thanksgiving, she put the turkey in the oven and then started to head outside without even thinking about it.

“You get triggers, and I have to tell myself, ‘I don’t smoke anymore,’” Dushkin said. “I had a lot of urges, like seeing other people smoking, but they went away.”

Dushkin said that physically, she feels good a year after quitting. She said she did gain a few pounds, but she’s also started power walking and dropped 10 pounds already.

The biggest change, she said, is being able to breathe through her nose. She said she thought she might have scar tissue from a childhood incident that was preventing her from breathing freely.

“I notice myself breathing through my nose now, and I’m not as congested,” Dushkin said. “Breathing through my nose, it’s a big thing.”

Simons said she’s proud of her mother for everything she’s been able to overcome.

“She makes a good example that tragedy can happen, but that doesn’t mean your life is over,” Simons said. “You can make changes, and you matter to other people.”

Dushkin has even written a book about her life experience. “Through Her Tears,” by Kandy

Rae and Candy Elmore, is available through lulu.com.

Dushkin’s future plans include sharing her life experience to help others. She is studying at Alaska Christian College in Soldotna, where she has three more semesters to go.

“I used cigarettes for negative things. There’s so much more positive now, I don’t think about smoking,” Dushkin said.

Find a reason for freedom

Freedom From Tobacco, a support group for living tobacco free, meets from noon to 1 p.m. Tuesdays in the Skilak Lake Kitchen in the Dena’ina Wellness Center. The group is open to the community. Wellness Consultants share curriculum-based information from noon to 12:30 p.m., followed by a half-hour of open discussion. All are invited to bring a lunch and join the conversation.

Those thinking about quitting tobacco are encouraged to contact Dena’ina Wellness Center Tobacco Treatment Specialists. Reach Tia Holley at 907-335-7578, or Levi Sutton at 907-335-7583.

Alaska’s Tobacco Quit Line is 1-800-QUIT NOW (1-800-784-8669), and online at alaskaquitline.com. Tobacco Quit Kits are available at the Dena’ina Wellness Center.



Sandra Simons hugs her mom during the celebration.



Flu shots offer ounce of prevention

There are several steps you can take to avoid getting the flu. At the top of the list is getting a flu shot.

“Flu shots are recommended for anyone six months and older,” said Lori Chikoyak, a Registered Nurse and the Infection Control and Employee Health Specialist for the Kenaitze Indian Tribe.

Chikoyak said fall is a good time of year to get a flu shot. The Dena’ina Wellness Center is stocked up on one of the newest flu vaccines on the market. The new vaccine is not egg-based, alleviating concerns for people with egg allergies.

Un’ina, those who come to us, who would like to get a flu shot simply need to stop by the Dena’ina Wellness Center during regular hours. No appointment is necessary, and the flu shot is free of charge for nearly everyone who receives services at the Wellness Center.

Chikoyak said it’s important to get a flu vaccine each year, because different strains of the flu virus show up in Alaska each year. In fact, with visitors from all over the world, Alaska sees flu

cases year-round, though flu season typically peaks in late winter.

“We’re already seeing the flu circulating in Alaska,” Chikoyak said.

Chikoyak said that a flu shot is very effective at preventing the flu. But if you do happen to catch the flu, having been vaccinated can make the symptoms much less severe.

In addition to getting a flu vaccine, you can protect yourself and those around you by covering your coughs and sneezes, washing your hands frequently, and staying home if you’re sick.

Last year, Dena’ina Wellness Center staff provided 625 flu shots.



Wayne Wilson Sr. receives a flu shot at Tyotkas Elder Center from Lori Chikoyak, Infection Control and Employee Health Specialist. Chikoyak has been giving flu vaccines at the Dena’ina Wellness Center and other Tribal facilities since the vaccine became available this fall.

The Wellness Center is on pace to surpass that number this year, with 217 flu shots provided as of early October.

For more information about

flu shots and other vaccinations, call the Dena’ina Wellness Center at 907-335-7500. You can reach Chikoyak at 907-335-7532 or lichikoyak@kenaitze.org.

Tribal Members,

Did you know, the Kenaitze Indian Tribe is able to provide a wide range of assistance to those in need?

- Emergency assistance for damage to your home or personal items
- Energy assistance for home heating costs
- Emergency housing, transitional housing, and help with home repairs
 - Child care assistance
 - Food cache
 - Burial assistance
- Domestic violence and sexual assault services
- Scholarships, student housing and career training
- Tribal Member enrichment fund

Even if you do not think you qualify for any of the above programs, please take a moment to contact Na’ini Social Services at 907-335-7600, as there may be alternative resources available to assist you with your needs.



Using your moose head

Kenaitze Elder leads workshop at Youth and Elders Conference

Tongue. Ears. Brain. Jawbone. Teeth. Head meat. Each is a gift with a purpose. That was the lesson dozens of participants learned at a “Traditional Use of a Moose Head” workshop taught by Kenaitze Elder Sharon Isaak at First Alaskans Institute’s Youth and Elders Conference in Fairbanks in October.

Isaak, also a Council Member, described how she and her son Joel learned how to utilize all that a moose head offers, and then gave the audience a chance to sample items including headcheese and boiled tongue meat.

At top, Sharon Isaak, her son Joel Isaak and Danielle Mills process one of the three heads they had available for the presentation. They showed how to utilize meat from the tongue and head, how to skin ears, how to retain the brain to process raw hides and uses for the jaw bone.

Middle, Rose Wassillie of Togiak holds up her phone to videotape a portion of the presentation. About 100 people attended.

Bottom left, after the presentation, the audience had the opportunity to try moose headcheese and cooked moose tongue Sharon Isaak prepared in advance.

Top right, Isaak leads the audience through a Dena’ina language lesson during the presentation.

At right, Jancee Corey of Ninilchik laughs as she learns how to pull tiny veins from moose ears destined for booties and other hand-crafted items.



Cooking with Kenaitze:

Moose tongue and stew

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 a traditional moose tongue and meat stew.



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

SLOW COOKER BEEF STEW

Prepare this in the morning and let it cook all day, so that you can enjoy a healthy and hearty dinner as soon as you walk in the door.

Ingredients
2 pound stew meat (cut into 1 inch cubes)
1/4 cup flour (all purpose)
salt and pepper (optional, to taste)
2 cup water
2 teaspoon beef bouillon (2 cubes)
1 garlic clove (finely chopped)
3 carrot (sliced)
3 potatoes (diced)
1 onion (chopped)
1 celery stalk (sliced)
Add herbs as desired: bay leaf, basil, oregano, etc.

Directions
1. Place meat in slow cooker.
2. Mix flour, salt, and pepper in a medium bowl, and pour over meat; stir to coat.
3. Add remaining ingredients and stir to mix.
4. Cover and cook on LOW for 8 to 10 hours or HIGH for 4 to 6 hours.
5. Stir stew thoroughly before serving. If using bay leaf, discard before serving.

Recipe courtesy Montana State University Extension Service, via USDA ChooseMyPlate website, choosemyplate.gov.

CROCK POT MOOSE ROAST WITH FRENCH ONION GRAVY

Moose is one of venison-lovers’ favorite cuts of venison. Its gamey flavor is less pronounced, and although the muscle is larger and denser than other venison, with slow cooking, it’s tender and tasty.

The roast is browned first, which heightens its rich flavor; then it braises in the slow cooker with the beginnings of classic French onion soup. Put the moose roast in a crock pot in the morning, and by dinnertime, you’ll have a tender cut of meat in a flavorful gravy.

- Ingredients**
4 pounds moose roast
1 tablespoon kosher salt (more or less as needed)
1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper (more or less as needed)
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
3 large onions (peeled and thinly sliced)
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons brown sugar
2 tablespoons flour
2 cups venison or beef stock (homemade or packaged, not canned)
1/2 cup red wine
2 bay leaves
- Steps to Make It**
1. Gather the ingredients.
2. Take the moose roast out of the refrigerator 1 hour before cooking. Liberally season the roast with kosher salt and freshly ground pepper.
3. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat, and brown the roast on all sides. Turn the roast with tongs, holding it against the skillet to ensure even browning. Transfer the roast to the slow cooker.
4. Add butter to the skillet over medium heat. When it stops foaming, add the onions and sprinkle the salt and sugar over them. Cover the skillet for 10 minutes, so the onions begin to soften.
5. Remove the cover, and cook, frequently stirring, until the onions caramelize to golden-brown, about 12 to 15 minutes.
6. Sprinkle the flour over the onions and mix well to coat them. Cook 2 more minutes as the flour browns, pour in the beef stock and red wine, and deglaze the skillet, stirring up any browned bits.
7. Bring to a low boil over medium-high heat, and cook for 2 minutes more. Carefully transfer the hot onions and gravy to the slow cooker, pouring it around and on top of the moose roast.
8. Nestle the bay leaves in the gravy, cover, and cook on low for 8 hours until the meat is very tender. Check occasionally to make sure there is enough liquid, and add more beef stock if needed.
9. When the moose is done, take it out of the slow cooker. Pour the onions and gravy into a large saucepan and heat to boiling. Lower to medium, and allow the gravy to reduce and thicken.
10. Slice the meat, spoon some of the onions and sauce over the sliced moose, and serve the remaining sauce on the side.
11. Enjoy!

This recipe by food writer and personal chef Gene Gerrard has been reprinted with permission from The Spruce Eats, www.thespruceeats.com.

MOOSE TONGUE

Directions
Before her presentation at the First Alaskans Institute Elders and Youth Conference in October, Sharon Isaak had never eaten moose tongue – but she had gleaned a few insights about how to prepare it along the way. She’s been collecting old cook books from the used book store in Kenai, and has been inspired by Dena’ina Elder Helen Dick, who Isaak described as “walking, living history.”

Step one, she said, is to obtain a road kill moose head, and cut the tongue out.

Then, she placed the tongue in a small pressure cooker with a little bit of water, some salt and pepper and some garlic. Then she “just let it jiggle for a while.”

“With the pressure cooker, it makes the meat salivatingly tender,” Isaak said.

Recipe courtesy of Sharon Isaak, Kenaitze Tribal Member.

The Big Picture



Kris Smith, third from left, laughs with other employees of the Dena’ina Wellness Center’s Dental department during her retirement party on Oct. 1. After 21 years at the Tribe, Smith, Dental Clinic Supervisor, retired to enjoy life as a snowbird, living in both Alaska an Arizona. “Words cannot express the gratitude I have today,” Kris wrote in an email. “I have an amazing staff and have made many friends that have touched my heart over the years. I am grateful for all of the challenges and opportunities I have had to grow. I have received support and strength from so many in leadership. I will truly miss the Tribe and wish great success in all of the departments.”

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

Dena’ina Wellness Center
508 Upland St., Kenai, AK 99611
907-335-7500

**Na’ini Family and Social Services
Kenaitze/Salamatof Housing**
1001 Mission Ave., Kenai, AK 99611
907-335-7600

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

On the Web: kenaitze.org
On Facebook: facebook.com/kenaitze

