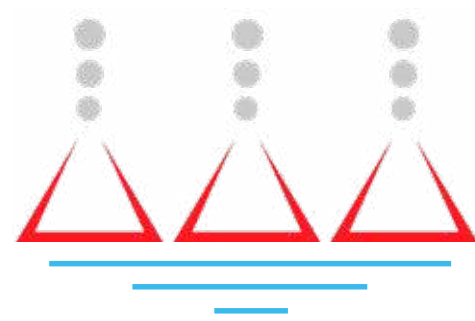




# The Counting Cord

*Nitnuqeyishi*



Spring 2021

KENAITZE INDIAN TRIBE NEWSLETTER

## Ready to see you

### In-person services resume at Dena'ina Wellness Center

The Dena'ina Wellness Center resumed in-person visits in January, and un'ina, those who come to the Tribe for services, are getting their first looks at recent improvements. Beginning last fall, changes were made throughout the building to improve and expand services while protecting the health of un'ina and employees.

#### Optometry

One of the first things un'ina at the Dena'ina Wellness Center



Benjamin Jackinsky works out on one of the Dena'ina Wellness Center's new WaterRower machines. The gym is open again, with new equipment, new classes and fun challenges.

will notice is the new Optometry suite, located just off the gathering space, or waiting area. Un'ina will also notice a new line of eyeglass frames on display, and now available to un'ina and their families.

The new Optometry suite includes four exams rooms, which provide space for a second Optometrist. Dr. Megan Lincoln was recently hired to join the Optometry staff.

Optometry Director Dr. William

Phillips said that new state-of-the-art equipment will help diagnose many conditions treated by Optometry staff. The new technology allows un'ina to actually see what is going on in their eyes, instead of

See **OPEN**, p. 7

### Emergency rental assistance available

The Kenaitze/Salamatof Tribally Designated Housing Entity has a program for qualified Tribal Members and other Alaska Native and American Indian people who have suffered from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic to provide emergency rental assistance for the payment of rent, utilities, and arrearages.

The maximum request for assistance can be up to 12 months per qualified applicant and is limited to the head of household in the TDHE's service area. The TDHE's service area is from Cooper Landing to the north side of the Kasilof River and includes the communities of Sterling, Soldotna, Kenai, Salamatof, Cohoe and Nikiski.

For full details and an application, visit <https://www.kenaitze.org/rental-assistance-available/>, or call the department at 907-335-7231.

## Tribal Court to expand

Plan adds larger courtrooms, more office space

The Kenaitze Indian Tribal Court is a place for people to come together to resolve difficult problems. A planned expansion of the building will provide a more inviting space to do that.

"Just being able to have people come in and be comfortable ... in an atmosphere that puts people at ease," Chief Judge Evelyn Huf said of the potential benefits of the building expansion project.

The Kenaitze Tribal Court, Huf said, is not like a state court, where attorneys for each side argue over a verdict.

Instead, participants sit together at a table to try to resolve an issue and work toward the best possible outcome. Lawyers are not involved.

"We have honest conversations with those who come in. We're able to interact, and make a decision based on those conversations," Huf said.

The current building is at Kahtnuht'ana

**'Just being able to have people come in and be comfortable ... in an atmosphere that puts people at ease.'**

— Evelyn Huf,  
Kenaitze Tribal Court Chief Judge

Qayeh, the new name for the Dena'ina Wellness Center campus in Kenai. The courthouse is about 1,480 square feet, and the single, 300-square-foot courtroom is cramped.

The expansion project will add more than 3,200 square feet to the building, for a total of 4,748 square feet. The expansion will have

See **COURT**, p. 5



## TRIBAL COUNCIL



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## NOTE FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIR

Hello everyone,

After a long winter, it's nice to see the snow melting quite rapidly, letting us know that summer is just around the corner. Hopefully, we have another beautiful summer to enjoy all of the outdoor activities we love. If you had told me over a year ago when COVID-19 first came around that our lives would be what they are today, I would never have believed it. After wrestling with so many changes and obstacles in the past year, it's encouraging to see how resilient we are and how much we can overcome when we work together as a people.

Throughout the pandemic, we have learned to adapt the way we do things. As a result, many of our services and facilities have actually expanded. We have found that if you aren't able to come to us for services and support, we can bring those services to you. Over the past year, that's meant delivering hot meals and food boxes to Elders, processing and packaging salmon for families who had signed up to fish the net, and even using available technology to bring you health care, wellness and education programs.

Now that we have learned different methods to keep us safe from COVID-19, the Tribe is opening up for more in-person services. I am excited to go check out the new equipment in the Dena'ina Wellness Center gym and see all of the upgrades we have made in the clinic as well. We're also



Wayne D. Wilson Jr.

making plans for the educational fishery which is expected to open June 1. I know our Elders are eager to return to the expanded Tyotkas. Good progress is being made on the new education campus, if you haven't had a chance to drive by I recommend checking it out when you can. Plans are also in the works to expand the Tribal Court building.

I am very proud of our medical center with their vaccine rollout, leading the charts in efficiency in comparison to so many other programs throughout the world. While we have availability for full access to ages 16 and up to receive the vaccine (including individuals that live with beneficiaries), many states have counties that are still only providing vaccines to high priority patients with a waitlist.

This summer marks the 50th anniversary of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe's constitution and we are currently making plans to see if we can make this a COVID-safe celebration. If not, I hope that we all can understand our safety is priority, but I truly hope we can make something happen. Once again, our resilience is inspiring and I am truly honored to be chair of such an amazing Tribe. If we can achieve what we have this past year in the midst of a global pandemic, I can only imagine how far we will take our Tribe in the next year.

Sincerely,  
Wayne D. Wilson Jr.  
Tribal Council Chair

## Home repair assistance available to Tribal Elders, disabled Tribal Members

Assistance is available for Kenaitze Tribal Elders and disabled Tribal Members in need of urgent minor repairs or maintenance around their homes.

This Tribally funded service is available for Tribal Elders and disabled Tribal Members whose permanent residence is in the Kenaitze Indian Tribe's service area between Point Possession and Kasilof, including Cooper Landing, Kenai, Nikiski, Soldotna and Sterling.

The service will cover minor repairs or maintenance, not to exceed \$750 in parts or materials. If a subcontractor is needed, the limit is \$1,000.

The funding limit covers a rolling 12-month

period.

Once Tribal Member Services is notified of the need for work, a member of the Tribe's maintenance staff will take a look at the problem.

Maintenance staff will perform the work, or make arrangements with a subcontractor, if needed.

Tribal Member Services staff also will check to see if other funding sources might be available.

To apply for assistance with urgent minor home repairs or maintenance, contact Tribal Member Services at 907-335-7200, or use the contact form at [www.kenaitze.org/tribal-member-services/](http://www.kenaitze.org/tribal-member-services/).

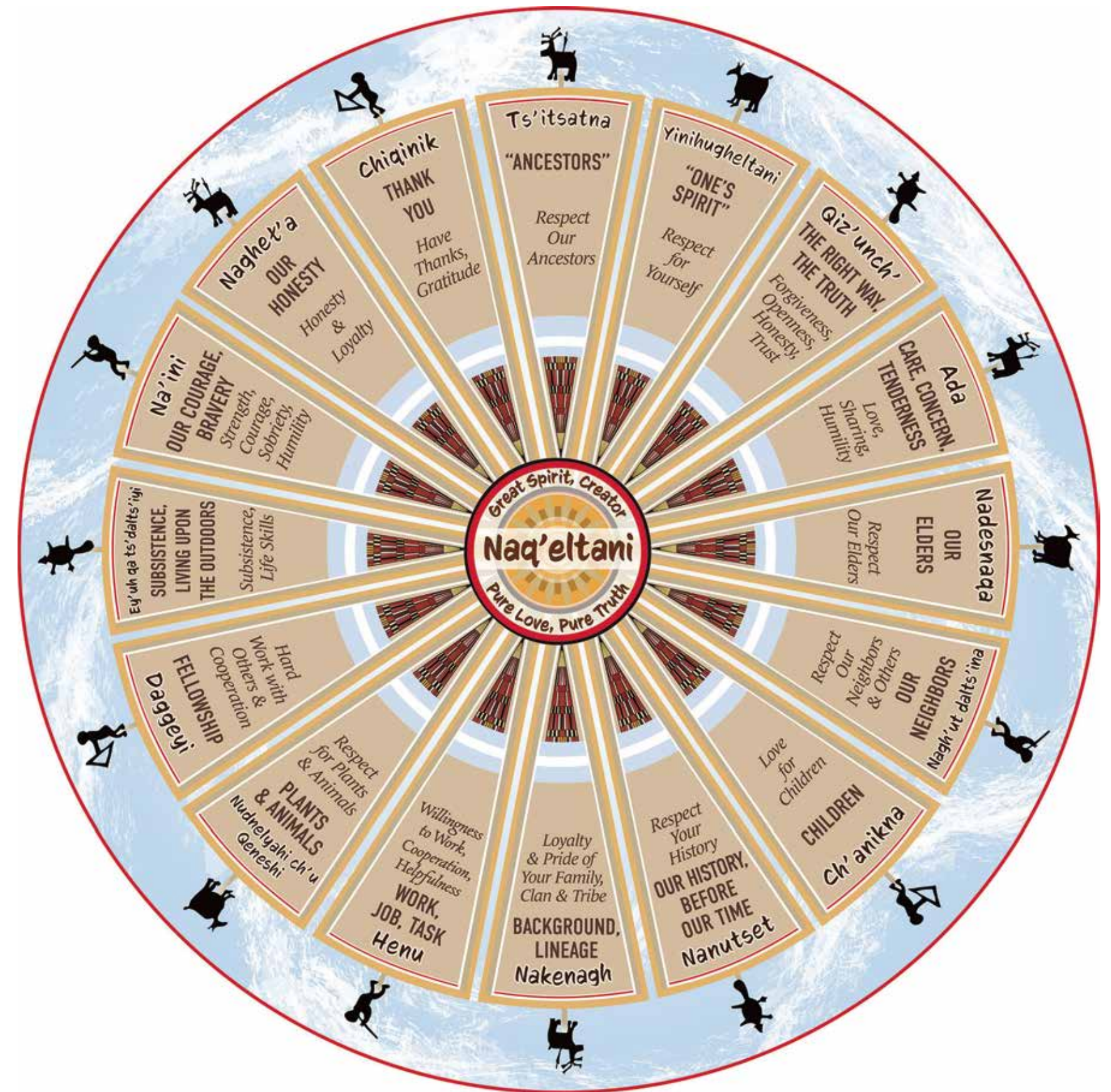
### From the Editor's Desk

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

### Have you lost a loved one?

For information about services and support provided by the Kenaitze Indian Tribe, please contact Tribal Programs Director Chelsea Hendriks at 907-335-7200 or [chendriks@kenaitze.org](mailto:chendriks@kenaitze.org).



## 'Naq'eltani' centers Kahtnuht'ana values

Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina culture is rooted in the 16 values on the Kenaitze Indian Tribe's Traditional Values Wheel.

Recognizing that a higher power is at the core of those values, this past winter, the Tribal Council added to the Traditional Values Wheel.

"The values wheel listed all of our values, but not where they radiated from," said Bernadine Atchison, Tribal Council Vice Chair. "As human beings, we have within us all our core values. But what helps to guide us in following them is Naq'eltani, pure love and truth. Love and truth is the center of where we came from and where we want to return to. We felt it was important as we open up our new education campus, Kahtnuht'ana Duhdeldiht, that we had the Traditional Values Wheel completed."

The Dena'ina word Naq'eltani, and the English translation "Great Spirit, Creator, Pure Love, Pure Truth" were placed at the center of the wheel, from which all of the Tribe's other values radiate.

The 16 traditional values are:

- **Ts'itsatna** – "ancestors";
- **Yinihugheltani** – "one's spirit";
- **Qiz'unch'** – "the right way, the truth";
- **Ada** – "care, concern, tenderness";
- **Nadesnaqa** – "our Elders";
- **Nagh'ut dalts'ina** – "our neighbors";
- **Ch'arikna** – "children";
- **Nanutset** – "our history, before our time";
- **Nakenagh** – "background, lineage";
- **Henu** – "work, job, task";
- **Nudnelyahi ch'u qeneshi** – "plants and animals";
- **Daggeyi** – "fellowship";
- **Ey'uh qats'dalts'iyi** – "subsistence, living upon the outdoors";
- **Na'ini** – "strength, courage, sobriety, humility";
- **Naghel'a** – "our honesty"; and
- **Chiqinik** – "thank you."



# Bequsilna, ‘those who are gone’

## Harriet Marie Seibert

Longtime Kenai resident Harriet Marie Seibert, age 78, went home to Heaven to be with her Lord and Savior on Dec. 30, 2020, at Providence Hospital in Anchorage as a result of complications brought on by the COVID-19 virus.

Beloved daughter, sister, wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, Harriet was born in Kenai, into the family of Harry James Mann and Julia (Oskolkoff) Mann, on Jan. 29, 1942. She was the oldest of five daughters, and grew up attending Kenai Territorial School from 1948-1956. She graduated from Kenai High School in 1961.

Following High School, she married U.S. Army serviceman, and later U.S. Coast Guard Retired and Vietnam Veteran Richard Frank Seibert (born Oct. 22, 1938) in Kenai on May 28, 1961. “Dick” and Harriet were stationed in many places: Delaware, North Carolina, Washington and Germany. They had three daughters: Naomi Ruth, Deborah Marie, and Heather Lynn.

Harriet’s three joys and passions in life were her family, her church and her relationship with Jesus Christ her Savior. Always faithful to her Lord and Savior and never looking back, even after the death of her husband in October 1973, she was a member and regular attendee of Kenai Bible Church. Whenever the church was open for services, be it Sunday morning, evening, or Wednesday prayer and Bible study, Harriet would always be there. She loved her Bible, the Hymns of the Church, and gospel songs. A recent song she heard and liked was titled “Strolling Over Heaven with You.”

Raising her children, supporting them with their education and sports, she also worked at Hutchings Chevrolet in Soldotna, the Bellingham, Washington school district, Kenai Middle School and Kenai Central High



School.

Harriet was a longtime member of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe and Kenai Natives Association, as well as a Cook Inlet Region Inc. shareholder since it was established in 1971. She was serving on the Kenaitze Indian Tribe’s Kahtnuht’ana Dena’ina Health Board; Behavioral Health Committee; and Elders Committee. Diligence and dedication were always her focus in life.

Harriet’s interests included sewing, knitting, quilting, attending many concerts and sporting events at Kenai Central High School, and walking on the beach looking for agates and shells. She always enjoyed the fishing season, often watching from the bluff as her brothers-in-law and other “drifters” came into the Kenai River. She was also personally involved in catching and processing the fish.

Anyone who ever visited in her Kenai homes, the most recent on Cannery Road, would have felt so welcomed by one of the most hospitable people you would meet.

She is survived by her daughters, Naomi Jackinsky of Houston, Texas, Debbie Nevitt of Wasilla, and Heather Goecke (Patrick) of Wasilla; grandsons Ryan of Kenai, Joshua of Houston, Richard (Lilly) and Clayton of Bellingham, Washington, Robbie (Lauren) of Ferndale, Washington, and Andrew of Wasilla; granddaughter Hannah of Wasilla; and great-grandchildren Malachi, Kasen, and Skyler, all of Washington State.

With her many family and friends, the greater Kenai area experiences a huge loss. She will be greatly missed by all who knew and loved her.

Her family would like to thank the many people, here in Alaska and other places, who supported and prayed for Harriet’s healing. God, in His infinite wisdom, healed her by taking her home to be reunited with her husband, parents and grandparents.

Depending on COVID-19 restrictions, a Celebration of Life will be announced at a later date.

## Jimmie and Mary Ellen Gibson

Jimmie Dale Gibson passed away Jan. 10, 2021 in Coolidge, Arizona.

Jimmie was born Feb. 18, 1944 in West Plains, Missouri. He spent his childhood in Arizona and California. He moved to Kenai in 1964. He married Mary Ellen (Cole) Gibson on Sept. 30, 1966. He had various jobs while he lived in Alaska but worked the majority of his career for Marathon Oil as an operator at Beaver Creek Oil Field.

After “retiring” from Marathon, he began another career driving tanker trucks for Weaver Brothers where he “retired” again in 2016. He and Mary Ellen relocated to Arizona in 2016 where he worked part-time as a truck driver until his final retirement in 2020.

Mary Ellen Cole Gibson joined her husband in heaven on Feb. 9, 2021,



## Bonnie Helen Juliussen-Gibbs

Bonnie Helen Juliussen-Gibbs, loving wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, passed away Friday, Feb. 12, 2021, at the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage at the age of 71.

Bonnie was born Feb. 3, 1950, to parents Ralph and Helen Petterson in Anchorage.

At the age of 18, Bonnie met and married Eugene Juliussen Sr. and together they raised three sons, and welcomed five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Bonnie and Eugene were married for 46 years until Eugene’s passing in 2015.

A Kenaitze Indian Tribal member, Bonnie dedicated nearly 25 years of her life working for the Tribe and advocating for Elders throughout the Kenai Peninsula. In addition to her advocacy work, Bonnie served on the Kenaitze Tribal Council for many years. At the time of her passing, Bonnie worked for the Kenai Senior Center and was actively involved on various committees and boards within the Tribe and Kenai Natives Association.

In 2017, Bonnie met, fell in love, and married her sweetheart, Marlen



in Anchorage.

Mary Ellen was born Nov. 15, 1947, in Seward and was raised in Kenai. She married Jimmie on Sept. 30, 1966. Mary Ellen worked as the secretary at the Soldotna Church of the Nazarene for many years. Mary Ellen’s greatest joy was her family and her love for Hawaii. Mary Ellen and Jimmie were married for 54 years.

Jimmie and Mary Ellen are survived by their daughters, Jolene Sutherland of Kenai, and Monica McGahan (Rich) of Nikiski; grandchildren, Michelle Frary (Mack), Matthew Sutherland, Jimmy McGahan, and Tessa McGahan; great-grandchild, McKinley Frary.

Jimmie also is survived by his brothers, Sam Gibson, Jerry Gibson, and Gary Gibson.

Mary Ellen is also survived by her brother, Dan Madsen; and cousins, Brian Johansen (Debbie), Liisia Blizzard (William), Mark Johansen (Marilee), Cathy Kidder (Robert Graham), and Holly Johansen.

A Celebration of Life barbecue will be held Saturday, June 5, 2021, from 2 to 5 p.m. at Farnsworth Park, 148 S. Birch Lane, Soldotna.

Gibbs. Together, Marlen and Bonnie lived a beautiful life full of adventure and love. They were active members of Kalifonsky Christian Center and enjoyed hosting and attending dinner parties with church friends and friends from work.

Bonnie loved many things but loved her family most. She admired her husband, cherished her sons, and adored each of her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She loved family get-togethers; any chance to spend time with her family was important to her.

Bonnie will forever be remembered for her kind, loving, and gracious spirit. She was notorious for always putting others before herself. She took care of everyone close to her and always made sure no one went without.

Bonnie is survived by her husband Marlen (Jake) Gibbs; sons Eugene Juliussen Jr., Jason Juliussen, and Scott Juliussen; and brother Ralph Petterson, all of Kenai; grandchildren, Jessica Crump, Cheyenne Juliussen, and Ihupani Juliussen, all of Kenai, Gabrielle Juliussen of Michigan, and Dustin Pelekai of Hawaii; and great-grandchildren, Gracelyn, Noah, Owen, Alaya, and Sophia.

A celebration of Bonnie’s life took place on Saturday, Feb. 27, 2021, at the Kalifonsky Christian Center on Kalifornsky Beach Road.



This rendering depicts the expanded Kenaitze Tribal Courthouse, located on the Dena’ina Wellness Center campus in Old Town Kenai.

### COURT, FROM P. 1

two 700-square-foot courtrooms at one end of the building, with the court’s Ts’ilq’u Circle moving into the current courtroom and a second, similarly sized room to be constructed at the other end.

In between will be new and reconfigured office space for the Chief Judge and court administrative and support staff, and work space for Tribal Court Judges. Judges will also have space to collaborate, something which is limited in the current building.

The building will include a comfortable waiting area, with lockers for court participants to safely store their personal items while they’re in the building.

The courtrooms will be wired for audio and video conferencing, and for recording court proceedings.

The basement, which currently houses the Ts’ilq’u Circle, will be reconfigured for storage for the Tribal Court, as well as for other buildings on the Dena’ina Wellness Center campus. Building entrances will be placed so that staff and visitors may enter one area of the building without disturbing anything going on in another part of the building.

Windows throughout the building, including a row of windows along the building’s peak, will provide plenty of natural light throughout. Designers also will be

looking for a palette of colors to promote an environment that puts participants at ease.

Huf said she anticipates growth in the number of people the Tribal Court serves, something the expansion will accommodate. The court currently handles civil cases, but could expand to address domestic violence cases as well. Huf said she also envisions a Tribal wellness court, similar to the Henu Community Wellness Court the Tribe operates in partnership with the Alaska Court System.

Huf also emphasized the importance of the Ts’ilq’u Circle to the court. The Circle process helps people have difficult discussions in a productive way, and is frequently

used to resolve issues before they enter the legal system. It can also be used, for example, to address an employee issue before it leads to corrective action. The Circle is available to any individual or group seeking a safe place to discuss difficult issues or make tough decisions.

The Tribe would like to see more Circle-type services offered.

“I think it’s very much needed,” Huf said.

The Tribal Court expansion project is in the design phase, with the aim of beginning construction this summer. The expansion is planned to be completed in early 2022. Funding for the project comes from U.S. Department of Justice grants.

# Employees recognized for years of service

In February, the Tribal Council recognized employees who had reached milestones during 2020.

Among the 59 employees recognized, Teresa Smith, the Education Grants Administrator, was recognized for 20 years of service – just the second employee to reach that mark.

Two employees reached 15 years of service with the Tribe – Suzie Metteer, Clinical Applications Specialist, and Diane Bernard, Early Learning Administrator.

Seventeen employees reached their five-year anniversaries, and 39 employees hit their two-year marks.

Smith shared this advice for fellow employees: every day, find something that inspires you, something that you enjoy. If you can do that, then it will make the tough days a little easier, and every day worthwhile.

Smith started as a preschool teacher for the Tribe’s Head Start program in August of 2000 after working in various support positions in the local school district.

While her goal had been to become a school classroom teacher, said she stayed with the Early



Suzie Metteer, Teresa Smith and Diane Bernard pose with their years of service awards. Each wear fur mittens awarded at 15 years of service. Teresa wears a fur hat she received for 20 years.

Childhood Center because of the opportunity to make an impact in the lives of the children who participate in the Tribe’s programs, as well as the families of those children and the staff who work with them. It has proven to be her inspiration.

“That’s why I’m still here,” Smith said.

Smith cited former Head Start Director Debra Shuey as one of

her early mentors. Shuey, she said, helped her understand that people come to the job with different abilities, and to look for ways to build off of each team member’s strengths.

Smith has held several different positions over the past 20 years, eventually overseeing the Early Childhood Center before transitioning to her current position. She said it doesn’t feel like it’s been 20

years since her first day working with preschoolers.

“I remember it like it was yesterday,” Smith said. “And those kids are now grown up and have their babies of their own.”

**Kenaitze Indian Tribe Years of Service Awards**  
**20 years** – Teresa Smith  
**15 years** – Suzie Metteer, Diane Bernard  
**5 years** – Kaylynn Whittom, Sasha Jackson, Tia Holley, Elizabeth Latz, Carrie Brown, Jessica Crump, Leslie Hemphill, Alvena Pete, Lauralee Smart, Brandi Bell, Maria Guerra, Matthew Trammell, Natalie Villegas, Rudolfo Villegas Jr., Colleen Robertia, Raelynnne Murphy, Shelley Zimmer  
**2 years** – Candice Elias, Sarah Kaiser, Marlene Smith, Brenda Blankenship, Cheryl Carattini, Michael Gamblin, Larry Barnes, Richard Stables, Logan Wik, William Morrow, Trixie Spicer, Victoria Bruxvoort, Crystal Schwartz, Cheyenne Juliussen, Desmeranda Napoka, Cayla Salyers, Chelsie Thompson, Dawn Navarro, Jason Chavarria, Jaelene Nickoli-Evan, Shandalyn DeVold, Vernon Stanford, Lena Smith, Johnathan Rine, Leslie Smith, Mackenzie Pietz, Kaylee Koby, Dawn Choate, Christine Bailey, Jennifer Flores, Kelsi Kiel, Tammy McIntosh, Sheilah Kean, Averee Amend, Lillygean Murray, Barbara Esteban, Sahar Millage, Ryan Rice, Chantilly Bayes



# Health Board celebrates re-openings

Spring is upon us! While the snow is melting quickly, we can only hope that it will be gone by July!

The Tribal Council and Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina Health Board are pleased to announce the re-opening of the Dena'ina Wellness Center and Chuq'eya Qenq'a (Birch Tree House) including all of the renovations and new services. Many hours have been spent by the Tribal Council, Health Board, Administration and the staff who worked collaboratively to ensure that the COVID funds were used in a manner to promote and ensure the health and general welfare of all of the un'ina and staff.

The availability of in-person visits has been increasing and the staff will continue to offer telehealth visits for those who are not able to come onsite for services. While we are not able to hold an open house this time due to the pandemic, we know that all un'ina will appreciate the improvements that the renovations have provided to all of the services offered at the Dena'ina Wellness Center and Chuq'eya Qenq'a.



Diana L. Zirul

family.

The Health Board welcomes Samantha Singleton as its newest member. Her enthusiasm is much appreciated.

With the re-opening, we are pleased to announce additional providers throughout our health system. Dr. Laina Cafego joins Dr. Callum, Dr. Mitchell and Dr. Marcotte in Primary Care. She comes to us from Fort Wainwright. Dr. Meagan Lincoln joins Dr. Phillips in the expanded Optometry clinic and comes to us from Kotzebue. Dr. Wayne Millar joins Dr. Richards in the Dental Clinic and

It is with heavy heart that we mourn the loss of Harriet Seibert who passed away in January and served on the Health Board since its establishment. Harriet was truly a loved and respected Tribal Elder who will be greatly missed, and our condolences go out to her

comes to us from Hawaii and more recently Ninilchik.

**Just a reminder!** The Tribe now offers the COVID-19 vaccines to all un'ina, ages 16 and older, all Tribal employees as well as to all Tribal Members' spouses and the spouses and immediate family of other beneficiaries and Tribal employees. Through its IHS allocation, the Tribe is now able to offer the Pfizer and Moderna vaccinations which are two-dose vaccines as well as the Jansen (Johnson & Johnson) vaccination which is a one-dose vaccine.

The Health Board respects that the option to receive a vaccination is a personal choice and would encourage un'ina to contact their providers with questions about the vaccine. Please contact the Dena'ina Wellness Center at 907-335-7500 to schedule your vaccination when you are ready or if you have further questions.

Be safe and be healthy, and we look forward to seeing you soon.

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

## New hours, gear in the Wellness gym

For all those ready to resume a fitness routine, or those ready to start one, the gym at the Dena'ina Wellness Center has reopened.

All those who receive services at the Dena'ina Wellness Center, the Tribe's employees, and gym users' workout buddies are now able to hop on the facility's cardio machines or get in some reps on the strength training equipment.

The gym is open to un'ina and their children ages 12 and up when accompanied by a parent. Fitness classes are open to un'ina, their children ages 12 and up, and their spouses. A brief orientation must be completed before using exercise equipment or participating in a fitness class.

The gym had just reopened at this time last year with new, more durable flooring before the COVID-19 pandemic put gym activities on hiatus.

Some new equipment has recently been installed at the gym, including two rowing machines and a pair of Adaptive Motion Trainers – low-impact machines that can be used for a range of stepping and striding motions. The gym also has treadmills and a Jacobs Ladder climbing machine.

The gym layout includes dedicated areas for kettlebell and dumbbell workouts, and plenty of space for other types of exercises while social distancing. Fitness staff also are making plans for a fitness-on-demand workout station.

In addition to the new equip-



Katrina Pierce, a Personal Trainer at the Dena'ina Wellness Center, times Benjamin Jackinsky and Leslie Morton as they hold planks that were part of the April fitness challenge. The challenges add fun competition to healthy workouts.

### Dena'ina Wellness Center Gym

**Hours:** 6:30 a.m.-6:30 p.m., Monday-Friday

**Phone:** 907-335-7589

**On the Web:** [www.kenaitze.org/denaina-wellness-center/wellness/](http://www.kenaitze.org/denaina-wellness-center/wellness/)

ment, the gym also has new hours: 6:30 a.m.-6:30 p.m., Monday

through Friday.

To provide room for social distancing, the space will be limited to eight users at a time and every other cardio machine will be left open. Gym visitors will undergo a temperature check at a kiosk at the activities desk before entering. Masks are not required while using the gym.

Personal Trainers Michael Dotomain and Katrina Pierce will be offering fitness classes. Class offerings include Tai Chi, as well

as a variety of strength training sessions.

Un'ina are eligible for 10 sessions with a Certified Personal Trainer to help set and meet health and fitness goals.

For more information about the gym, the workout buddy program, or the fitness class schedule, stop by the activity desk at the rear of the Dena'ina Wellness Center, call 335-7589 or visit <https://www.kenaitze.org/denaina-wellness-center/wellness/>.

### OPEN, FROM P. 1

relying on the provider's explanation.

### Primary Care

With Behavioral Health services moving to Chuq'eya Qenq'a (Birch Tree House), Primary Care staff have more space in which to work.

The new pandemic suite with six exam rooms and a negative pressure air handling system is ready for use. The rooms in the pandemic suite can be sealed off from the rest of the building to prevent the spread of airborne disease. The area can be accessed from a separate side entrance, when needed.

In addition to new space for Physical Therapy, remodeling in the Primary Care area of the Dena'ina Wellness Center includes rooms for complementary medicine, including massage therapy, Rolfing, and traditional healing. Un'ina will be able to begin making massage therapy appointments in late April.

Dr. Laina Cafego joined the Primary Care staff in February.

### Dental

Recently completed expansion of the Dental clinic includes three additional large, enclosed dental exam rooms. New equipment assists in maintaining the exam rooms to ensure the health and safety of un'ina and staff. Each exam room is equipped with HEPA filters that clean, purify and re-energize the air.

Additionally, each hygiene room has been equipped with new ultrasonic cleaners and dental suction systems that remove droplets and aerosols from the air, further reducing the risk of infection.

Dental staff also are now using new intraoral scanners, which create digital 3-D models of teeth. With the scanners, Dental will be able to offer Invisalign to un'ina who qualify. This alternative to metal braces reduces the number of overall office visits and allows for remote orthodontic treatment.

Dr. Wayne Millar recently joined the Dental staff.

### Physical Therapy

Physical Therapy staff began

### Daggeyi internships available

The Tribe's Daggeyi Internship Program is open to people ages 14-24. Daggeyi interns build job skills and explore career paths while also learning about goal setting and cultural education. Summer internships with Education Day Camps and rotating internships with the Tribe are available. Internships are up to 20 hours per week during the school year, and up to 40 hours per week during the summer.

For more information, contact Krista Pitsch at 907-335-7606 or [kpitsch@kenaitze.org](mailto:kpitsch@kenaitze.org).



Above, the Optometry team is pictured with some of the new frames now available at the Dena'ina Wellness Center. Pictured are Optometric/Optical Assistant Emily Arnold, Dr. Meagan Lincoln, Dr. William Phillips and Optometric Assistant Jennifer Flores.



Physical Therapists Twila Berry and Collin Atkinson, and Physical Therapist Assistant Sabrina Royster are pictured in a new, additional gym added to support physical therapy sessions at the Dena'ina Wellness Center.

seeing un'ina in person in January in the new treatment space. New Physical Therapist Collin Atkinson joins Physical Therapist Twila Berry and Physical Therapist Assistant Sabrina Royster.

The new space, located in Primary Care, includes individual rooms for evaluation and treatment of un'ina, and a large, dedicated gym area for other physical therapy activities.

### Wellness

The Wellness gym is open, and many other programs have resumed. Arts and crafts sessions from 1-4 p.m. Mondays and weekly tea time from 3-5 p.m. Wednesdays will be held in the Wellness group room, which is located next to the Wellness Activity reception desk. The Freedom from Tobacco support group meets at 2 p.m. Tues-

days, also in the group room.

The Ch'k'denlyah yuyeh greenhouse on the Dena'ina Wellness Center campus also has resumed open hours for all those ready to take in some spring greenery.

For more information on Wellness programs, call 907-335-7588.

### Laboratory and Imaging

More space in the lab area provides room for new state-of-the-art equipment. The new X-ray machine also is fully installed.

With the new technology, lab staff can perform more tests on-site, and get more accurate and detailed results in minutes. That allows providers to diagnose issues faster, and start treatment with un'ina sooner.

**COVID-19  
Vaccines  
Now  
Available**

**Open to all  
Alaska Native and  
American Indian  
people 16 and older.  
Call the Dena'ina  
Wellness Center to  
learn more.**

**907-335-7500**





# Tyotkas remodel wraps up

Tyotkas Elder Center staff are back in Tyotkas Elder Center.

Tyotkas closed to the public a year ago, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Last fall, the building underwent additions and remodeling. The changes allow for expanded services as well as enhanced safety when the building reopens to the public.

On March 15, Tyotkas resumed preparation of hot meals for Elders in the Tribe's service area. Hot meals are available to Elders for delivery or pick-up on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Last summer and fall, Tyotkas staff, with assistance from some of the Tribe's other programs, delivered as many as 250 meals each day. In November, Tyotkas switched to weekly food boxes due to a surge in COVID-19 transmission. From November to March, staff prepared and delivered 4,264 food boxes to Elders.

In the kitchen expansion, there is now more room and some new equipment, including a designated baking area.

The dishwashing area features a new triple-basin sink, large enough to handle the biggest pots and pans the kitchen staff uses.

There is also now a dedicated salad prep area, complete with a commercial salad spinner, which drains lettuce so it doesn't get soggy in the salad bar.

The kitchen also now features an Oliver packaging machine. With the machine, meals can be packaged and sealed for delivery or storage.

When Elders are able to return to Tyotkas, they will notice some changes in the dining area, too. Most noticeable is the new solarium area, added to the back of the building. The room faces south, taking advantage of the sunshine and the view toward the mouth of the Kenai River with a wall of floor-to-ceiling windows. The solarium opens up onto a new patio area.

The solarium is outfitted with



Top, Jade Huntsman, Tyotkas' new Baker, pulls kulich from the oven while working on an Easter meal for Elders. Arthur Flores, Assistant Cook, packages salads for delivery on Tyotkas Elder Center's new "Oliver" packaging machine.

## Tyotkas Elder Center

Tyotkas Elder Center staff prepare hot meals for Elders on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

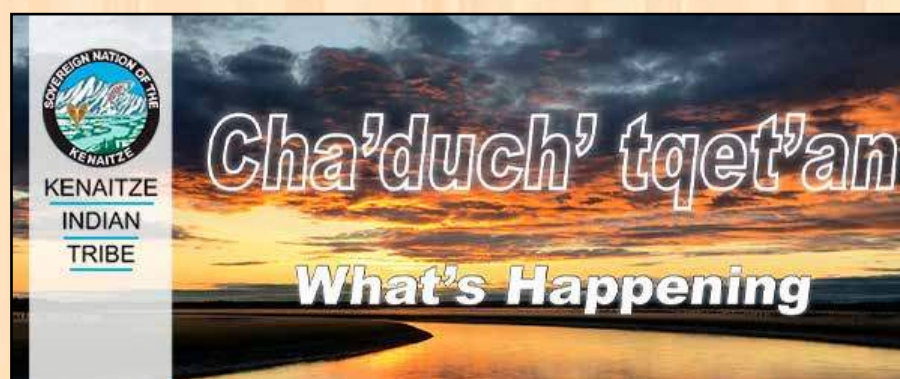
To arrange for pick up or delivery, please call **907-335-7280**.

board games and puzzles, as well as TV screens for Elders to catch their favorite shows – "The Price is Right" and "Wheel of Fortune" are popular among the morning crowd.

Elders also will appreciate the new and improved salad bar, and new chairs and tables in the dining area. There's also a sweet treat waiting for the re-opening: a new soft-serve ice cream machine.

For information about lunches and advocacy services available at Tyotkas Elder Center, call 907-335-7280.

## Coming soon ...



**An email newsletter for Members of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe!**  
**Stay informed on programs, events, and news about the Tribe and Tribal Members.**  
**Watch your mail for your invitation to subscribe.**



# Feeling the rhythm

## Drum making class inspires creativity, connections

A drum beat has a way of bringing people together. So, when COVID-19 restrictions kept many people at home, an online drum making class provided an important connection.

"It was therapeutic," said Anna Eason, a Youth Advocate in the Tribe's Education program. "It was stress relieving, and it was nice to be able to interact with other families, to talk about our drums and learn about cultures of different indigenous people."

Eason said she had some experience with drum making, but for her kids, who also participated in the class, it was their first time.

The class was launched over the winter as part of the Tribe's Dena'ina Yinihugheltani Project, which supports Alaska Native and American Indian youth, up to age 24. Yinihugheltani is the Dena'ina word for "one's spirit," and is one of the Tribe's traditional values. The Yinihugheltani Project is funded by a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Native Connections grant.

Ken Hoyt, the Yinihugheltani Project Coordinator, said the classes started as a pilot program to try to reach people during safer-at-home mandates. The classes are geared toward young people and those who regularly work with young people. Hoyt said the online sessions started with about eight households participating.

Hoyt said drums are an important way to connect in Alaska Native culture. While we don't always live in traditional ways, the act of drumming can "re-erect" those traditions.

"To me, a drum is significant technology. It allows the context for ceremony and culture," Hoyt said. "... When the drum comes out, it's time to sing, and the songs lead to stories, and people learn and pass the drum and share that knowledge."

Sharing knowledge was a key goal of the classes. Hoyt said the classes didn't have a formal structure, like school or work. Jonny Wilson, a longtime Youth Advocate currently the Cultural and Stewardship Administrator, shared his knowledge of drum making. Drum making materials were provided, and participants could touch base with Wilson and each other as help was needed.

"One of the goals wasn't to produce many drums, but to produce drum makers," Hoyt said.

Adam Segura and his daughters, Portia, age 7, and Emry, age 5, have made nine or 10 drums together so far. Segura said he was surprised by how engaged his daughters have been with the process. He said he likes to envision the drums before he starts building, but appreciates seeing them come together.

Building a drum with his own hands has made him wonder about how his ancestors might have done it so long ago.

"Thinking about people back in the day, figuring out a way to do this ... who came up with that? It definitely sparked that curiosity about our ancestors, and how they would have conceived of a drum," Segura said.

One of the benefits of the classes has been to create a drum making curriculum, including photos and footage of Wilson demonstrating technique and skills.

Participants started with a small, 10-inch drum – a nice size for a young child to start learning.

"You're born with the rhythm. Your first nine months are spent listening to a drum beat," Hoyt said. "When we play the drum, we're connecting with something really innate."

"If you start young and keep going, you're going to be a very good drummer. But also, it's never too late to start."

Segura said the drums that his family has made are getting regular use.

"I play guitar as well. We'll get the drums out, and I'll play guitar, or we'll do drum circles," Segura said. "It's cool having them around the house. We have a few hanging on the wall. We're a very musical family, so it's an everyday thing."

Eason said that initially, she was afraid to draw and paint on the drums she had made. However, once she got over the intimidation, she found it empowering.

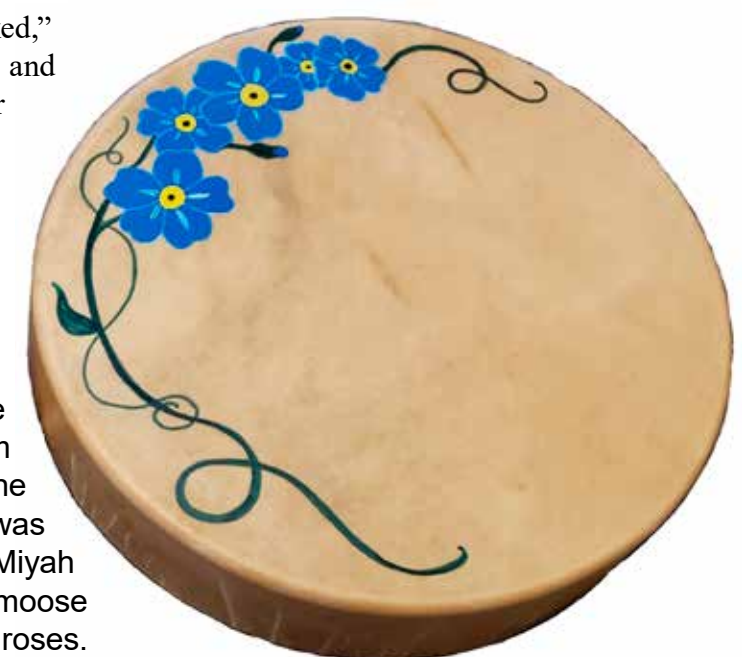
"I gifted the first drum I made, which is Dena'ina culture," Eason said. "The second one, I made for myself, in honor of loved ones who have gone before me. So, when I play, I will think of them."

Segura said he sees himself and his daughters continuing to make drums, and to teach the skill to others.

"These aren't my last drums. I'm hooked," Segura said. "I'll continue to make them, and pass it on to my kids, and hopefully, their kids."

To learn more about the Dena'ina Yinihugheltani Project, contact Ken Hoyt at [khoyt@kenaitze.org](mailto:khoyt@kenaitze.org).

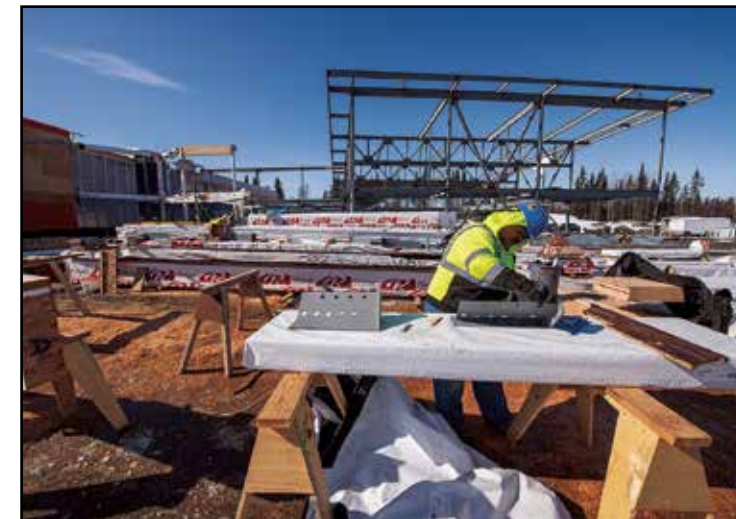
The Eason family created these drums as part of an online drum making class. Anna Eason made the top and bottom drums. Luke Riley was inspired to put a tiger on his drum. Miyah Eason designed the drum with moose tracks and wild roses.







## Kahtnuht'ana Duhdeldiht Campus rises



Workers continue to make progress as they construct the Tribe's Kahtnuht'ana Duhdeldiht Campus at the corner of the Kenai Spur Highway and South Forest Drive in Kenai. Structural steel is complete and the classroom wing is closed in. When the building is finished next year, it will house under one roof all of the education services offered by the Tribe.

**At top**, the classroom wing takes shape, dwarfing workers. **At middle**, Blazy Construction workers labor on the second floor of the education wing. **At left**, Michael Zimmerman of Ironworkers Local 751, welds down Nelson studs on the second floor. **Above**, Dan Wolfley, a carpenter with Blazy Construction, works on wood beams. The multi-purpose wing towers behind him.

## Kenaitze Early Childhood Center Now accepting applications!



Programs for pregnant women and children from birth to age 5

Native and Non-Native

Parent/family involvement

Health screenings

School readiness

Family engagement

Community partnerships

Children with disabilities accepted

We work with our Elders, community, and Tribal programs to ensure the best services available.

Find more information at:  
<https://www.kenaitze.org/education/>  
or email [education@kenaitze.org](mailto:education@kenaitze.org)

130 N. Willow St., Kenai  
907-335-7667





# The Big Picture



A spruce tree tops the highest and final steal beam installed March 25 at the Tribe's 65,000 square-foot Kahtnuht'ana Duhdeldiht Campus, under construction in Kenai. "Topping" a building project is an ancient practice. See more on page 10.

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

