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 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

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 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

‘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

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See COUR, p. 5

See OPEN, p. 7
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 Denaina Wellness Center gym and see all of the upgrades we have made in the clinic as well. We’re also making plans for the education- al 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 chart 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 30th 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 done 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 Kaslof, including Cooper Landing, Kenai, Nikiski, Soldotna and Sterling.

The service will cover minor repairs or maintenance, not to exceed $750 in parts or labor, per Landing, Kenai, Nikiski, Soldotna and Point Possession and Kasilof, including Cooper Landing. For Tribal Elders and disabled Tribal Members in need of home repairs or maintenance, contact Tribal Member Services at 907-335-7200 or use the contact form on 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 or 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.

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.

‘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 Kahtnuht’ana, 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 Duheddidht, 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 added to the Tribal Council’s Traditional Values Wheel.

The 16 traditional values are:

- ‘Ts’atsina’ – “ancestors”;
- ‘Yinibugheltani’ – “one’s spirit”;
- ‘Qiz’unch’ – “the right way, the truth”;
- ‘Afa’ – “care, concern, tenderness”;
- ‘Nadesnaqa’ – “our Elders”;
- ‘Nag’u’t dalts’ina’ – “our neighbors”;
- ‘Ch’anikna’ – “children”;
- ‘Nanuq’ – “our history, before our time”;
- ‘Nakenh’ – “background, lineage”;
- ‘Henu’ – “work, job, task”;
- ‘Nedneq’ – “plants and animals”;
- ‘Tsoots’ina’ – “fellowship”;
- ‘Ey’uh qats’alts’i’yi’i’ – “subsistence, living upon the outdoors”;
- ‘Na’ini’ – “strength, courage, sobriety, humility”;
- ‘Naghiel’ – “our honesty”; and
- ‘Chiqinik’ – “thank you.”

The 16 traditional values radiate:
- ‘Na’ini’ – “subsistence, living upon the outdoors”;
- ‘Chiqinik’ – “thank you.”
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Wayne D. Wilson Jr.
Tribal Council Chair

Sharon Isaak
Council Member
sisaad@kenaitze.org

Diana Zirul
Treasurer
alaskad@pentc.com

Bernadine Atchison
Vice-Chair
batchison@kenaitze.org

Virginia Wolf
Council Member
virginiawolf07@gmail.com

Mary Ann Mills
Council Member
mmills42346@gmail.com

Liisia Blizzard
Secretary
lblizzard@kenaitze.org

Tribal Council
Wayne D. Wilson Jr.
Chair
wwilsonjr3@gmail.com

Council Member
Virginia Wolf
mmills42346@gmail.com

Council Member
Mary Ann Mills
mmills42346@gmail.com

Council Member
Virginia Wolf
virginiawolf07@gmail.com

Council Member
Liisia Blizzard
lblizzard@kenaitze.org

Council Member
Diana Zirul
alaskad@pentc.com

Council Member
Mary Ann Mills
mmills42346@gmail.com

Secretary
Liisia Blizzard
lblizzard@kenaitze.org

Tribal Council Chair
Wayne D. Wilson Jr.
Sincerely,
Wayne D. Wilson Jr.

Tribal Council Chair
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 Ch’k’denłyah yuyeh greenhouse on the Dena’ina Wellness Center campus has also resumed. Open hours for all those ready to take in some spring greenery. For more information on Wellness programs, call 907-335-7588.

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. The gym had just reopened with new hours per week during the school year, and up to 40 hours per week during the summer. Spring 2021

Dena’ina Wellness Center

- Open to all
- 907-335-7580
- www.kenaitze.org/tribalWellness/WellnessCenter
- Contact the Dena’ina Wellness Center at 907-335-7580 or visit https://www.kenaitze.org/tribalWellness/WellnessCenter.

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/tribalWellness/WellnessCenter

- Physical Therapist Collin Atkinson and Physical Therapist Assistant Sabrina Royston.
- The new space, located in Primary Care, includes individual rooms for treatment of un’ina, and a large, dedicated gym area for other physical therapy activities.

Physical Therapy

- Physical Therapy staff began
- physical therapy appointments in late April.
- Dr. 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 is in place 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.

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 traditional braces allows the number of overall office visits and allows for remote orthodontic treatment.

Dr. Cafego recently joined the Dental staff.

Quality Dental Care for a Healthy Smile

The Dental clinic is equipped with HEPA filters that clean, purify, and re-energize the air. Heat- and particulate-matter filters are also 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.

- Dental
- Physical Therapy
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Physical Therapy


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Daggey internships available

The Tribe’s Daggey Internship Program is open to people ages 14-24. Daggey interns build job skills and explore career paths while also learning about goal setting and time management. 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 907-335-7669 or kpitsch@kenaitze.org.

Explore Dena’ina culture

Yaghanen Summer 2021 learning opportunities are open to youth ages 5-17. Activities include walking field trips, indoor and outdoor play for ages 5-7; exploring the Kenai Peninsula for ages 8-14; and Kenai Susten Ahereche School for ages 14-18. Sessions run June 7-July 2 and July 12-Aug. 13. Summer programs are open to Kenaitze Indian Tribal Members and youth enrolled in Education programs. To register, call 907-335-7667 or email education@kenaitze.org.

Day camps, Clinics for ages 10-14.

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

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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 due 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 building’s dining 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 dining 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.

“Taking advantage of the sunshine building. The room faces south, most noticeable is the new solarium. Changes in the dining area, too. To Tyotkas, they will notice some

With the machine, meals can be packed and sealed for delivery or storage.

When Elders are able to return to Tyotkas, they will notice some changes in the dining area, too. With the machine, meals can be packed and sealed for delivery or storage.

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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.

Top, Jade Hunterian, 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.

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 Yinigungheltani Project, which supports Alaska Native and American Indian youth, up to age 24. Yinigungheltani is the Dena’ina word for “one’s spirit,” and is one of the Tribe’s traditional values. The Yinigungheltani Project is funded by a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Native Connections grant.

Ken Hoyt, the Yinigungheltani 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 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.”

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

“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 Wil- song demonstrating technique and skills.

Participants started with a small, 8-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 con- necting with something really innate. ‘If you start young and keep going, you’re going to be a very good drummer. But also, it’s nev- er 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 fami- ly, so it’s an ever-present thing.”

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

Segura said the drums he has made are a nice size for a young child to start learning.

“‘These aren’t my last drums. I’m hooked. I’ll continue to make them, and pass it on to my kids, and hopefully, their kids.’” – Adam Segura, Drum making class participant

Stay informed on programs, events, and news about the Tribe and Tribal Members. Watch your mail for your invitation to subscribe.

Spring 2021

THE COUNTING CORD

The Eason family created these drums as part of an online drum making class. Anna Eason made the top and bottom drums. Luke Riley inspired her 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 Wofley, a carpenter with Blazy Construction, works on wood beams. The multipurpose 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
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 Duhdelidiht 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

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