

# the council

*Dena' Nena' Nenash • Our Land Speaks*

Vol. 45, No. 12

A REPORT TO THE MEMBER TRIBES OF TANANA CHIEFS CONFERENCE

December 2020

## Upper Tanana Health Center Open for Service

Photo Courtesy of Felicia Cooper

Residents of the Upper Tanana sub-region are now able to schedule appointments at the newly constructed Upper Tanana Health Center which opened its doors on Monday, November 16th. The new facility offers primary care, urgent care, behavioral health, lab, pharmacy, radiology, dental, and medical services all in one location.

The original opening that was scheduled on October 19th was

rescheduled due to the rise in COVID-19 cases in the area – and the need for several employees of the facility being required to quarantine per TCC's policy, which is set in place to ensure the health and safety of both the employees and the patients at the clinic.

On opening day, they had Daisy Northway bless the facility before it opened its doors to patients. An

official opening celebration will be announced held at a later date when it is safe to do so.

While the interior of the facility is complete, shipping delays have hindered the installation of the outside siding, and the siding has not been completed yet. As of publication, the siding should be completed within a couple of weeks.



### UPPER TANANA HEALTH CENTER

Open Monday through Friday  
8:00 am - 5:00 pm

#### For Medical/Dental appointments:

(907) 883-5855 or 1-800-478-5185

#### After Hours Triage Number:

1-800-478-5185 or 883-5855 and press 1

### UPPER TANANA BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Open Monday through Friday  
8:00 am - 5:00 pm

#### To schedule an appointment:

(907) 883-5855 or 1-800-478-5185

#### After Hours Triage Number:

1-800-478-6682 x5601 or (907) 451-6682 x5601

Welcome!



**MASKS ARE REQUIRED AT ALL TIMES IN OUR FACILITY.**

**WE ARE SCREENING FOR YOUR SAFETY**  
If any of the following applies to you, please notify a staff member:

- You have traveled out of state in the past 14 days.
- You have recently come into contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- You have had contact with someone being evaluated for COVID-19.
- You have one or more of the following symptoms:
  - Fever/Chills
  - Cough/Shortness of breath
  - Loss of smell or taste
  - Runny Nose
  - Sore Throat
  - Fatigue
  - Body Aches

**In This Issue:**

**New Location for Services**  
Page 3

**Food Sovereignty & Food Justice**  
Page 4

**FBI Sees Increase In Scams**  
Pages 5

**Spending & Audits**  
Page 6-7

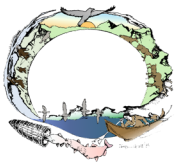


## MISSION STATEMENT

Tanana Chiefs Conference provides a unified voice in advancing sovereign tribal governments through the promotion of physical and mental wellness, education, socioeconomic development, and culture of the Interior Alaska Native people.

## VISION

Healthy, Strong, Unified Tribes



Tanana  
Chiefs  
Conference

## TCC EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

Donald Honea Sr./Ruby  
*1st Traditional Chief*

Trimble Gilbert/Arctic Village  
*2nd Traditional Chief*

PJ Simon/Allakaket/Galena  
*Chief/Chairman*

Charlene Stern/Arctic Village  
*Vice President*

Jerry Isaac/Tanacross  
*Secretary/Treasurer*

Herbie Demit/Tanacross  
*Upper Tanana*

Nick Alexia Sr./Nikolai  
*Upper Kuskokwim*

Nancy James/Fort Yukon  
*Yukon Flats*

Eugene Paul/Holy Cross  
*Lower Yukon*

Frank Thompson/ Evansville  
*Yukon Tanana*

Norman 'Carl' Burgett/ Huslia  
*Yukon Koyukuk*

Peter Demoski/Nulato  
*Elder Advisor*

Jolie Murray/Beaver  
*Youth Advisor*

## CHIEF'S REPORT

Dear Tribes and Tribal Members,

I would like to take a moment to thank the Tribes for their vote of confidence and electing me to serve as their new Chief/Chairman. I am looking forward to a busy two and a half years as we work towards the priorities that the tribes have expressed are important to them. The priorities include bringing faster internet to our villages, water and sewer, housing, public safety, and food security. Without the Tribes, we wouldn't be here to serve, and we are always looking at ways to give back and support you.

This time of the year always goes by quickly, and I want to wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving filled with health, good food, loved ones, and time to reflect on what we have to be grateful for. I am grateful for my health, the Tribes, and the opportunity to serve you. With COVID-19 cases still on the rise, I want to remind everyone to be safe during the holidays by following the recommended preventative measures to help curb the positive cases in our community. Please avoid large group gatherings, wear a mask while out in public, wash your hands frequently, don't touch your face, and stay home if you are experiencing any symptoms or if you are sick. Together we are strong, and I know we can make it through this pandemic if we work together.

I want to express my gratitude to all the employees across the organization. We have a world-class pool of employees striving to serve our Tribes. It has been a tough year and we have worked together in ways we could have never imagined. Over the coming months, we will take some time to review our vision for the future, values, and strategic plans.

I am excited for our organization and its future. Our Executive Leadership Team is doing a great job of bringing me up to speed on all of the challenges TCC is experiencing, and the opportunities that we have available to us.

I wish you all a healthy and happy holiday season. Remember to be your brother's keepers and look after one another.

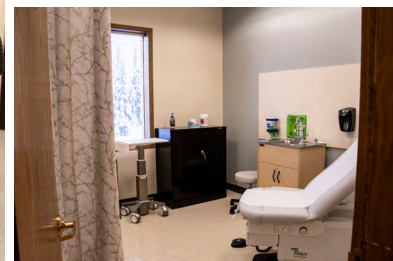
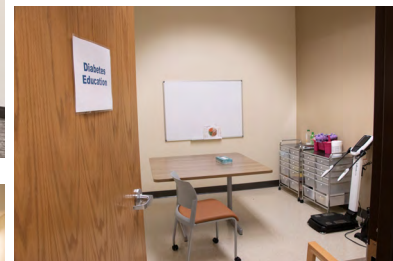
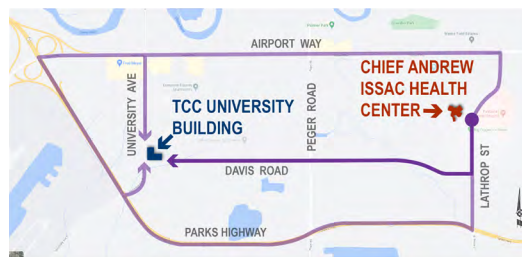
Ana' Bassee  
PJ Simon



## New Location Purchased by TCC Provides Space for Programs

Tanana Chiefs Conference recently purchased a new office building located at the corners of University Ave. and Davis Rd. in Fairbanks. The new office space will allow for more space as TCC's programs and services continue to grow. In the meantime, several programs have moved from the Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center (CAIHC) to the new location; pediatrics, women's health, Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and Diabetes. These services will be moved here temporarily to ensure the safety of employees and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. The services plan to be moved back to CAIHC once it is determined that it is safe to do so.

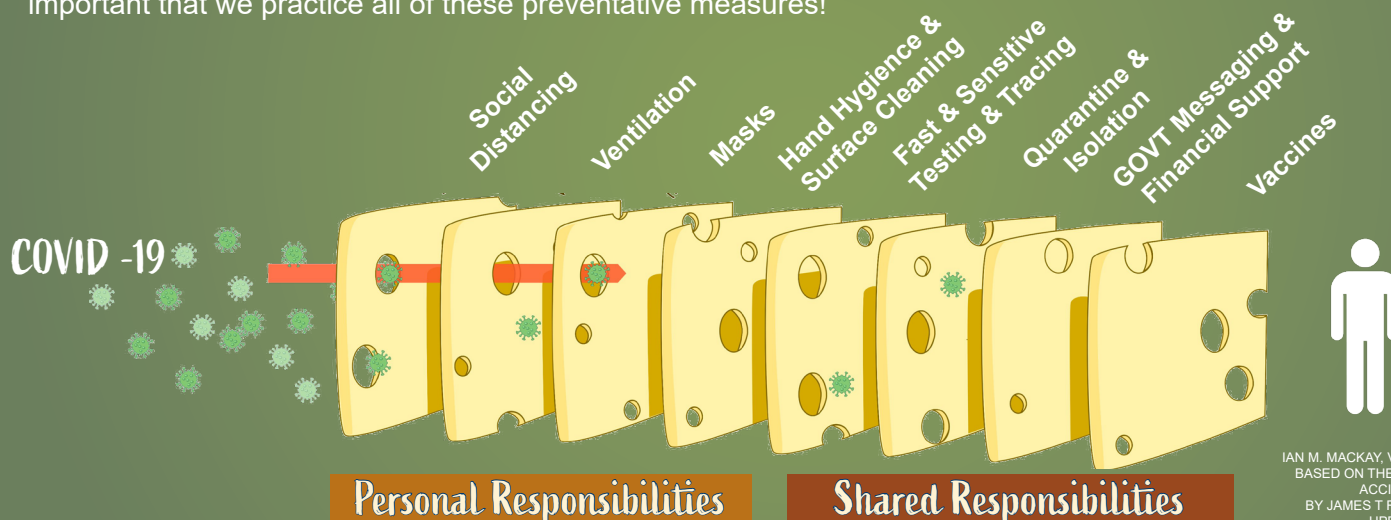
The building opened with TCC services on Monday, November 23rd, where Chief/Chairman PJ Simon toured the newly renovated building alongside Executive Director of Health Services, Jacoline Bergstrom, Executive Director of Quality Services, Jennifer Eden, and Jeffery Murtiff, Facilities Director.



## How Does Swiss Cheese Relate with COVID-19?

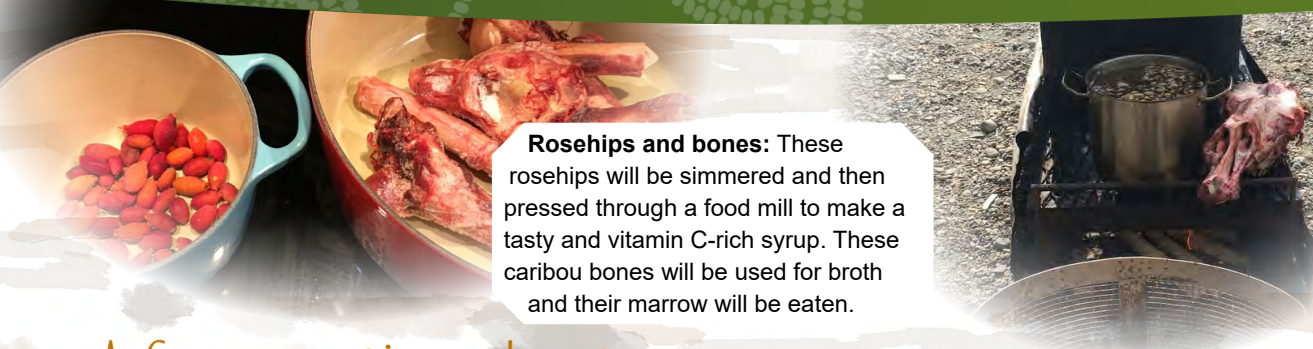
What really prevents the spread of COVID-19? We have all heard the importance of masking and social distancing, but the truth is that successful COVID-19 mitigation requires several layers of behavioral prevention efforts.

Each preventative measure (masking, social distancing, testing, etc.) is another barrier that COVID-19 has to overcome – when all of these measures are implemented – the less likely the virus will be able to spread. This is why it is so important that we practice all of these preventative measures!



IAN M. MACKAY, VIROLOGYDOWNUNDER.COM,  
BASED ON THE SWISS CHEESE MODEL OF  
ACCIDENT CAUSATION  
BY JAMES T REASON, 1980, VERSION 2,  
UPDATE: 15OCT2020





**Rosehips and bones:** These rosehips will be simmered and then pressed through a food mill to make a tasty and vitamin C-rich syrup. These caribou bones will be used for broth and their marrow will be eaten.

**Moosehead soup:** This moosehead soup was prepared at a traditional potlatch at a culture camp in Nenana. There were many cultural lessons and rituals in the preparation of this soup — from the hunting, to the cutting, to the cooking, to how certain parts of meat were shared and, finally, how it was served at the potlatch.

## A Conversation about Food Sovereignty and Food Justice in Alaska at the Alaska Food Festival and Conference

By Heidi Rader  
Tribes Extension Educator for Tanana Chiefs Conference

A primary focus of the 2020 Alaska Food Festival and Conference was food security and justice.

As a governing board member of the Alaska Food Policy Council, I helped organize the conference ([www.ak-foodpolicycouncil.org](http://www.ak-foodpolicycouncil.org)) that happened virtually in early November. Although the format removed one aspect of the conference that I always look forward to — tasting a wide variety of local and wild foods — it offered the chance to hear voices from all over the state, country and beyond, all from the comfort of our own homes or offices. The conference kicked off with a film called “Gather” ([gather.film/](http://gather.film/)), which focuses on the “. . . growing movement amongst Native Americans to reclaim their spiritual, political and cultural identities through food sovereignty, while battling the trauma of centuries of genocide.” This was co-hosted by Native Movement.

Simply put, food sovereignty is defined as ensuring that people have the right to sufficient, healthy and culturally appropriate food and that is borne out in hunting, fishing, gathering and agriculture policies. The conference focused in particular on tribal food sovereignty.

Meda Dewitt, Tlingit traditional healer and ethnoherbalist, spoke passionately about the importance of traditional knowledge around plants as a way to heal and improve food security and health in a changing climate. Several speakers spoke about how they managed to include traditional foods (like seal oil, herring eggs, caribou) in their medical facilities and how integral that was for nourishing their Alaska Native

patients, especially now, when they are not allowed visitors.

Carolina Behe with the Inuit Circumpolar Council spoke with elders and others about what food security and food sovereignty means from an Inuit perspective, some of whom co-authored a report of more than 100 pages on the topic ([bit.ly/2GIXY6K](http://bit.ly/2GIXY6K)).

Valerie Segrest, with the Native American Agriculture Fund, spoke about how policy and grant programs can help address food sovereignty. I should add that they have awarded 11 grants in Alaska this year and are the leading funder of projects that address needs and issues related to tribal food sovereignty and justice.

In one presentation, I talked about the Tribes Extension Program and how it is well suited to help tribes in Alaska address food security and sovereignty challenges. The program is funded by a federal grant and can also focus on promoting language, traditional knowledge and cultural practices. If you’d like to learn more about the Tribes Extension Program and are interested in possibly starting a program where you live, please complete this short survey, at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/DMN2T89](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DMN2T89).

Several staff from the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association spoke about their latest efforts related to promoting traditional foods. The project, called Qaqamiigux (to hunt or fish for food and collect plants, or subsistence), seeks to preserve and sustain traditional knowledge centered around food. In addition to a cookbook and Head Start curriculum, they have recently created three films. All of these

great resources can be found at [bit.ly/3pfQWld](http://bit.ly/3pfQWld).

Sommer Sibilly-Brown spoke about her efforts in the Virgin Islands, where she founded the Good Food Coalition ([goodfoodvi.org/](http://goodfoodvi.org/)). Much like Alaska, the Virgin Islands import most of their purchased food. Although she was far away physically, she connected deeply with many of us in the virtual room with her powerful message of what food justice means and is and her efforts to do something about it.

The Alaska Food Policy Council works to address all kinds of issues related to food insecurity and injustice. To get involved and learn more, go to [www.akfoodpolicycouncil.org/](http://www.akfoodpolicycouncil.org/). The presentations were recorded and many of them will be posted on our website. The Interior Alaska Food Network addresses food policy at a regional level. To find out more, find them on Facebook or contact Mel Sikes at [mel.fswcd@gmail.com](mailto:mel.fswcd@gmail.com) to be added to a listserv.

There’s so much more to food than the eating of it and the calories and nutrients in it. The practices of gathering, fishing, hunting, preparing, preserving and sharing food are at the heart of culture and can nourish not only the body, but the mind and spirit as well.

Questions about gardening or the Tribes Extension Program? Visit [www.uaf.edu/ces/TCC](http://www.uaf.edu/ces/TCC) Contact Heidi at [hbrader@alaska.edu](mailto:hbrader@alaska.edu) or 474-6620. For more articles like this, go to: <https://itgrowsinalaska.community.uaf.edu/>



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# Winter Safety Tips

Winter is upon us and with the changing weather comes hazards. Here are a few safety tips to keep in mind before you venture out in rural Alaska:

- **Be Prepared** – Make sure you have a plan
- **Tell Someone** where you are going and the route you plan to take.
- **Always check weather conditions**, try to bring a partner for long travel.
- **Slow down** and avoid traveling across bodies of water when uncertain of the ice thickness
- With warmer temperatures it's getting harder to predict the thickness and relative **safety over rivers and lakes.**
- Finally, **do not drive impaired!** We want you to get to your destination safely.

## FBI Sees Increase in Technical Support Scams in Alaska

The FBI and the U.S. Attorney's Office are reporting an increase in technical support scams in Alaska and anticipate a further increase in the months leading up to the holiday season.

Technical support fraud involves a criminal claiming to provide customer, security, or technical support to defraud individuals, and can disproportionately victimize our senior population.

In technical support scams, fraudsters will frequently target victims through pop-up warnings on their devices, or unsolicited phone calls that could appear to be from the same area code as the victim. The fraudsters impersonate employees of popular technology companies to mislead victims into thinking there are security problems with their computer or online accounts. They will then offer to resolve the issue, and in many cases, will attempt to gain access to the victim's device by requesting the victim install remote access programs. Then, using high-pressure tactics, they persuade the victim to pay for the technical support services via prepaid

cards, such as gift cards, or via money transfer applications or services.

Technical support scams were originally an attempt by criminals to gain access to devices to extort payment for fraudulent services, but more can happen once they are given access to the device including, but not limited to, access to computer files that may contain financial accounts, passwords, and personal data.

To combat this increasingly common form of elder fraud, the FBI and the U.S. Attorney's Office advise the public to build a digital defense by doing the following:

Be cautious of unsolicited phone calls, mailings, and door-to-door service offers.

Remember that legitimate tech companies will not make unsolicited phone calls, will not request remote access to your device through third party applications, will not ask for account passwords or for payment via gift cards or prepaid cards.

Ensure desktops, laptops, and mobile devices have anti-virus software installed and routine security updates are applied.

FBI Anchorage  
Public Affairs Officer Chloe Martin

Disconnect from the Internet and shut down your device if you see a pop-up message or locked screen. Enable pop-up blockers to avoid accidentally clicking on a pop-up.

If you do need computer support, go to a company that you know and trust. You should make the initial contact, preferably in person or by phone, using publicly available contact information.

Never give or send any personally identifiable information, money, jewelry, gift cards, checks, or wire information to unverified people or businesses.

Resist the pressure to act quickly. Scammers create a sense of urgency to produce fear and lure victims into immediate action. Call the police immediately if you feel there is a danger to yourself or a loved one.

If you believe you are a victim of fraud, or know a senior who may be, regardless of financial loss, report the incident to the **FBI Anchorage Field Office** at 907-276-4441, online at [tips.fbi.gov](https://tips.fbi.gov), or through the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center at [www.ic3.gov](http://www.ic3.gov).





## State Level Budget **OUTLOOK**

By Marna Sanford  
*Government Relations Coordinator*

In our continued effort to advocate for a multi-pronged approach to a sustainable fiscal plan at the state level we wanted to include a budget outlook to prepare for the upcoming state legislative session.

### THE “GOOD” NEWS:

Despite volatility in global oil markets, the unrestricted revenue outlook for the upcoming fiscal year is relatively unchanged from the spring forecast. The State expects to bring in \$1.2 billion in unrestricted revenue, but this is still historically low. The stability picture for Permanent Fund earnings is similar. The draw from the earnings reserve of the Permanent Fund that is allowed under state statute for the

payment of the dividend check and government expenses is expected to be approximately \$3 billion. Combined oil revenue and Permanent Fund draw total \$4.2 billion in projected revenue.

### THE “BAD” NEWS:

\$4.2 billion in projected revenue is \$400 million smaller than last year's budget before paying any dividend. In other words, if the State were to provide a ZERO dividend, the State will still face a \$400 million deficit. A “flat” budget that pays all State statutory obligations, including a “full” PFD, creates a deficit that amounts to \$2.4 billion, or 36 percent of the entire budget. A “flat” budget with a PFD the same size as this year results in a

\$902 million deficit. In short, with the Constitutional Budget Reserve (CBR) now effectively unable to fill gaps, the scope of budget deficit is spectacular.

A number of emerging issues that also must be considered when crafting the upcoming budget are as follows: The complete lack of a capital budget last year, declining school enrollment means possible lower payments to K-12 districts, multiple statutory obligations that are currently unfunded such as school bond debt, REAA, and Community Assistance are likely. In short, these figures reaffirm that Alaska will be drastically in the red as the governor and lawmakers prepare to shape this year's budget.

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## The Year That Keeps on Giving: **A TALE OF SPENDING AND AUDITS**

By Marna Sanford - *Government Relations Coordinator* & Ben Shilling - *Deputy Financial Officer*

What a year! So much has happened this year that you have probably forgotten it was just months ago that Prince Harry and Megan Markle announced they were leaving the royal family and the west coast was invaded by MURDER HORNETS!!! It was also only a few months back that a global health emergency emerged that has changed life as we know it for the foreseeable future.

As a result of the virus, Congress passed the CARES Act, which provided for financial relief to states, tribes, and local governments for the increased costs associated with the COVID19 public health emergency. Due to lots of pressure from tribal advocates, Tribes received \$8 billion according to a formula implemented by the US Department of Treasury.

We have been in contact with almost every single one of our communities

as you have planned your assistance programs and addressed long overdue maintenance issues in your water and sewer systems, provided remote work and schooling options, cleaner heating systems, and food security. It's been a whirlwind of spending and planning to shore up our communities for the continuing impacts you have felt from the pandemic.

As a constant reminder, the Department of Treasury will be enforcing the statutory guidelines for how funds can be used. In short, CRF funds can only be used for:

- “Necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency”
- Those expenditures that are “not accounted for” in the tribe's 2020 approved budget; and
- Expenditures that incurred between March 1, 2020 and

December 30, 2020.

Treasury has segmented expenditures into 5 types of permitted uses:

- Medical expenses
- Public health expenses
- Payroll expenses for public health, safety, direct responders, others dedicated to responding to the public health emergency
- Expenses to help facilitate compliance with public health measures
- Economic support for small businesses, government employee payroll support, and unemployment insurance

Treasury has also identified “ineligible expenses” such as certain payroll costs, expenses that will be reimbursed by another federal program, and per capita distributions to tribal members.

So while it feels like 2020 is the



year that just keeps on giving; one of its most belated gifts will be the gift of an audit requirement that is likely to hit sometime in 2021. TCC has been able to insulate many of our villages from this requirement in the past, by having their federal and state funds flow through TCC and thereby keeping the audit requirement with TCC. However, most of the tribal set aside in the CARES act went directly to the villages. Combined with your direct receipts, your CARES funding is likely to cause many of our villages to fall into the mandated federal single audit. However, there are strategies that may be utilized to avoid the audit and/or maybe limit it to just one year.

Before we get into those strategies, let's review the actual requirements.

A federal single audit is required for any fiscal year in which the village SPENDS \$750,000 or more of federal funds. The audit requirement is not triggered by receiving the money. It is only triggered by expenses. And expenses are triggered by when the work is done or the goods are received. It is not triggered by when you write the check. So for any fiscal year in which you have \$750,000 of work done, or goods received that are funded by federal funds, you will have to have a federal single audit performed. And remember, if your entity will be required to have a federal single audit performed, it won't just be the federal

funds that are audited, it is the entire organization and all funds expended and funds received and all assets and liabilities.

Here are a couple of strategies to possibly mitigate the audit requirement, keeping in mind that the requirements of your federally funded programs may not allow you to take advantage of these strategies.

**Spread your expenditures across two different fiscal years.** For instance, if your fiscal year ends on September 30, you can set your program up to have part of the work performed before September 30 and some of the work performed after September 30. So if you have a \$1,000,000 grant, and that is your only source of federal funds, try to spend less than 70% in one fiscal year and the balance in the next fiscal year. That way neither year will trigger a federal single audit. Remember that it isn't which year you write the check, it's which year was the work done, so be careful.

**Spend the bulk of your funds in a single fiscal year in order to avoid multiple federal single audits.** If you know you are going to exceed the threshold in one year, then spending as much of the federal funds as possible in that single year could help you avoid having to do another audit in the next year. This is only an option if the type of program you are undertaking lends itself to this type of schedule.

If you have not had audits performed routinely, it can be a big hurdle to overcome. Just getting the records ready to be audited can be a substantial task and may cost as much as \$10,000 or more to accomplish depending on whether you are able to perform the work in house or have to contract with an accounting firm to assist. The audit itself can cost \$20,000 or more depending on the size of your organization and the condition of your records. Audit and accounting fees are typically allowable costs that can be charged against the federal funds so be sure to set some aside for this work that will come after the fact.

The big take away here is that the audit threshold is \$750,000 of federally funded EXPENSES that are incurred during a single fiscal year. And the State of Alaska has the same threshold for spending of State funds. So all of the above would also apply if you receive state funding and you want to manage the need to have State Single Audits performed.

If you have any questions about how your CARES funding can be used, or if you have any questions about the federal single audit requirements, please don't hesitate to reach out to us.

For More Information:

**TCC • Marna Sanford • Government Relations Coordinator**

(907) 452-8251 Ext. 3317 • (800) 478.6822 • [marna.sanford@tananachiefs.org](mailto:marna.sanford@tananachiefs.org)

## ANMC Patient Advocate



Kristy Supsook, TCC Patient Advocate, works closely with the medical teams at the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) to ensure TCC patients receive clear communication about their care, experience safe discharges and can access support if concerns arise while at ANMC.

Please call Kristy if you need assistance with anything at all. Out of respect for patient privacy, Kristy does not automatically contact patients in Anchorage for care unless the patient or a health-care provider calls requesting assistance.

For more information, contact Kristy Supsook, TCC Patient Advocate at ANMC  
907-687-9193 • Toll Free 1-800-478-6682 ext. 3604 • [kristy.supsook@tananachiefs.org](mailto:kristy.supsook@tananachiefs.org)



# Focus on Healthy Family Time

By Autumn Cantu  
Prevention Program Coordinator

Winter is here, which means it's time to come together for the holidays! Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) – Partnership for Success (PFS), The Indigenous Wellness Academy (IWA) and the Youth Wellness Warriors (YWW) would like to help families expand family wellness during the holidays. These programs would like to encourage families to participate in cultural traditions, consistent communication and healthy interacting. SPF PFS program's purpose is to help prevent and reduce youth from developing substance misuse with underage drinking, and prescription drug misuse. We encourage having more interaction with your family because it can lead to healthy routines, and more fulfilled daily lifestyles.

Creating a strategy to help improve your family's wellness doesn't have to

be a struggle, SPF PFS would like to offer some small tips. Take one step at a time, this will help your family transition into your new routine smoothly. Always keep communication open for suggestions. It's important to remember to include our youth in the process. You never know, they may have great idea! Ask your children what they like, and don't like about the new routine. Here are some family wellness activities suggested from SPF PFS:

- Eat meals together.
- Simplifying your schedules.
- Have family activity nights.
- Communicate as much as you can.
- Get active as a family.
- Visit family. (Zoom or FaceTime or Skype)
- Cooking healthy meals together.

Participating in all of these activities play an important role in a child's life because they are protective factors. What is a Protective factor? It can be a parent, significant individual, grandparent, or even your community that helps create positive life qualities. These individuals can help you learn how to deal with stressful situations and lower the possibility of a negative outcome that might cause an impairment on your mental health. We hope to inspire and support the healthy changes in your community for the holidays and after. On behalf of The Division of Wellness and Prevention here at Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) be the change for betterment for your family this winter, and please break trail for a healthy lifestyle alongside your family.

For More Information:

**TCC • Division of Wellness & Prevention**

(907) 452-8251 Ext. 3056 • (800) 478.6822 • [prevention@tananachiefs.org](mailto:prevention@tananachiefs.org)

## Resilience: what is it, and how do you “flex” that muscle

Resiliency is the ability to bounce back from unfavorable situations.

When something goes wrong, do you tend to bounce back or fall apart?

When you have resilience, you harness inner strength that helps you rebound from a setback or challenge, such as a job loss, an illness, a disaster or a loved one's death. If you lack resilience, you might dwell on problems, feel victimized, become overwhelmed or turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as substance abuse. Resilience won't make your problems go away — but resilience can give you the ability to see past them, find enjoyment in life and better handle stress. If you aren't as resilient as you'd like to be, you can develop skills to become more resilient.”

Resiliency is also the ability to keep functioning during times of high stress, and even while experiencing difficult emotions like grief, anger, or pain. Sometimes we confuse “sucking it up” with being resilient, but that's not it at all. Being able to reach out to our support system (fami-

ly, friends, community members we look up to, Elders, Council Members, mental health professionals, etc.)

*Do you feel like you could use some “exercise” for your resiliency?*

*Check out these tips and see what works best for you:*

- Get connected. Building strong, positive relationships with loved ones and friends can provide you with needed support and acceptance in good and bad times.
- Make every day meaningful. Do something that gives you a sense of accomplishment and purpose every day.
- Learn from experience. Think of how you've coped with hardships in the past. Consider the skills and strategies that helped you through difficult times. You might even write about past experiences in a journal to help you identify positive and negative behavior patterns — and guide your future behavior.
- Remain hopeful. You can't change the past, but you can always look toward the

future. Accepting and even anticipating change makes it easier to adapt and view new challenges with less anxiety.

- Take care of yourself. Tend to your own needs and feelings. Participate in activities and hobbies you enjoy. Include physical activity in your daily routine. Get plenty of sleep. Eat a healthy diet. Practice stress management and relaxation techniques, such as yoga, meditation, guided imagery, deep breathing or prayer.
- Be proactive. Don't ignore your problems. Instead, figure out what needs to be done, make a plan, and take action. Although it can take time to recover from a major setback, traumatic event or loss, know that your situation can improve if you work at it.

If you are ready to talk to a mental health professional, call Tanana Chiefs Conference and schedule an appointment! Our mental health professionals are ready to help.

**Give us a call at (907) 459-3800** and ask for a counselor or if you are ages 16-25, and are from a rural community in the TCC region, then ask for the Healthy Transitions team.

Our staff is ready to take on your challenges with you!



# COMMUNITY HEALTH AIDE *Spotlight*

## Mariah Bifelt-Itinerant

By Linden Staciokas

Mariah Bifelt knew a number of health aides growing up, including her own aunt. But she never considered being one until she moved back to her home village of Hughes. "I was born in Fairbanks but raised in Hughes, leaving when I was an adult. I returned in June of 2015, and the position was sitting empty, and had been for a number of months. I had always wanted to be in the health field, I just had not thought about being a health aide."



The training for becoming a health aide is rigorous but Mariah had a head start that served her well. She had spent two years attending the UAA nursing program, so she already knew the medical language and knew how to study. "I have a feeling that if I had not had that experience, that it would have been much harder, much more difficult to pass the classes."

There was an important part of the job that she could not learn about in any training session, the most rewarding part of the job but also the hardest---that of being with people during some of the most frightening and vulnerable times of their lives. It takes an enormous amount of emotional energy to help people through

a crisis, especially if the outcome may not be an easy or positive one. And frequently it is not just the patient who is upset and needs words of explanation or comfort, but also the partner, the parent, or the child.

Once in a while, the patient or family take out their fear on Mariah, blaming her for things she has no control over.

Another stressful aspect is that some health aides are on call around the clock for weeks or months at a time. Mariah remembers going for nearly a year with no one to share the middle of the night and weekend phone calls and call outs. "The job can be hard and when you add in not being able to relax or go off into the woods because someone might need you, it can be really hard. I am lucky that I can call other village health aides, especially the ones who went through the classes at the same time I did, for comfort or even to just vent. Being able to decompress is really important for my own health."

Nevertheless, Mariah would recommend the career of health aide highly. "It is a gift to be able to help people and there is a lot of flexibility in working for TCC. For example, I

was the health aide in Hughes but in February we decided to move back to Fairbanks and now I am an itinerant health aide. I can decide what village I want to work in and how long I can stay. Covid has made it a bit more difficult because when you go into a village, you have to stay for a certain amount of time. There is no going in and out quickly, like there used to be."

Mariah's fiancé Aaron has always been supportive of her career. As the mother of a two and four year old and the stepmother of an eight year old, it would be difficult for her to work the hours she did in Hughes or travel to villages the way she is doing now if he were not willing to be the stay at home parent. She realizes how fortunate she is to have backing of not just her co-workers and her TCC supervisor, but her husband to be as well.

At this point, Mariah intends to remain a health aide for TCC. The ongoing training and support she is provided, the way the health clinic buildings and equipment are continually being upgraded, and the fact that she can be stationed in the village of her choice or work as an itinerant, means she is never short of a challenge or chance to improve her skills.





# Coping With Grief During the Holidays

By Roxanne Frank  
Prevention Program Manager

This year with COVID-19, the Holidays will be different for everyone, and gathering together and sharing traditions might not happen for most of us. The holidays can be difficult for those who have lost a family member, especially if this is the first holiday cycle after the passing of a loved one.

According to Grief Recovery Method, grief is defined as "Conflicting feelings caused by the END of or CHANGE in a FAMILIAR PATTERN OF BEHAVIOR." We are going through a major disruption in a familiar pattern of behavior with COVID-19. We are all going through changes and grieving because of the changes.

The absence of a loved one means that normal routines have ended or are never repeated the same way. The routines that used to be fun may now feel empty or sad. The routine with your loved one is no longer there and you will need to make adjustments in your life without the person.

## Ways to Cope during the Holidays:

- Acknowledge that the holidays won't be the same and for some it will be tough.
- Decide how you want to spend your holidays.
- Either way, make a conscious decision how to celebrate the holidays. So, plan ahead.
- Do be gentle with yourself and take care of yourself.
- Don't do more than you want; if you usually decorate the whole house and now you just want to decorate the tree, well that's okay. Avoid additional stress.
- Do allow time for feelings. Don't deny what you're feeling.
- Do talk with someone to let your feelings be known. This will help process your feelings.
- Be careful not to isolate yourself,

this is an important time to stay open to support of family and friends— so reach out.

- Don't keep your feelings bottled up. If you have 1,000 tears to cry, don't stop at 500, let it out.
- Reach out and talk with a trusted friend and share your feelings.
- Remember that not everyone will be grieving the same way you are grieving.
- When in grief, please pay extra attention to the children. Children are too often forgotten grievers. They are grieving the loss right along with you.
- Limit social gatherings, remember the guide lines and wear a mask and stay 6 feet apart.

## Ways to support the person or family who is grieving:

Call each other and encourage each other by phone.

For family members, do an act of service for the family, where they won't have to worry, example: getting a tree, cutting wood, or offer to help decorate for the holidays.

Offer to help with baking.

Be supportive of the way the person chooses to handle the holidays. Some may follow traditions and others may choose not to. Remember, there is no right way or wrong way to handle the holidays. Just be there for the person.

If the person wants to talk about their loved one they lost, just LISTEN! This is important! Listening will help him or her heal.

As a friend, the best way to help those who are grieving during the holidays is to let them know you care. This also helps them to know you remembered and honor their loved one.

## There are a number of ways to include your loved one and your loss into the holidays:

- Share a favorite story about your loved one; everyone will have a story about him or her.
- You can say a prayer about your loved one before the Holiday dinner
- Make a dish that your loved one used to like or loved used to make.
- Make a memorial ornament or wreath in honor of your love one.
- Light a candle for your loved one.

We will continue lighting a candle and have a picture of my late father Richard Frank on the table during the Thanksgiving dinner and Christmas dinner. All my family members are not able to gather during the Holidays and that will be okay. We will continue with his memory and know he is with us in spirit, and know my family has the support and love for each other. It is important how you remember your loved one, and you honor them by the fact that you remember.

May this holiday season bring you hope, good memories, and most importantly, you feel the love from each other during this time of grief for you and your family and the whole community.

For more information on grief or loss, or if you need assistance during the holidays, please contact Tanana Chiefs Conference Behavioral Health at 1-800-478-7822, ext. 3800 or 907-459-3800.

# Winter Blues? *Feeling* SAD?

What can you do to help yourself through the cold and dark season?

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that's related to changes in seasons — SAD begins and ends at about the same time every year. If you're like most people with SAD, your symptoms start in the fall and continue into the winter months, sapping your energy and making you feel moody. Less often, SAD causes depression in the spring or early summer.

Treatment for SAD may include light therapy (phototherapy), medications and psychotherapy.

Don't brush off that yearly feeling as simply a case of the "winter blues" or a seasonal funk that you have to tough

out on your own. Take steps to keep your mood and motivation steady throughout the year.

## *What should you do if you are experiencing SAD?*

We all experience feelings of sadness from time to time but if the feelings are persistent, it's important to evaluate the situation you are in and ask for help if it is needed. Some of us might feel like a burden to others, and we might want to continue shutting down. Remember, we are never alone in these situations, and we must lean on our support system during the difficult times. There may be more people than you think who are experiencing the same things you are.

By Christine Babcock

*Behavioral Health Clinical Associate*

## *Should you talk to a professional about your symptoms?*

Absolutely! Mental and physical health professionals can assist you in finding a solution that is appropriate for you. Everyone responds to things differently so what may work for someone else, might not work for you. That's why it's important to ask your doctor or therapist about what other things you could include in your daily routine to help alleviate symptoms of SAD.

## *What if I don't have a mental health professional I talk to?*

Call Tanana Chiefs Conference and schedule an appointment! Our mental health professionals are ready to help.

**Give us a call at (907) 459-3800** and ask for a counselor or if you are ages 16-25, and are from a rural community in the TCC region, then ask for the Healthy Transitions team.

Our staff is ready to take on your challenges with you!

## MARIE YASKA HUSLIA

Marie Yaska was born January 1st, 1938 in the old village of Cutoff, just outside of Huslia. "Cutoff was just a little settlement," explains Marie, "We didn't stay there because there was no school or anything there."

"I was adopted in the traditional way," says Marie, "Traditional meaning no paperwork. It was kind of like Indian Law."

"My Dad was a traditional healer," says Marie, "if someone was sick, they came to him. There was no doctors around."

Marie remembers that before she went to bed, her dad would pray. I'm just a little kid, I don't know what prayer is," says Marie, "We never saw church or I never hear about church."

Marie remembers hearing him saying that he's praying for the wellbeing of everybody. "Dad, who do you talk to when you go to bed?" Marie asks her Dad....

*To hear Dora's full story, visit [www.tananachiefs.org/legacy-of-our-elders/](http://www.tananachiefs.org/legacy-of-our-elders/)*

*TCC's Legacy of our Elders series documents the lives and stories of Elders throughout the TCC region. These videos are available on our website.*

LEGACY  
OF OUR  
ELDERS



# THE COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

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Letters to the Editor, other written contributions and photo submissions are welcome. However, space is limited and program-oriented news has priority. We reserve the right to edit or reject material. Letters and opinions are not necessarily the opinions of Tanana Chiefs Conference. Material submitted anonymously will not be printed.



Tanana  
Chiefs  
Conference



## Let's Celebrate the Holidays SAFELY!



## GOOD GOVERNMENT, ALASKANS DECIDE

The Alaska Federation of Natives is grateful to the delegates and participants of the Interior Region! Thank you for your investment and engagement. Additionally thanks to our sponsors! We look forward to seeing you at the 2021 Convention!

### DENALI: GCI

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Alaska Federation of Natives | 3000 A Street, Suite 210 | Anchorage, AK 99503 | [www.nativefederation.org](http://www.nativefederation.org)

## Find Your Purpose

JOIN OUR TEAM: [WWW.TANANACHEADS.ORG/CAREERS](http://WWW.TANANACHEADS.ORG/CAREERS)

### Village Vacancies

- |   |   |   |  |  |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Alatna</b> - Community Health Aide/Practitioner</li> <li>• <b>Allakaket</b> - Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Community Health Representative, Family Visitor, Village Public Safety Officer</li> <li>• <b>Anaktuvuk Pass</b> - Behavioral Health Aide</li> <li>• <b>Anvik</b> - Substitute Elder Nutrition Cook, Village Public Safety Officer</li> <li>• <b>Arctic Village</b> - Home Care Provider, Substitute Elder Nutrition Cook, Village Public Safety Officer</li> <li>• <b>Chalkyitsik</b> - Behavioral Health Aide, Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Tribal Family Youth Specialist, Tribal Workforce Development Specialist, Village Public Safety Officer</li> <li>• <b>Circle</b> - Community Health Aide/</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practitioner, Tribal Family Youth Specialist</li> <li>• <b>Dot Lake</b> - Behavioral Health Aide, Home Care Provider</li> <li>• <b>Eagle</b> - Home Care Provider, Village Public Safety Officer</li> <li>• <b>Evansville</b> - Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Elder Nutrition Cook</li> <li>• <b>Fort Yukon</b> - Home Care Provider, Preschool Assistant Teacher, Preschool Lead Teacher</li> <li>• <b>Galena</b> - Home Care Provider, Infant/Toddler Teacher, Lead Teacher</li> <li>• <b>Grayling</b> - Preschool Assistant Teacher, Village Public Safety Officer</li> <li>• <b>Healy Lake</b> - Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Tribal Workforce</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development Specialist, Village Public Safety Officer</li> <li>• <b>Holy Cross</b> - Home Care Provider</li> <li>• <b>Hughes</b> - Community Health Aide/Practitioner - Itinerant, Family Visitor</li> <li>• <b>Huslia</b> - Home Care Provider, Preschool Assistant Teacher, Village Public Safety Officer</li> <li>• <b>Kaltag</b> - Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Family Visitor, Tribal Workforce Development Specialist</li> <li>• <b>Koyukuk</b> - Community Health Aide/Practitioner</li> <li>• <b>Manley Hot Springs</b> - Community Health Aide/Practitioner</li> <li>• <b>McGrath</b> - Family Visitor, Preschool Assistant, Tribal Workforce Development Specialist,</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Village Public Safety Officer</li> <li>• <b>Minto</b> - Tribal Family Youth Specialist</li> <li>• <b>Nenana</b> - Behavioral Health Aide, Infant/Toddler Teacher</li> <li>• <b>Nikolai</b> - Elder Nutrition Cook, Home Care Provider</li> <li>• <b>Northway</b> - Behavioral Health Aide, Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Preschool Assistant Teacher, Substitute Teacher/Assistant Teacher, Village Public Safety Officer</li> <li>• <b>Nulato</b> - Village Public Safety Officer</li> <li>• <b>Old Minto</b> - Camp Counselor, Old Minto Family Recovery Camp Traditional Counselor</li> <li>• <b>Rampart</b> - Behavioral Health Aide, Community Health Aide/</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practitioner</li> <li>• <b>Ruby</b> - Behavioral Health Aide, Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Substitute Elder Nutrition Cook</li> <li>• <b>Stevens Village</b> - Community Health Aide/Practitioner</li> <li>• <b>Tanacross</b> - Preschool Lead Teacher</li> <li>• <b>Tetlin</b> - Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Village Public Safety Officer</li> <li>• <b>Tok</b> - Security Officer, Tok Sub - Regional Primary Care Physician</li> <li>• <b>Venetie</b> - Village Public Safety Officer</li> </ul> |
|---|---|---|--|--|

### Region- Wide Vacancies

- Community Health Aide/Practitioner - Itinerant
- Tribal Employment Rights Officer

JOBS LISTED WERE OPEN AS OF NOVEMBER 20, 2020