

the council

Dena Nena Nenash • Our Land Speaks

Vol. 46, No. 01

A REPORT TO THE MEMBER TRIBES OF TANANA CHIEFS CONFERENCE

January 2021



Virginia Johnston, 93, of Galena receives the first COVID-19 Vaccine from TCC.

The Beginning of the End

On the evening of December 16th, Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) received the first shipment of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, which marked a hopeful beginning to the end of the pandemic. TCC will be administering the vaccine based on a distribution plan that first prioritizes elders over the age of 75, front-line healthcare workers, and employees at long-term care facilities. Currently there isn't an estimate on when the vaccine will be available to the general public, but due to limited availability it likely won't be available for a few more months.

"We are excited and thankful that the vaccine has made it here to interior Alaska," says TCC Chief/Chairman PJ Simon, "It is important that we prioritize our elderly and vulnerable population first as they are the ones who are most likely to become very sick if they contract COVID-19."

On December 21st, a small crew of TCC staff including Faith Walsh, Jo Miller, and Samantha Ervin boarded a plane to Galena with the first doses of the vaccine.

"It's so, so exciting to have the vaccine," said Dr. Tamara Huntington of the

Edgar Nollner Health Center in Galena, "We're very, very pleased to be the first village to get it."

The vaccines were taken to the Yukon-Koyukuk Elder Assisted Living Facility where 17 staff and elders became the first to receive TCC's COVID-19 vaccines. The first elder in line to receive that vaccine was the oldest resident of Galena – Virginia Johnston who is 93 years old.

The next day, TCC set up a COVID-19 vaccine site at the Chief David Salmon Tribal Hall where Community Health

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TCC Leadership

On December 17th, Tanana Chiefs Conference held an Executive Board of Directors Meeting in Fairbanks.

While the majority of board members and attendees participated in the meeting virtually in order to comply with COVID-19 safety guidelines, Secretary/Treasurer Jerry Isaac of Tanacross and Vice President Charlene Stern of Arctic Village were among those able to attend in-person and meet with Chief/Chairman PJ Simon.

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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



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 want to wish everyone a Happy New Year, and I hope everyone enjoyed a joyous holiday season filled with peace, hope, and happiness.

As you know, TCC has officially received the COVID-19 vaccines and we have already begun vaccinating our high risk population (elders over the age of 75) and our front-line healthcare workers. We don't know how much of the vaccines we will be getting in the future or how often we will receive them, but we will continue to keep our tribes and patients informed on when we will be able to vaccinate our general population. We ask for everyone's patience during this time as the situation continues to change.

As we begin the New Year, TCC staff have already begun planning for our March 2021 Annual Convention which will likely be reduced to a two-day event rather than four days to ensure everyone's health and safety during the ongoing pandemic. More information on this year's convention and elections will be available in our February Council Issue.

I would also like to take a moment to thank Doyon, Limited who recently donated \$50,000 to our Hunting and Fishing Task Force.

As I look back at 2020, it reminds me of just how resilient we are as native people. I know that as we enter 2021, we will come out stronger than we have before. I encourage all of you to continue moving forward with faith and hope as we continue to strive towards our vision of Healthy, Strong, Unified Tribes.

Ana Bassee,
PJ Simon
Chief/Chairman

TCC Calendars are Here!



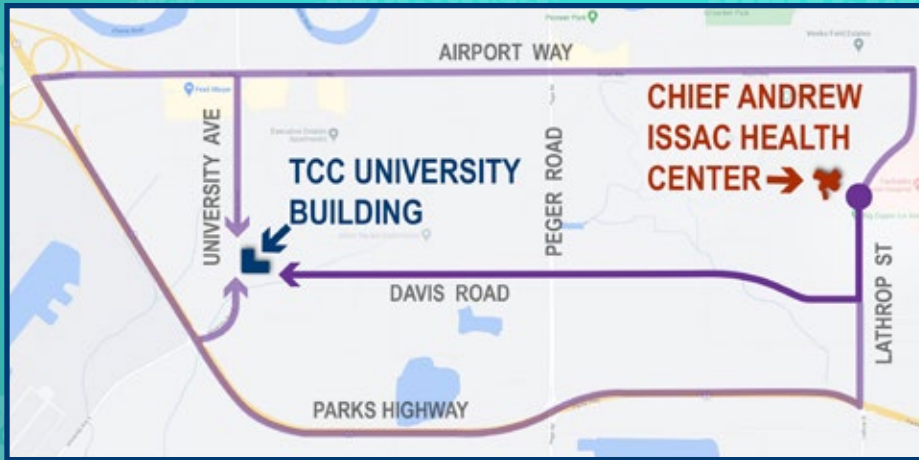
TCC calendars are here and have been mailed to all tribal offices in the TCC region!

Do you live outside the region or state?

Send your mailing address to
Communications_Dept@tananachiefs.org
and we will mail you one!

Reminder: Some TCC Services Have Moved

In order to maintain safe social distancing, several services that were previously located at the Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center have temporarily relocated to a new building at 2175 University Ave in Fairbanks.



The following services were relocated:

- Pediatrics
- Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
- Women's Health
- Diabetes

Maintenance & Special Projects Report

By Jeffery Murtiff
Facilities Director

TCC is going into 2021 with a wide spread of projects that are under active or pending construction. The CAIHC Expansion project is on schedule and within budget. The Manley Hot Springs Health Clinic, Evansville Health Clinic and Upper Tanana Health Clinic in Tok are moving to completion.

Chief Simon gave TCC's Facilities Division three directives; first, to broaden and enforce the Alaskan Native Hire Preference on our construction projects. The Facilities Division's goal is to extend the employment opportunities across all trades and disciplines in the construction industry for TCC beneficiaries through creating hiring requirements within our service contracts. Moving forward, we will implement Chief Simon's directive into all of TCC's facility contracts for construction and services to advance the participation and workforce development of TCC tribal members and communities.

The second directive is to provide broadband to all of the villages. Under Chief Simon's directive, TCC has created a multi-discipline strategic planning committee focused on broadband to the villages. The committee is developing a charter, conducting a Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threats analysis, developing a stakeholder communication tracking tool to ensure tribes have a voice in our planning, and a strategic plan template that will outline the objectives and initiatives.

The third directive is to provide or upgrade the water and sewer systems in our villages. TCC is exploring the Portable Alternative Sanitation System (PASS) and other creative ways that address the water and sewer needs. Similar to broadband, a multidisciplinary strategic planning committee has been convened to bring in broad perspectives on how to advance this directive and follow the same template

to develop objectives and initiatives. In addition, TCC established a position that is solely dedicated to advancing this directive.

TCC is progressing with implementing alternative energy systems and replacing tradition diesel generators with more ecofriendly plants. Staff identified a company that can supply a solar system utilizing a connex box for shipping and as the structure to support the working components of the system. We are on schedule to install one unit this summer.

TCC's Facilities Division is also responsible for the maintenance and operation of 14 buildings in the Fairbanks area. Staff duties range from moving snow, fixing door locks, repairing ruptured piping, and upkeeping TCC's properties to ensure safety and professionalism.



The Beginning of the End

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Aide Itinerant Destiny Salmon of Chalkyitsik, great granddaughter of Chief David Salmon, was the first to receive the vaccine.

"It is very important to get the vaccine," said Elizabeth Fleagle of Alatna after receiving her first dose, "I don't ever want that disease to hit anybody I know. I encourage anyone who is asked to get a vaccine to go ahead and get it. It's better than being home sick, because it is taking our people. Too many of my friends are leaving just because of it."

TCC will be encouraging people to get the vaccine once it becomes available to them. The more people who receive the vaccine, the closer we get to achieving 'herd immunity', which is achieved as more people get the vaccine and are

able to break the chain of transmitting it to others.

TCC's Dr. Stephen Gerrish strongly recommends getting the vaccine. "When you look at all those numbers and you compare it against the risk of getting COVID, which in Alaska right now means about one chance in 300 of dying, higher if you're high risk," he explains, "Is pretty much a no brainer. And for me, I strongly recommend it. I think it is safe, it's very effective, and at this point we strongly recommend proceeding with vaccinations."

After the elderly and healthcare workers are vaccinated, the next step will be to vaccinate those over the age of 65



and other essential workers including EMS. TCC will continue to keep patients and tribes updated with information on the vaccine as it becomes available.

For updated information you can visit our website at www.tananachiefs.org



TCC Tours New *Evansville* Clinic!

On December 28th, 2020, Chief/Chairman PJ Simon along with other TCC staff had the opportunity to tour the new health clinic in Evansville where they were welcomed by Chief Frank Thompson.

TCC Facilities Director Jeffery Murtiff and Safety Officer Christopher Chestnut inspected the clinic to

ensure that the clinic was built to safety standards.

In order to make the most of the visit, Health Staff including Sam Ervin and Jo Miller brought doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to administer to elders and health staff. A total of 14 Evansville residents were able to receive the first dose of the vaccine.



Now Accepting Referrals for Connections DDRC

The Alaska Center for Children and Adults (ACCA) is now accepting referrals for Connections DDRC.

What is connections DDRC?

Connections assists individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families access services through State of Alaska Developmental Disabilities programs.

How can connections DDRC help?

The Connections DDRC Coordinator serves as a first point of contact to help access and navigate the variety of disability services available, such as:

- Applying for Developmental Disability Eligibility
- Applying for and maintaining placement on the DD Registry

- Accessing other disability resources
- Submitting DD Mini-grant applications
- Referring for Waiver Care Coordination

The Connections DDRC Coordinator will help develop strategies and natural supports to help participants achieve stability and independence.

Find Out More Information

For more information or to make a referral, please contact:

- Fontana Dawson, Connections DDRC Coordinator
- Phone: 907-456-4003



- Toll Free: 1-866-456-4003
- Fax: 907-456-6124
1020 Barnette St.
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
- Connections@alaskacenter.org

ACCA provides Connections DDRC services to the following regions:

- Fairbanks North Star Borough
- North Slope Borough
- Interior Road System
- Yukon-Koyukuk Region

What You Need to Know About the COVID-19 VACCINE



THE VACCINE IS SAFE

In the trial studies, no serious problems were identified. Many people will have a sore arm, headache, body ache, fatigue, chills or fever, especially following the second dose of the vaccine, but these are considered normal and a sign that you are developing immunity. Older people seem to have fewer symptoms after vaccination but still develop good immunity.



THE VACCINE IS EFFECTIVE

Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines were almost 95% effective in preventing COVID-19 infections in the recent studies that included over 75,000 people. Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine require 2 doses to be effective; the second doses are 3 or 4 weeks after the first depending on which vaccine you receive.



WHO IS GETTING THE VACCINE FIRST?

At this time TCC has a very limited quantity of COVID-19 vaccines and will be prioritizing vaccinating individuals in accordance with federal guidelines. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that initial supplies of the vaccine be offered to healthcare personnel and long-term care facility residents. There is currently not an estimate on when the vaccine will be widely available.

THE SIDE EFFECTS

More than half of everyone receiving the Pfizer vaccine had noticeable symptoms after receiving the vaccine including:

- Pain at injection site
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle Pain
- Chills
- Joint Pain
- Fever
- Swelling or redness at injection site
- Nausea
- Malaise
- Swollen lymph nodes



These are to be expected after receiving the vaccine and are considered normal. Generally these symptoms start within a day of vaccination and last less than 24 hours. Rest, fluids and analgesics (Tylenol or ibuprofen) can be taken if needed for these symptoms.

What If I Already Had COVID-19?

If you have had a COVID-19 infection in the last 90 days, we ask that you wait until later to be vaccinated as we have limited vaccine and we believe that it is unlikely that you will get re-infected within the first few months after infection.

Will I Need To Continue Wearing A Mask?

Yes! We will continue to require universal masking at TCC and you should continue to protect yourself and others by wearing a mask in public. We all hope that we can eventually stop wearing masks, but it will be many months before we can do so.

How Long is the Vaccine Effective?

If you have had a COVID-19 infection in the last 90 days, we ask that you wait until later to be vaccinated as we have limited vaccine and we believe that it is unlikely that you will get re-infected within the first few months after infection.

STAY UP TO DATE:

Visit www.tananachiefs.org
for the most recent information.

The Differences Between the PFIZER & MODERNA VACCINES

PFIZER	MODERNA
95% Effective	94.5% Effective
30 mcg doses given 21 days apart	100 mcg doses given 28 days apart
5 dose vials	10 dose vials
Must be diluted with 0.9% sodium chloride	No dilution required
Stored at -112 to -76 degrees Fahrenheit	Stored at -13 to -5 degrees Fahrenheit
36,621 trial participants	30,350 trial participants
Approved for use in people over the age of 16	Approved for use in people over the age of 18
Published Safety and Efficacy results from Phase 3 on December 10th, 2020	Published Safety and Efficacy results from Phase 3 on November 30th, 2020
No aluminum, mercury or food allergens	

99% SURVIVAL RATE

A commonly asked question is “why should I get vaccinated if the COVID-19 infection is 99% survival rate?”

Surviving and thriving are incredibly different! COVID-19 symptoms can persist for months. The virus can damage the lungs, heart and brain, which increases the risk of long-term health problems. Even young, otherwise healthy people can feel unwell for week to months after infection.

How organs may be affected by COVID-19:

Heart: Imaging tests taken months after recovery from COVID-19 have shown lasting damage to the heart muscle, even in people who experienced only mild COVID-19 symptoms. This may increase the risk of heart failure or further heart complications in the future.

Lungs: The Type of pneumonia often associated with COVID-19 can cause long-standing damage to the tiny air sacs (alveoli) in the lungs. The resulting scar tissue can lead to long-term breathing problems.

Brain: Even in young people, COVID-19 can cause strokes, seizures and Guillain-Barre Syndrome – a condition that causes temporary paralysis. COVID-19 may also increase the risk of developing Parkinson’s disease and Alzheimer’s Diseases.

Short-Term side effects and 95% vaccine efficacy > long term health damages from COVID-19 infection.

COVID-19 Vaccine Will Be An Important Tool To Help Stop The Pandemic

Wearing masks and social distancing help reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus or spreading it to others, but these measures are not enough. Vaccines will work with your immune system so it will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed.

The combination of getting vaccinated and following CDC’s recommendations to protect yourself and others will offer the best protection from COVID-19.

The Vaccine is a Safer Way to Help Build Protein

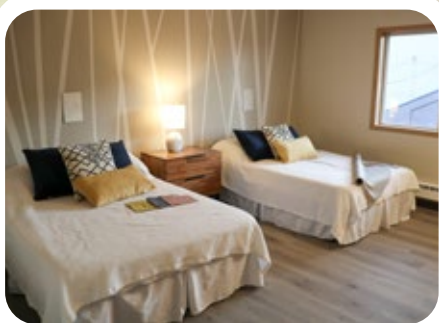
COVID-19 can have serious, life-threatening complications, and there is no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you. And if you get sick, you could spread the disease to friends, family, and others around you.

Clinical trials of all vaccines must first show they are safe and effective before any vaccine can be authorized or approved for use, including COVID-19 vaccines. The known and potential benefits of a COVID-19 vaccine must outweigh the known and potential risks of the vaccine for use under what is known as an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA).

Getting COVID-19 may offer some natural protection, known as immunity. But experts don’t know how long this protection lasts, and the risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 far outweighs any benefits of natural immunity. COVID-19 vaccination will help protect you by creating an antibody (immune system) response without having to experience sickness.

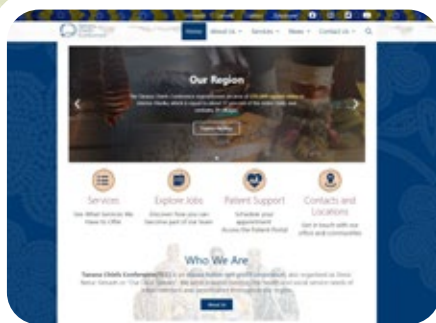
Both natural immunity and immunity produced by a vaccine are important parts of COVID-19 disease that experts are trying to learn more about, and CDC will keep the public informed as new evidence becomes available.

A YEAR IN REVIEW



JANUARY 2020

TCC celebrated the re-opening of the newly renovated Willow House in Fairbanks - which included new paint, flooring, light fixtures, exhaust fans, A/C units, furniture, and hotel-grade TVs and phone systems.



FEBRUARY 2020

TCC announced the re-launch of their website which completely re-designed and re-organized to increase ease of use for users, provide faster load times for our villages, and become a mobile-friendly platform.



FEBRUARY 2020

For the first time, TCC Dental hosted a 'Give Kids a Smile' event in honor of National Children's Dental Health Month. Kids were able to get routine exams, cleanings, and other preventative treatment while participating in fun activities.



FEBRUARY 2020

Chief Andrew Isaac and Center staff participated in a 3-Day workshop. They were able to provide CAIHC expansion design process and better serve patients.



MARCH 2020

TCC launches a 'virtual movie night' for the Legacy of Our Elders project by debuting the elder interviews on TCC Facebook, YouTube, and website. The COVID-19 pandemic prevented an in-person premiere.



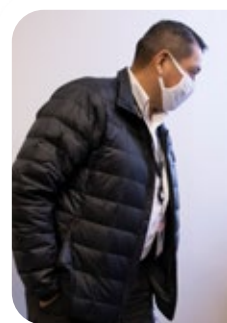
APRIL 2020

Construction began on the expansion of the Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center in Fairbanks, the expansion will add 108,000 gross square feet, providing space for additional services.



OCTOBER 2020

PJ Simon of Allakaket/Galena is elected as the new Chief/Chairman of Tanana Chiefs Conference. Chief Simon



NOVEMBER 2020

TCC moves several services such as women's health, purchased building at 2175 University Ave to ensure safe space at the clinic.



JANUARY 2020

Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center participated in a meeting where they provided input on the new clinic design. The meeting allows TCC to gather feedback from patients at the clinic.



MARCH 2020

After encouragement from numerous tribal leaders, the Executive Board of Directors made the decision to postpone the 2020 Annual Convention. This decision was made with the safety of the tribes, tribal members and employees in mind.



MARCH 2020

A work-from-home order is set for all non-essential TCC employees to ensure the health and safety of both staff and those we serve as COVID-19 numbers across the nation began to climb.



MARCH 2020

TCC Health staff jump into action and set up a drive-thru COVID-19 testing site outside of the Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center.



APRIL 2020

Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center pediatricians, Dr. WI to a newly opened clinic located at 1st Ave in Fairbanks to practice social distancing.



NOVEMBER 2020

Community Health Aides Betty Jo Schmitz (Evansville), Phebe Kamholz (Eagle), Shelbylee Simeon (Aniak), Tina Nollner (Circle), and Pauline Egrass (McGrath) completed their session IV training and graduated in a Zoom Ceremony.



DECEMBER 2020

Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center received 450 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine in their first shipment.

Pictured:

Samantha Ervin (Pharmacist), Dan Nelson (Pharmacy Director), and Isaac Bailey (Pharmacy Intern)



DECEMBER 2020

With the arrival of the COVID-19 Vaccine, TCC started with the vaccinating the most vulnerable populations which include elders over the age of 75 and essential healthcare employees working on the front-line.

COMMUNITY HEALTH AIDE *Graduation*

The Community Health Aide Training Center enjoyed hosting another health aide completion ceremony in person and by zoom in November. Five graduates finished their basic training in Fairbanks and will return to their home villages ready to continue practicing the skills they have learned over four sessions of training. Students ranged from 1 to 2 years on this journey. The ceremony was modified this year to include speakers and family members joining by zoom conferencing. While the room was physically less crowded, there was a palpable spirit of celebration and perseverance. The training center staff and students enjoyed speakers providing

congratulations and words of wisdom including insightful gratitude's from Dr. Alisa Alexander, supportive words from Chief/Chairman PJ Simon, health board member and former health aide Curtis Sommer, health director Jacqueline Bergstrom and CHAP director Crystal Stordahl. It was a veritable success all around and an example of how teamwork, dedication and effort creates achievement. We are hon-



ored to work with each of the following graduates and wish them continued success as their future practice takes shape.



What do you like about being a health aide?



Betty Jo Schmitz
Evansille

"I like being a person contributing to the wellness of the community. I like to help people."



Pauline Egrass
McGrath

"I love working with patients and helping with patient education too, hopefully make for healthier, happy lives. Plus being a health aide has kept me learning."



Phebe Kamholz
Eagle

"Interacting with individuals seeking assistance and support by listening, observing, assessing, problem solving, guiding and educating."



Shelbylee Simeon
Aniak

"I love wound care, I love learning about my people, I love being helpful, I love advocating for my patients and getting them the care they need."



Tina Nollner
Circle

"I love being the person to take care of people's health in the village and being there for people when they have a hard time being there for themselves."

COMMUNITY HEALTH AIDE *Spotlight*

Shanice Albert-Northway Health Aide

By Linden Staciokas

When you see the TV coverage of how the Corona virus is overwhelming the U.S. health care system, the stories are about hospitals. Dressed in gear that looks like it was designed for space travel, the front line workers talk about how physically and emotionally exhausted they are, how they long for a return to normalcy. It is easy to forget that we have rural Alaskan medical providers also straining to deal with the virus on top of their normal workloads, and that many of them are working alone, without the support of on-site colleagues or sufficient time off to recharge. People like Shanice Albert, the health aide in Northway.



memorizing the information. There were times when she wanted to just leave it all and go home, but by focusing on each day instead of how much there was still to do and learn in front of her, Shanice made it through the rigorous training and eventually went back home to Northway.

"At first I was a nervous wreck. Not just doing the medical part of the job, but here I was asking personal questions and examining the community members I was raised with. It was so awkward sometimes, but eventually I grew into being more professional and now it is just my job and I try to do it with compassion and no judgment."

Even after years of doing the work, parts of the job remain wrenching. "It is very hard to see people in pain, especially the elders. Sometimes they are so ill that I have to arrange a medivac, with the assistance from Northway EMS Pamela Baker-Albert, for them to be sent to the hospital. In those cases, I have to force myself not to become emotional, because I know it is going to be hard for them to be away from home, being treated by strangers in an overwhelming large hospital."

"The virus has made things worse. More sick people, having to put on special suits and shields when tending to a COVID patient, and more testing of people with some of them getting upset when the results are not back fast enough. And then over the last nine months the guidelines for how to protect yourself have changed, as scientists have learned more. There are times that people get mad at

the different information and protections I talk about, because it seems arbitrary to them and each time the rules get stricter." The virus outbreak in Northway did not spare Shanice, who caught the virus and had to stay away from her job for almost an entire month while she recovered. "That was almost harder, knowing people needed me and there was nothing I could do but stay home."

Shanice has been the only health aide since March, except for the few times an itinerant worker has been able to come into the village for a week to help. She has terrific phone support from her supervisor and knows she can contact other health aides if she needs to vent, but in the end, she alone is there for her village. This means she is on call around the clock, and since there is no cell coverage in this part of the state, she is forced to stay home to be near her landline. People also know that if she is not there, she is usually at her mom's house, "bugging her to teach me more about beading. She is very skilled and I am just learning."

As the mother of two boys, nine and ten, Shanice does not have a lot of free time, but when she is not doing mom-related activities or beading, she works with her aunt Lorraine Titus to write out the traditional Native songs so that they will not be lost to future generations. "I am pretty good at my language and writing it, just not the talking part, and I get satisfaction out of knowing I am helping to pass on our traditional songs. I also am in our native dance group, but it has been canceled since Covid hit us...right now we are all just waiting for life to get back to normal."

Born and raised in this community of under 300 people, Shanice has been a health aide for almost five years. "My late grandmother Maryann Albert, was a Certified Nurse Assistant and when I was a kid, I was always messing around with things like her stethoscope, pretending to do her job. I didn't exactly intend to follow in her footsteps, I didn't really think I was qualified for such an important job. But my cousin saw the job advertisement and encouraged me to apply; I was amazed when they hired me!"

The initial steps to becoming a health aide were even harder than Shanice had imagined. She had to leave her home and family for weeks at a time to go to Fairbanks for classes, she had to share a room with a fellow student who was a stranger to her, and after a day of sitting through lectures and demonstrations she often stayed up until midnight or later reading and

Greenery and your Mental Health This Winter

By Heidi Rader

Tribes Extension Educator, TCC

Winter solstice is around the corner. Maintaining mental health in the dead of winter in Interior Alaska is always a struggle, but even more so given the added stress and limitations presented by COVID-19.

Research shows that greenery, both indoor and outdoor, offers a protective factor against the stresses and anxiety caused by living in a time of uncertainty, limitations and challenges. One study, "Daily emotional well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic," asked Irish participants how they felt during various, daily activities, on a day after new restrictions were implemented. According to the results, which were published in the British Journal of Health Psychology, exercising, particularly outdoors, going for a walk and gardening topped the charts in terms of promoting emotional well-being. In Norway, the term *friluftsliv*, or open air living, captures their cultural enthusiasm for nature and getting outside whatever the season or weather.

Spending time with friends as well as children was associated with positive feelings — but not if it involved homeschooling! Interestingly, interacting with your spouse was also associated with negative feelings. While spending time indoors with friends is discouraged now, socially distanced outdoor recreation is a safe way to connect with friends.

One of my favorite ways to recreate in the winter is skiing. It doesn't matter whether it's cross-country, downhill or backcountry, as long as I'm sliding on snow, I'm happy. Judging by the number of people in the parking lots for the ski trails, lots of people are trying skiing for the first time. If you're interested in learning how to ski, the Fairbanks Nordic Ski Club offers lessons for all ages. If you live in a village in Alaska, Skiku, a program that usually provides in-person lessons throughout rural Alaska, is providing virtual support for kids who want to ski in their village this year. Many schools in rural Alaska have been stocked with skis by Skiku as well.

We have the luxury of living in a location with easy access to the outdoors and ample space to recreate, so if you can get outdoors on a regular basis, do it!

Another study published in the Environmental Research journal, "Does greenery experienced indoors and outdoors provide an escape and support mental health during the COVID-19 quarantine?" did find positive correlations with mental health and greenery. Whether having houseplants, a view of nature outdoors, or being in nature, there were all positive

effects on mental health. Looking outside my window, and when I'm outside in the winter, I'm not sure I would describe it as greenery — maybe whiter?

If you're unable to get outside in nature, for whatever reason, consider spending some time by a window that looks out over greenery, buy a few houseplants or even grow an indoor edible garden. Here are some tips: bit.ly/36uzrwm. You could even incorporate gardening into your homeschool curriculum, which might promote emotional well-being all around.

Even though we can't enjoy many of the activities we once took for granted, there's a lot to be thankful for and ways to lift our spirits through this challenging time.

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

Blog post link: <https://itgrowsinalaska.community.uaf.edu/2020/12/05/greenery-and-your-mental-health-this-winter/>



Captions:

Houseplants: Even in a small cabin, there is always room for a houseplant or two. From left, that's a Ficus plant, a bromeliad and a Monstera. *Photo by Heidi Rader.*

Skiing: Skiing in McCarthy with my daughter, Kinsey in a snowstorm. *Photo by Chris Cannon*



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Rural *Small Business* Owner Survey

THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19

TCC Village Planning & Development Program Mission is to provide technical assistance to Tribal Councils to support sustainable community development for the Interior Alaska Native People.

Please complete our survey if you are a small business owner/entrepreneur/self-employed located in rural Interior Alaska, Tanana Chiefs Conference region. To be eligible to win one of three \$100 visa gift cards your business needs to be physically located within the rural TCC region. Drawing will be held on February 26, 2021. You do not have to be a TCC beneficiary to be eligible to win prizes.



TAKE THE SURVEY ONLINE AT THE LINK BELOW:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LV8F2WN>



IRENE ROBERTS *CIRCLE*

Irene Roberts was born in Fort Yukon, but raised in the village of Circle. "Circle was not a big village," says Irene, "We had to create our own entertainment." Irene and her family grew up in a one room cabin like most people at that time. Her mother and father worked very hard to raise all five of their children. "Mama and Papa worked very hard," she says, "[Mama] always made sure we were clean, our clothes were clean."

Irene remembers her father always being outdoors, finding ways to provide for the family. "Come spring, Papa would go fishing," remembers Irene, "He and his brother had a fish wheel. We had plenty of fish."

"I must have been about six years old when I started school," recalls Irene.

Irene the school teacher recognized how good Irene was doing and decided to skip her a grade.

"Bless her heart, she promoted me to 9th grade. She helped me [with] some of the things I needed to know," says Irene, "That's when the school teacher said 'You can go to Mt. Edgecumbe Irene, just talk with your dad.'" That's how I went from Circle to Mt. Edgecumbe," she explains, "What a different world."

To hear Irene's full story,
Visit 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



Value of Digitizing Last Words to Preserve Culture FOR THE FUTURE

How a language can be brought back to life by digital records. *By Jessica Charlie
Communications Coordinator*

The Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) Education Department was recently awarded a \$300,000 a year Ch'oodoohk'ii grant from the Administration for Native Americans.

The project—which will run for three years under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—aims to create metadata or data that provides information about other data, for all current Alaska Native language recordings to help understand and catalog them. It will also digitize the recordings and documents, making them searchable and available for tribal members in the villages to access over the internet.

Currently, there are only two languages in Alaska that are fully digitized: Menhti Kenaga, sometimes called Lower Tanana dialect, and Dinju Zhuh K'yu, the dialect for the Gwich'in. Edward Alexander, the former Education Manager at TCC, says the project will ensure any knowledge gaps are identified and filled. Words not currently documented might include things like minerals, names of animals, plant usage, astronomy, cultural information, directions, political speech, and place names. Alexander says, "It's about connecting people, and it's about listening. Which is why the grant is called Ch'oodoohk'ii—it means 'you listen,' the elder is going to do the talking now. It's about creating that opportunity for listening."

Today, 9.2 percent of living indigenous languages around the world have fewer than ten speakers per language—and languages in Alaska are not an exception. At least three generations of indigenous children in the early territory, now known as Alaska, were put through cultural and lan-

guage suppression. In 1888, Sheldon Jackson, the earliest commissioner of education, established a policy prohibiting the use of the native tongue. This prohibition included learning Alaska Native languages in school, and lasted until 1972.

Consequently, as a result of this policy, nearly all the indigenous languages spoken in Alaska fell into a natural decline. The Eyak People who once lived near Prince William Sound spoke "daXun-hyuuga" which translates to "The people living to your left as you face the ocean." The Eyak language was left on the brink of extinction when their last full-blooded, Native-born speaker, Chief Marie Smith Jones, passed away in 2008.

In Smith Jones' later years of life, she assisted Dr. Michael Krauss, the founder of the Alaska Native Language Center. Together, they worked on revitalization efforts to help breathe life back into the Eyak language. Dr. Krauss decided the best way to help preserve what remained of the Eyak language was to create a dictionary. This meant creating an Eyak orthography—or the conventional spelling system of a language. This created a written base to help build up the conservation efforts to save the dying dialect. During their work together, Krauss compiled more than 6,000 terms in written form.

While Smith Jones assisted Dr. Krauss, one of her last premonitions was that a person from afar would come and save the Eyak language. Strangely, since Krauss' death in 2019, Guillaume Leduey, a French linguist,

has continued this preservation work with the Eyak people. Leduey was only 13 years old at the time when he first took interest in the endangered dialect. He requested any Eyak text, audio materials and DVDs and studied them, and became fluent in the language. Today, he is only one out of two people that is fluent in the language.

Leduey has helped create an online dictionary for anyone who wants to reference and learn the language. It now has over 600 words in written and audio form. The Eyak Culture Camp also meets every year, attracting interested linguists and archaeologists across the globe. Last year Leduey led the camp, focusing on positive and fun ways to learn, like variations of different games like 'Simon Says' and 'Charades'.

Using the Eyak language as an example how language revitalization efforts can work, the Ch'oodoohk'ii grant may be an effective way to preserve languages. Alexander says, "The idea is to connect the language to learners wherever the learner is at, and also to provide resources for students who are interested in studying their language."

The next steps for TCC are to hire a Ch'oodoohk'ii project coordinator who will oversee the digitization process, and will be involved with hiring elders, and review any language collections to catalog and research them.

For more information contact:-
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Eagle builds *Quarantine Shelters* for Elders

The village of Eagle used their COVID-19 funds to build elder quarantine shelters. These shelters were made for elders who live outside of the village due to losing their homes in the 2009 flood to be able to come back to their village and stay safe from the pandemic. The village maintains and cleans the shelters for the next visitors.

The work crew is pictured here: from left to right is Rick Crofoot, Geraldine Goodnoh, Howard David- in the back. Front three on the right is Edward David, Tyrese Roberts, and Benjamin Juneby.

Thank you to these hard workers for the great effort they put into building these shelters!



Healthy Transitions! *Healthy Life!*

Who we provide services for:

Individuals who are ages 16-25. We can continue services to someone who ages out while in the program; unfortunately, we cannot take someone in who is not yet 16, and someone who was not already in the program before they turned 26. We cover TCC villages and any participants need to have a rural village as their home of record in order for us to provide services to them. They can be in Fairbanks temporarily and we can supplement Health Education to them in addition to the services they are receiving with other agencies. Our grant covers expenses for the services we provide so there will be no conflict with Medicaid billing.

What we do and how:

Healthy Transitions is a program designed to assist teens and young adults' transition into adulthood. Kids in this age range experience high levels of stress due to the pressure they face in deciding what to do with their future after high school, transitioning into their own home, paying bills, and just basically being on their own. This is the time in a young adult's life where they are more likely to develop mental health illnesses and unhealthy behaviors, so it is a

critical time in their development to learn healthy life skills. We provide 30-60-minute individual sessions with clients who agree to health education through our program. The Clinical Associates use four workbooks to deliver information to the clients. Each client is unique and service plans will reflect the needs of each client, so some may complete only one workbook while others will complete two or three, or all four. Group sessions are possible if there are enough clients to participate in activities.

These are our workbooks and a brief description of what each cover:

Healthy Relationships: explore qualities that make up healthy relationships; take a look at the many relationships in your life right now; understand the ripple effects certain behaviors can have on those around you; recognize the skills that can help you effectively communicate in your relationships; resolve conflicts in relationships, or remove yourself if the relationship has become harmful; look toward creating healthy relationships in the future.

Daily Life: identify how you have dealt with stress in the past and focus on how to better manage your stress; learn tips for good nutrition

and healthy eating; explore ways to improve the quality of your sleep; consider ways to add more physical activity to your day; get a clear picture of your financial situation.

Feelings: explore how your feelings can influence your overall wellness; consider some facts about feelings; identify which of your feelings are most challenging for you right now; explore strategies for managing difficult feelings, which could include changing, preparing for or taking action against them; apply and practice these strategies you have learned to manage your difficult feelings.

Core Skills: asking for and accepting feedback from others; practicing effective communication; learning how to cope with troubling feelings and behaviors; identifying your anger triggers and ways to effectively deal with anger; finding ways to reduce your stress; learning ways to handle risky situations; improving your decision-making skills; building personal relationships.

What's next?

Give us a call at (907) 459-3800 and ask for Healthy Transitions! We are eager and ready to help you tackle challenges in your life.

For More Information from our **Healthy Transitions Team:**

TCC • Healthy Transitions

(907) 459-3800

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.



TELEHEALTH APPOINTMENTS

Need to talk to your doctor, but want to stay safe during the pandemic? The Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center offers the option to have your medical appointment via phone or video conferencing! No need to leave our work or home.

We have staff available to assist you in setting up your smart phone or computer.

Call Central Scheduling at 907-451-6682, option 1, to schedule an appointment.



FEBRUARY IS

National Children's Dental Health Month!



ADA American Dental Association®

TCC DENTAL WILL BE CELEBRATING WITH A SPECIAL 'GIVE KIDS A SMILE' EVENT. STAY TUNED BY VISITING TCC'S FACEBOOK AND WEBSITE!

The American Dental Association's (ADA) 'Give Kids a Smile' program was begun in 2003 by the ADA with the goal to provide dental care to children as well as to increase prevention and education for communities around the country.

Find Your Purpose

JOIN OUR TEAM: WWW.TANANACHEADS.ORG/CAREERS

Village Vacancies

- **Alatna** - Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Substitute Elder Nutrition Cook
- **Allakaket** - Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Community Health Representative, Village Public Safety Officer
- **Anaktuvuk Pass** - Behavioral Health Aide
- **Anvik** - Village Public Safety Officer
- **Arctic Village** - Home Care Provider, Substitute Elder Nutrition Cook, Village Public Safety Officer
- **Chalkyitsik** - Behavioral Health Aide, Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Tribal Family Youth Specialist, Tribal Workforce Development Specialist, Village Public Safety Officer
- **Circle** - Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Tribal Family Youth Specialist
- **Dot Lake** - Behavioral Health Aide, Home Care Provider
- **Eagle** - Home Care Provider, Village Public Safety Officer
- **Evansville** - Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Elder Nutrition Cook
- **Fort Yukon** - Home Care Provider, Preschool Assistant Teacher, Preschool Lead Teacher
- **Galena** - Cook (EHS), Home Care Provider, Infant/Toddler Teacher
- **Grayling** - Preschool Assistant Teacher, Village Public Safety Officer
- **Healy Lake** - Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Tribal Workforce Development Specialist, Village Public Safety Officer
- **Holy Cross** - Home Care Provider
- **Hughes** - Community Health Aide/Practitioner - Itinerant, Family Visitor
- **Huslia** - Home Care Provider, Preschool Assistant Teacher, Village Public Safety Officer
- **Kaltag** - Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Family Visitor, Tribal Workforce Development Specialist
- **Koyukuk** - Community Health Aide/Practitioner
- **Manley Hot Springs** - Community Health Aide/Practitioner
- **McGrath** - Family Visitor, Preschool Assistant Teacher, Tribal Workforce Development Specialist, Village Public Safety Officer
- **Minto** - Tribal Family Youth Specialist
- **Nenana** - Behavioral Health Aide, Infant/Toddler Teacher
- **Nikolai** - Home Care Provider
- **Northway** - Behavioral Health Aide, Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Preschool Assistant Teacher, Substitute Teacher/Assistant Teacher, Village Public Safety Officer
- **Nulato** - Home Care Provider, Village Public Safety Officer
- **Old Minto** - Camp Counselor, Old Minto Family Recovery Camp Traditional Counselor
- **Rampart** - Behavioral Health Aide, Community Health Aide/Practitioner
- **Ruby** - Behavioral Health Aide, Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Substitute Elder Nutrition Cook
- **Stevens Village** - Community Health Aide/Practitioner
- **Tanacross** - Preschool Lead Teacher
- **Tetlin** - Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Village Public Safety Officer
- **Tok** - Security Officer, Tok Sub-Regional Primary Care Physician
- **Venetie** - Village Public Safety Officer

Region- Wide Vacancies

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

JOB LISTED WERE OPEN AS OF DECEMBER 16, 2020