

## Kids Age 5-11 Can Now Get The COVID-19 Vaccine!



Azalea Augustine, age 9, after receiving her first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at the Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center.

Last month, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) approved children between the ages of 5 to 11 to receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. This announcement was long awaited by many parents who wanted to ensure that their children had a level of protection against the virus before returning to in-person activities such as school.

After the announcement, TCC immediately set up a weekend Children's Vaccine Clinic at the Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center in Fairbanks for children in that age range to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and their flu shot. Plans are currently in place to distribute the vaccine out to rural communities throughout the region.

If you have a child age 5 or over who

has not yet received their COVID-19 vaccine, please consider making an appointment by calling the Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center at 907-451-6682.

The more people who get the vaccine, the faster we can reduce the number of COVID-19 cases throughout the state.



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## Mission

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

Trimble Gilbert/Arctic Village  
*1st Traditional Chief*

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*2nd Traditional Chief*

PJ Simon/Allakaket/Galena  
*Chief/Chairman*

Charlene Stern/Arctic Village  
*Vice President*

Charlie Wright/Rampart  
*Secretary/Treasurer*

Herbie Demit/Tanacross  
*Upper Tanana*

Claude 'Joe' Petruska/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*

Alex Hanna/Minto  
*Youth Advisor*

## Chief's Report

Dear Tribes and Tribal Members,



In January 2021, we started off the year with hope as the COVID-19 vaccines began to make their way out to the general public. This gave us the peace of mind that our elders, families and loved ones now had a level of protection against the virus. It was a great contrast to the environment we were in when I took on the role of Chief/Chairman in October 2020. At that time, we had been almost a year into a global pandemic and many felt fearful and uncertain of what the future would bring.

When I look back at this past year, I am continuously reminded of how resilient we are as an organization and as a region. In the year and two months that I have served as the Chief/Chairman, Team TCC has had the opportunity to celebrate many achievements including;

- Developed a new draft strategic plan that will better communicate the tribe's priorities and provide focus to the organization.
- Health Services successfully rolled out the first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to all villages in our health services area.
- Facilities, Maintenance & Planning Department—This newly created department has resulted in saving over \$5 million on the expansion of Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center, helping tribes with existing infrastructure as well as building new infrastructure for villages.
- Four TCC owned buildings and one rural clinic were leased to IHS for \$938K for FY22, through the 105 (I) Lease program, FY21 brought in \$399k in lease payments. This funding will provide maintenance and upkeep of the buildings.
- 46 kW worth of solar-battery projects were installed in Tanacross.
- Received \$1.4 million for diesel generator upgrades in five TCC villages.
- Received the Department of Justice Office of Victims of Crime Tribal Victim Service Set-Aside grant for \$3,028,128 for FY22 on behalf of 13 tribes.
- Fitch Ratings reaffirmed TCC's bond rating of A+ and stable outlook – reflecting TCC's strong financial profile.
- 150 youth were awarded summer youth employment positions in 29 villages – totaling \$316,800.
- TCC made a \$100,000 contribution to the Doyon Foundation for scholarships geared towards students pursuing health degrees.

This is just a small look into the long list of achievements Team TCC has accomplished over the past year. Without our hard-working employees, this couldn't have been possible. Team TCC is just getting started.

My intention has always been to lead from a place that prioritizes the overall wellbeing of our organization – this includes our employees and our tribes. I promise that I will continue to lead with this focus in mind.

I look forward to everything we will achieve in the next year as we continue to strive towards our vision of *Healthy, Strong, Unified tribes*.

Anaa Baasee,  
PJ Simon  
Chief/Chairman



# Congratulations! COVID-19 Vaccine Giveaway Winners

Tanana Chiefs Conference would like to thank the winners of our COVID-19 Vaccine Giveaway for the month of November.

"It's for the community," said drawing winner Emanuel Bostwick when asked why he choose to get his COVID-19 vaccine. Thanks Emanuel, and all of our winners, for doing your part to protect yourself and keep your friends and neighbors safe.



## \$500 Cash:

- Sarah Curwen of Fairbanks
- Nathan Fennimore of Galena
- Floyd Vent Jr. of Huslia
- 1 winner that prefers to remain anonymous

## Beaded Gloves:

- Darius Chapman of Fairbanks
- Christine Erhart of Tanana
- Patricia Kriska of Fairbanks
- Jason Malemute of Koyukuk

## Apple iPad Air:

- Jaden Griffin of Fairbanks
- Kayann Thomas of Northway

## Nintendo Switch & \$100 Gift Card:

- Cedar Robichaud of Fairbanks
- Catherine Solomon of Fort Yukon

## Beats Headphones:

- Olivia England of Fairbanks
- Arabelle Hamilton of Grayling

## \$300 Amazon Gift Card:

- Emanuel Bostwick of Fairbanks
- Sherah Frank of Northway

## GRAND PRIZE DRAWING

Winners for our final drawing will be announced on December 15th. We will be awarding 24 prizes including these grand prizes:

1. A trip for two on Alaska Airlines plus \$1500 in spending money to two lucky winners
2. \$5000 in cash to two lucky winners



## Now Offering COVID-19 Booster Shots

Booster shots are now available at the Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center for all three types of COVID-19 vaccines (Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson).

### To receive the booster shots you must:

- Be over the age of 18
- Have completed your 2nd dose of Pfizer or Moderna at least 6 months ago or completed your single dose of J&J at least two months ago.
- TCC booster doses are available to all TCC beneficiaries of routine care, TCC employees, or the immediate household members of either of these two groups.



To schedule an appointment call 907-451-6682.

# Combating Seasonal Depression *Together*

December is Seasonal Depression Awareness Month. The Division of Wellness and Prevention would like to offer support and tips for those who are experiencing Seasonal Depression.

## What is Seasonal Depression?

Seasonal Depression also known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) where serious mood changes occur with the changes of seasons. It is most common for SAD symptoms to occur at the start of fall and continue into the winter months. With education and support, symptoms from SADs can be combated for healthy and positive results.

### What are the Symptoms?

Possible symptoms may include the following.



### What can we do?

Possible ways to help.



If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide contact:  
TCC Behavioral Health 907.452.8251 • After Hours Crisis: 1.800.478.6682  
Alaska Careline 1.877.266.4357 (HELP) • text "4help" to 839863  
(Tuesday-Saturday 3 pm to 11 pm)  
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1.800.273.8255

For more information on suicide prevention contact:  
Division of Wellness & Prevention Zhiinidzelt'aey Project  
1.800.478.6822 • (907) 452.8251 Ext 3164  
Prevention@tananachiefs.org

For more information visit websites:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/seasonal-affective-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20364651>  
<https://afmed.org/december-is-seasonal-depression-awareness-month/>

<https://www.mentalhealth.gov/what-to-look-for/mood-disorders/sad>

<https://www.aarp.org/health/conditions-treatments/info-2021/seasonal-affective-disorder.html>  
<https://www.everydayhealth.com/depression/treatment/ways-to-ease-seasonal-depression/>

## Head Start News

The FY22 Head Start school year is going strong! Nenana, Galena, Northway and Tanacross classrooms are still operating with kids in the classroom while other sites are supporting families with home based care. We're hoping to be able to open more sites to classroom based care soon, depending on staff availability.

Head Start has open enrollment for children birth-4 year olds. Please contact Tanya Yatlin at 907-452-8251 or 800-478-6822 ext. 3469 for more information.

TCC Head Start has teamed up with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library! Every month, enrolled children from the ages of birth to 5 will get a free age appropriate book! Reading together is a wonderful way to build a lifelong love for reading with children and promote family time.

To celebrate the interiors beautiful

harvest season, Head Start sent out about 75 pumpkins to enrolled families, along with some recipes and family activity ideas. To continue the celebration this month, we'll be sending out Fall Harvest food boxes to enrolled families with supplies for a turkey dinner. To further support our communities we're partnering with village stores wherever possible to order those supplies.

With COVID-19 cases on the rise, we are no longer able to brush teeth in the classroom, so we're participating in the Brush, Book and Bed program. Last month we sent out care packages with tooth brushes, tooth paste and books to enrolled families to help instill good oral hygiene and promote family time. A new book will be sent in November.



In October, Head Start staff travelled to seven villages in our region to provide vision and hearing screenings to children enrolled in our program.

Head Start has positions open in the following villages: Fort Yukon, Galena, Grayling, Holy Cross, Hughes, Huslia, Nenana, Nulato, Shageluk and Tetlin. The positions available are Lead Preschool Teacher, Preschool Assistant Teacher, Infant/Toddler Teacher, Family Visitor, Early Head Start Cook and Substitute Teacher/Assistant Teacher. We also have an ERSEA position open in Fairbanks. Please visit our website at [www.tananachiefs.org/careers](http://www.tananachiefs.org/careers) to see what's open in your area or call Kristi Walmsley at 907-452-8251 or 800-478-6822, ext. 3015.



# Flu Season Importance of Getting a Flu Shot

With flu season upon us during the COVID-19 pandemic, it's doubly important to lessen the risk for getting the flu. In a typical year, flu season occurs from fall to early spring. The length and severity of an epidemic may vary. Some lucky individuals can get through the season flu-free, but be prepared to be surrounded by sneezing and coughing for a few months. Also remember to self-isolate and seek testing as soon as any symptoms appear.

## Flu Symptoms Include:



**Coughing**



**Fever**



**Headache**



**Muscle/Body Aches**



**Sore Throat**



**Runny Nose**



**Fatigue**



**Vomiting/Diarrhea**

The symptoms that come with the flu can keep you bedridden for a week or more. An annual flu vaccine is the best way to help protect you against flu.

The CDC believes that flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 will both be spreading during fall and winter. The symptoms of flu have major overlap with symptoms of COVID-19, so the flu vaccine will be more important than ever.

**To schedule an appointment to get your flu shot call the Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center at 907-451-6682.**

## Helping People with Disabilities Enter the Workforce

TCC's Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) Program has been federally funded for the past 25 years, helping coordinate with programs in Family Services & Support to provide culturally appropriate vocational rehabilitation services to eligible Tribal Members living in the TCC service area.

### WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES?

Anyone enrolled in an Alaska Native Village, Corporation or Native American Indian Tribe from the Lower 48 with a documented permanent physical or mental disability that interferes with his or her ability to get or keep a job or to fully participate in a subsistence lifestyle may be eligible based on application review and eligibility determination (within 60 days) by one of the three counselors. Tribal members must live in the TCC service area or in their Village. Providing current medical documentation of your permanent disability with your application will help us determine eligibility faster. *There are no income restrictions and this is a voluntary program.*

### WHAT HELP IS AVAILABLE?

The overall purpose of TVR is to help people go to work, which could be competitive employment, self-employment, or *wild resource and harvest lifestyle activities*. The program counselors work one-on-one with each person to begin the process by identifying a goal for the future. Services are coordinated to help individuals to reach their goals. Examples of services provided during the process include vocational counseling and guidance; referral to other agencies and service providers; vocational educational training; purchase of books, tools, equipment, supplies, and materials. If eligible, we can assist with medical and mental health services such as collaboration for therapeutic treatment; purchase of eyeglasses, hearing aids, and prosthetics (not already covered by medical benefits); and job related services that include job search, on-the-job training, and follow-along services. The type of assistance the program provides is based on individual needs: no two Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE) are identical. *ALL information*

**Amanda Race, MA, CRC, Manager/Counselor** is confidential and no one is given any information without having written & signed consent from the applicant.

### HOW TO REACH US:

Toll-free: 800-478-6822

(907) 452-8251 ext. 3232

Fax: 907-459-3883

Chief Peter John Tribal Building – 5th Floor

*Amanda Race, Program Coordinator*  
Ext. 3232, [amanda.race@tananachiefs.org](mailto:amanda.race@tananachiefs.org)

### Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors

*Phillip Albert*

Ext. 3323, [phillip.albert@tananachiefs.org](mailto:phillip.albert@tananachiefs.org)

*Rita Eaglehead*

Ext. 3329, [rita.eaglehead@tananachiefs.org](mailto:rita.eaglehead@tananachiefs.org)

Learn more by visiting  
[www.tananachiefs.org/services/family-services/tribal-vocational-rehabilitation-program/](http://www.tananachiefs.org/services/family-services/tribal-vocational-rehabilitation-program/)

Please feel free to stop by the office with an appointment or if we are traveling to your Village, please look for our travel letters posted in your local Tribal offices. We travel late March through October and bring the services to you!

# Coping with Grief During the Holidays

By Roxanne Frank

Due to the emergence of the COVID-19 Delta Variant, the TCC region has experienced a tremendous amount of loss this year. All of our tribal communities have been impacted. The holiday season can be particularly difficult for those who have lost a family member and will be experiencing the season without them for the first time.

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.

It's important to acknowledge that the holidays will not be the same as it has in years past. It's still important to make a conscious decision to celebrate – even in small ways. Plan ahead and make a commitment to celebrate.

## How to Cope with Grief:

- **Be gentle with yourself.** Recognize when things are getting too difficult and take breaks as necessary.
- **Don't overexert yourself.** If you usually decorate the whole house and now you just want to decorate the tree - that's okay. Don't stress yourself out trying to replicate past holidays.
- **Talk to someone.** Don't hold your feelings to yourself. Find a trusted friend or family member who can help you process your feelings.
- **Don't isolate yourself.** Stay open to receiving support from

friends and family – and don't forget to offer support to others who are grieving as well.

## Support Others Who Are Grieving:

- **Pay attention to the children in your life.** Remember that children also experience grieving and it is often their first time dealing with the death of a loved one. They may need someone to guide them through their feelings and remind them that they are loved.
- **Remember that grief is complicated.** Everyone deals with death differently. Remember to be gentle with others – as their grieving process may look very different than yours.
- **Stay connected.** Connect with your friends and family via phone, text, or FaceTime to uplift one another and encourage each other.
- **Volunteer to help.** Offer to help others with acts of services like getting a tree, cutting wood, help decorating or help with cooking or baking.
- **Listen.** If someone wants to talk about the loved one they lost – listen. It can be difficult to bring up old memories, but it's important to listen as this may be part of their healing process.
- **Show that you care.** The best way to help those who are grieving is to let them know that you care. Acknowledge their loss and let them know that you remember and honor their loved one.

## Honor your loved one during the Holidays:

- **Share a story.** Share one of your favorite experience or memory that you shared together and allow others to share their own stories as well.
- **Say a prayer.** Say a prayer especially for your loved one before the holiday dinner.
- **Make their favorite dish.** Make a dish that your loved one used to like or used to make.
- **Make something.** Make a memorial ornament or wreath in honor of your love one.
- **Light a candle.** Light a candle in their memory.

We hope that this holiday season brings you hope, good memories, and that you feel the love from each other during this time of grief for you, your family, and the whole community.

TCC is now offering an opportunity for connection, empowerment and encouragement for those who are struggling as we continue to move through the COVID-19 pandemic. Connection with others is important for our overall health and wellbeing and many are feeling the loss of those important connections with family and friends.

These meetings will be available remotely (via phone or computer). Those interested in attending can contact Roxanne Frank at 907-452-8251 ext.3581 or [Roxanne.frank@tanachiefs.org](mailto:Roxanne.frank@tanachiefs.org)



# The Perfect Moment to Talk

Autumn Cantu, Strategic Prevention Framework Partnerships for Success (SPF – PFS)

Have you talked with your children about the importance of healthy communication? Have you talked to them about the dangers of underage drinking?

Our Strategic Prevention Framework Partnerships for Success (SPF-PFS) grant focuses on reducing prescription drugs and substance abuse among youth. Our staff at Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) are encouraging communities to strengthen

prevention responsiveness within your family and community. We understand it can be a difficult topic to navigate. We also understand the stress and anxiety you might be having. You may be asking yourself, “are they too young?” or “will they really listen?”

In reality, your children look up to you and everything you do. They hear us whether they show active listening

skills or not. We understand families are going through a lot right now. Many of us are spending more time at home due to the pandemic—either working from home or not yet back to work. We encourage you to take this time to spend more quality time with your families and take this opportunity to have a healthy conversation with your children including discussing underage drinking.

It's never too early to have a healthy conversation with your child, as long as the chat is age appropriate and allows them to express their thoughts as well. Open the conversation, give your child the time to talk and express their feelings/thoughts to you. Short and frequent conversations are most effective as your child moves through the stages of adolescence.

**Our Strategic Prevention Framework Partnerships for Success (SPF-PFS) grant focuses on reducing prescription drug and substance abuse among youth.**

If you would like resources or support on how to start the conversation, how to adapt the conversation to your child's age, or how to practice and encourage healthy communication, we are here.

You can find more information through “Talk. They Hear You.” developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) <https://www.samhsa.gov/talk-they-hear-you/parent-resources>.

Or give us a call at (907) 452-8251 ext. 3056, SPF-PFS/TCC. We hope to inspire and support the healthy changes in your community. 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.

## Staying Safe in Cold Weather

As the cold weather sets in here in Alaska, it is important that we educate ourselves on how we can ensure that we stay safe during the winter months especially while travelling. Here are some tips and safety guidelines to keep you safe.

### Cold Weather Must-Haves

It is always important to keep these staples in your car when you plan on hitting the winter roads. Make sure to go through this checklist beforehand:

- Plenty of water
- Extra snacks and food
- Warm clothing – bring layers!
- Flashlight or headlamp
- Window scraper
- Blanket
- Portable phone charger

### Travel Safety Tips

If you plan to travel longer distances be sure to follow these tips.

- Be prepared and have your vehicle checked by a trusted auto repair facility.
- Keep up with the weather and check the conditions before you leave.
- Tell someone where you are going, what route you plan to take, and when you expect to arrive.

# Infant Learning Program

The Infant Learning Program (ILP) at TCC is a home-based early intervention program that provides support and services to young children experiencing developmental delays and their families. ILP provides individualized services to children and families through state funding.

This program is family centered, meaning that each child is viewed in the context of their entire family and community. Family goals and needs are the center of services.

Services are provided to any child birth to three, residing outside of the

Fairbanks North Star Borough. Children do not have to be Tribal members.

The Infant Learning Program was designed to be the foundation of the education system that serves children with special needs through Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Act.

ILP facilitates transitions to pre-school, Head Start and Special Education.

## Services We Provide:

- Developmental Screenings and Evaluations
- Family Support and Service Coordination

- Special Instruction and Information for Caregivers
- Direct Speech, Occupational and Physical Therapy
- Infant and Toddler Social and Emotional well being
- Referrals to Appropriate Supports and Resources in the Community
- Transition Services in to Pre-school, Head Start and Special Education as children approach age three.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION REGARDING THE INFANT LEARNING PROGRAM:

**Gina M. Pope**

Infant Learning Program Coordinator  
(907) 452- 8251 ext. 3176  
Gina.pope@tananachiefs.org  
Fax: (907) 459-3952

**Lori Markkanen**

Developmental Specialist  
(907) 452- 8251 ext. 3280  
lori-markkanen@tananachiefs.org  
Fax: (907) 459-3952

# Meet Brent Meredith Physician's Assistant

Brent Meredith has a medical degree and passed the board examinations to become a physician. Instead of pursuing a three- to eleven-year residency program needed to become licensed in Alaska as a medical doctor, he chose to continue serving as a physician assistant at Tanana Chiefs Conference's Upper Tanana Health Clinic in Tok.

"I wanted to learn more and to do more for my patients, so I went to medical school," said Meredith, who has worked at UTHC since 2017. "I love studying science and medicine. Understanding molecular biology helps me better understand what is going on with my patients. I love being able to put it all together so that I can help provide the most appropriate medical care. At the end of the day, its not about being called doctor, its about serving my patients."

Meredith grew up on a farm in Payson, Utah. In high school, he excelled in his science, welding and shop classes. It was his love of people and science that guided Meredith to choose a career in health care. He continues to work a ro-

tating schedule at UTHC so he splits his time between Tok and Woodland Hills, Utah, where his family lives.

In addition to his medical degree, he has a degree in physician assistant studies from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. Meredith earned his medical degree in 2020 from a school in Samoa. He was able to take most of his courses through distance learning, which allowed him to continue serving his patients at UTHC. Meredith completed the clinical part of his medical degree at a hospital in McAllen, Texas.

"A lot of people tend to coast as they get further along in their career, and that's absolutely not what I wanted to do," said Meredith. "I want to always be improving in every way. I want to be a better provider now than I was 10 years ago, and I want to be a whole lot better than I was 20 years ago. I want to be current and at the forefront of everything I

do as a medical provider, because my patients deserve the best health care."

In Texas, Meredith met some guys that were working up on the North Slope in the oil fields. He became interested in finding a job with rotating weeks off because it would make it possible for him to work while completing his medical degree. After working in Deadhorse as a physician assistant on a rotating schedule, Meredith accepted a position as a contractor for TCC.

"I just I loved it," said Meredith. "I love the people and working at the Upper Tanana Health Clinic. I love everything about so that's really why I've stayed since 2017. I also love the variety of what I do. I never know what's coming next. It could be anything, so it doesn't get boring."





# BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AIDE *Spotlight*

## Valerie Bergman - Allakaket

By Linden Staciokas

Someone once wrote that if you look hard at a successful person, you can see the shadows of those, past and present, who helped them along on the path of life. If you looked behind Valerie Bergman, the Behavioral Health Aide for Allakaket, you'd see a large group of elders and children. Young and old, at one time or another all of them taught or mentored her, some when she was a teacher's aide, others when she was a tribal employee working on development programs, and many more when she was a tribal family services worker. Six years ago, it was elders who encouraged her to apply for what was then called a mental health counselor but is now known as a Behavioral Health Aide.

Valerie was hired in September of 2015, but she did not immediately begin seeing clients on her own. First, she had to complete the two year training, a grueling process where she travelled every month to take classes. The first year it was off to Fairbanks for one week every month for training at the University of Alaska. The next year, she had to fly to Anchorage each month. At that point she completed the UAF Human Services certification, but then it was two more years of flying to Bethel every month, for more firsthand experience under the guidance of licensed mental health professionals. And in between all the travel, she was expected to read textbooks, practice her skills at the Allakaket clinic, and work on her own personal healing so that she could deal with clients without any of her own unresolved issues were clouding her judgment.

The personal sacrifice was not small. "I could not have done it without the strong support of my husband and family. They had to sacrifice, too. For example, I have five children, four of whom still live in Allakaket, and 14 grandchildren. I used to host huge

Sunday dinners, where the adults and children would gather at our house to share food and catch up on what was happening in each one's life. While I was in training, those dinners were less frequent."

Her family's support is still important to Valerie; she wonders if she could continue such an intense position without their emotional and practical help. Her husband and children have not waived in their willingness to help with chores when she is too busy, or to listen when she wants to talk about her fatigue or feeling helpless to fix a problem. Her husband understands that sometimes Valerie is on call and must answer the phone for crises, and that she may have to leave the house even when it is not convenient.

Another way Valerie copes with her pressures is through a self-care ritual she practices every workday. "I walk to the river and pray. I pray for everyone who is needing help and I give thanks for the many small positive things in my work and my life. Even on really good days, I go to the river to give thanks for a wonderful day."

She also spends time "watching silly half hour shows that will make me laugh, or favorite programs like The Voice. I love to go ice fishing. In fact, I love working with any kind of fish, although my favorite is when the white fish and sheefish come in during the fall. Sometimes

people give me fish and I am happy to take it all. I cut it for smoking or drying."

While the pandemic has made some things more difficult, the increased use of and acceptance of programs such as Zoom have made

her more accessible to clients who are not living in Allakaket. Through the miracles of technology, she can offer local residents, as well as those farther away, the full spectrum of services: intake assessments, diagnosis and treatment plans, individual counseling, and group counseling. And, because Valerie, like many other behavioral health aides, has completed her chemical dependency certification, she can offer services targeted for people who have addiction issues.

One of the things that has surprised and delighted Valerie is how mental health counseling has become behavioral health counseling, with an emphasis on the entire person---body, mind, and spirit. This has come about as people, the tribes, and health professionals, have started to incorporate trauma issues into their approaches. It is now a part of clients' treatment plans.

For someone born and raised in Allakaket, there is a particular pleasure and blessing to be able to give back to the community that raised her and the many elders who guided her. Valerie hopes that more people will consider a career as a behavioral health aide. As she says, "For anyone interested, I would say sign up. You have to be alcohol and drug free for at least one year, and have the support of those around you." Those who have a heart for helping others and can meet those requirements can have a long and rewarding career.



## TCC Hosts *Strategic Planning* Retreat

In November, the TCC Executive Board and Executive Management Team attended a three-day Strategic Planning Retreat. The meeting provided the opportunity the Executive Board to review and provide input on TCC's Strategic Planning process to ensure that the organization remains in alignment with the tribes. This is the first step in receiving feedback, and the Executive Management Team will work on meeting with the subregions for input prior to the March Convention.

TCC's strategic plan was re-designed to better communicate our Tribe's priorities and provide focus to the organization. The plan focuses

on six strategic pillars that drive the organization – Healthy People, Strong Tribes, Economic Sovereignty, Stewardship of Our Land and Resources, Safe and Strong Communities, and Educated and Empowered Tribal Members. These pillars were developed based on Chief Simon's priorities, feedback from village visits, and visioning of the Executive Board.

Using these pillars, TCC leadership developed measureable improvement goals that could be achieved in the next 12-18 months. These various projects include the Chief's initiatives on broadband, water & sewer, public safety and food security. The EMT also presented its transformational initiatives related to operational efficiency, tribal self-determination, healthcare expansion,



as well as improved data and communications.

During the retreat, the Executive Management Team shared their 12-18 month plans with the Executive Board, and breakout groups were held that focused on how transformation can be achieved through tribal sovereignty. Agreement and alignment were achieved. The Executive Board emphasized that food security was a critical issue with broad impacts to the tribes, encouraged continued 2-way communication between the Tribes and TCC, and supported acquiring data to advance tribal initiatives.



## *Seeking Applicants* Indigenous Wellness Academy

TCC's Prevention through Wellness Program is accepting applications for the Indigenous Wellness Academy (IWA)!

The IWA program provides great knowledge and personal growth opportunities for individuals interested in leading community prevention efforts in their home village.

The IWA is a foundational course in the study of community wellness engagement and substance abuse prevention. It prepares participants to address substance abuse prevention through a comprehensive approach supported by a cultural and community framework.

Only 25 applicants will be accepted into the program. iPad pros will be provided for students during the training.



**REGISTRATION CLOSES FRIDAY, DECEMBER 31st, 2021.**

APPLY ONLINE AT:

[www.tananachiefs.org/services/wellness-prevention/indigenous-wellness-academy](http://www.tananachiefs.org/services/wellness-prevention/indigenous-wellness-academy)



## Emil Notti National Native American Hall of Fame

In November, Emil Notti was officially inducted into the National Native American Hall of Fame for his Advocacy work. The National Native American Hall of Fame serves as a unique resource for identifying and honoring contemporary pathmakers, new heroes, and significant contributors to American society.

The National Native American Hall of Fame helps people understand how Native Americans overcame the hopelessness of early reservations, and the trauma of Indian boarding schools, poverty, discrimination, racism, and the cultural divide to not only adapt but to achieve greatness in every field, profession, and industry.

Emil Notti, Athabascan, was the first president of Alaska Federation of Natives, founded in 1966. Notti was a force behind the land claims movement and central to the negotiations

that culminated in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. The legislation authorized Alaska Natives to receive title to 44 million acres of public land in Alaska and a \$962 million land claims settlement, further establishing village and regional Native corporations. He was instrumental in calling for a convening of Alaska Natives from every region of the state. An electronic and aeronautical engineer, he worked on the Minuteman Ballistic Missile and worked for the Federal Aviation Administration. Notti served under several Alaska governors as Deputy Commissioner of Health and Social Services, Commissioner of Community and



Regional Affairs and Commissioner of Commerce, Community and Economic Development.

Chief/Chairman PJ Simon travelled to Oklahoma to attend the official ceremony for Emil and to honor him with a Chief's necklace on behalf of the TCC Region.

## MARY ROSE AGNES KALTAG

Mary Rose Agnes was born in Kaltag, where she lived all her life. Her family lived off the land without store bought food.

There was no time for school, because her family travelled from camp to camp. Mary Rose made it to the eighth grade. She taught for 19 years at the Yukon School District. Mary Rose also taught her language at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

"I taught sewing and singing and dancing in our language," said Mary Rose. "Well, they called, and they tell me that they want to hire me. No diploma, but that the area superintendent say its okay, it looks like you graduate from something he tell me and I went to work."

When she was little, her mom passed away from tuberculosis, so Mary Rose never knew her.

"So, Dad got married again and we had a stepmother, Pauline who treated us so good. Just raised us up like men. We have to work at wood, haul water, haul wood, chop wood, and cook, everything. And then they teach us how to cut fish, that was hard work."

Alcohol is killing us all. I just hate it. I just pray over it.

*To hear Mary'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.*





# 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



## Find Your Purpose

Join our Team at Tanana Chiefs Conference

[www.tananachiefs.org/carees](http://www.tananachiefs.org/careers)

### Village Vacancies

- **Alatna:** Tribal Workforce Development Specialist, Tribal Administrator-Onsite Supervisor
- **Allakaket:** Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Community Health Representative
- **Anaktuvuk Pass:** Behavioral Health Aide
- **Anvik:** Substitute Elder Nutrition Cook, Village Public Safety Officer
- **Arctic Village:** Home Care Provider, Substitute Elder Nutrition Cook, Tribal Administrator - Onsite Supervisor, Village Public Safety Officer
- **Chalkyitsik:** Behavioral Health Aide, Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Tribal Family Youth Specialist, Village Public Safety Officer
- **Circle:** Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Substitute Elder Nutrition Cook, Tribal Family Youth Specialist
- **Dot Lake:** Behavioral Health Aide, Community Health Aide/Practitioner
- **Eagle:** Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Home Care Provider
- **Evansville:** Elder Nutrition Cook, Community Health Aide/Practitioner
- **Fort Yukon:** Preschool Assistant Teacher, Preschool Lead Teacher, Home Care Provider
- **Galena:** Behavioral Health Clinical Associate-Galena, Infant/Toddler Teacher, Physician Assistant - Primary Care, Galena, RN, Service
- **Desk Technician, Sub-Regional Care Coordinator**
- **Grayling:** Family Visitor, Tribal Workforce Development Specialist, Village Public Safety Officer
- **Healy Lake:** Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Tribal Workforce Development Specialist x2, Village Public Safety Officer
- **Holy Cross:** Family Visitor, Home Care Provider, Substitute Elder Nutrition Cook
- **Hughes:** Community Health Aide/Practitioner - Itinerant, Family Visitor
- **Huslia:** Family Visitor, Preschool Lead Teacher, Tribal Workforce Development Specialist
- **Kaltag:** Tribal Administrator-Onsite Supervisor, Tribal Family Youth Specialist, Tribal Workforce Development Specialist
- **Koyukuk:** Tribal Office Administrative Assistant
- **McGrath:** Elder Nutrition Cook, Substitute Elder Nutrition Cook, Tribal Administrator-Onsite Supervisor, Tribal Workforce Development Specialist, Village Public Safety Officer
- **Minto:** Behavioral Health Aide, Community Health Aide/Practitioner
- **Nenana:** Cook(EHS), Preschool Assistant Teacher, Tribal Family Youth Specialist
- **Northway:** Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Home Care Provider, Village Public Safety Officer

- **Nulato:** Substitute Teacher/Assistant Teacher, Tribal Administrator-Onsite Supervisor, Village Public Safety Officer
- **Old Minto:** Traditional Counselor, Primary Counselor
- **Rampart:** Behavioral Health Aide, Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Elder Nutrition Cook, Substitute Elder Nutrition Cook
- **Ruby:** Behavioral Health Aide, Community Health Aide/Practitioner
- **Shageluk:** Family Visitor
- **Stevens Village:** Community Health Aide/Practitioner
- **Tanacross:** Community Health Aide/Practitioner
- **Tetlin:** Behavioral Health Aide, Community Health Aide/Practitioner, Family Visitor, Village Public Safety Officer
- **Tok:** Assistant Crew Boss, Behavioral Health Clinical Associate-Tok, Certified Medical Assistant, Coordinator/Instructor Mid Level Practitioner, Family Directed Respite Provider, On Call Janitor, Physician Assistant-Upper Tanana Health Center, Tribal Family Youth Specialist, Urgent Care RN Advanced, UTHC Team Lead
- **Venetie:** Tribal Administrator - Onsite Supervisor, Village Public Safety Officer

### Region- Wide Vacancies

- Community Health Aide/Practitioner-Itinerant

POSITIONS WERE POSTED AS OF 11/17/21

## COVID-19 Funeral Assistance Available

FEMA is offering financial assistance for individuals who have incurred funeral expenses on or after January 20, 2020 from COVID-19. Eligible expenses include funeral services, cremation, interment, casket or urn, burial plot or cremation niche, marker or headstone, arrangement of the funeral ceremony, use of funeral home, and more.

To apply call the COVID-19 Funeral Assistance Helpline at 844-684-6333 from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday. The application is by phone (no online option), and will take 20 minutes to apply.

Visit their website for more details at:  
<https://bit.ly/3qDmqLI>

## Monthly Connections

### Find Connection & Encouragement

TCC is now offering an opportunity for connection, empowerment and encouragement for those who are struggling as we continue to move through the COVID-19 pandemic. Connection with others is important for our overall health and wellbeing and many are feeling the loss of those important connections with family and friends.

These meetings will be available remotely (via phone or computer). Those interested in attending can contact Roxanne Frank at:

907-452-8251 ext.3581

Toll-Free at 1-800-478-6922 ext.3581

[Roxanne.frank@tananachiefs.org](mailto:Roxanne.frank@tananachiefs.org)