



Tanana
Chiefs
Conference

The Council

Incorporated as Dena' Nena' Henash
Vol. 50 No. 6 • June 2025



Celebrating CHAP Graduates: Honoring Dedication to Rural Health Care

On April 18th, the Chief David Salm-on Tribal Hall was filled with applause, pride, and joyful tears as two cohorts of graduates were honored during the Community Health Aide Program (CHAP) graduation ceremony. Family members, community leaders, and supporters gathered to celebrate the incredible achievements of the newest Session IV graduates—dedicated individuals on their academic and professional journey to becoming a Community Health Aide Practitioner.

Session IV is the second-to-last training in CHAP's rigorous pathway,

requiring months of academic study, hands-on clinical practice, and unwavering commitment. These graduates have not only advanced their medical training but have also deepened their commitment to serving the health needs of their communities.

The following Session IV graduates were celebrated at the ceremony:

- **Heather Kangas** – Itinerant
- **Jordyn James** – Dot Lake
- **Katrina Dillard** – Northway
- **Amber Demit-Albert** – Northway
- **Kara Jonathan** – Tanacross

- **Myra Ambrose** – Nulato
- **Danielle Dayton** – Huslia
- **Tasha Demit** – Northway

Health aides are the front line of health care in rural Alaska and represent a legend of resilience and ingenuity for the services they provide. Each of these graduates has completed a major milestone, not just in their training, but in their journey as vital members of their communities' healthcare teams. Tanana Chiefs Conference extends a heartfelt congratulations to all of our community health aide graduates.

Congratulations! Class of 2025

From tiny caps to PhDs, we're celebrating all of our 2025 grads! Send your favorite grad's photo and help us honor their accomplishment in the July edition of *The Council*.

SUBMIT YOUR PHOTOS BY JUNE 13, 2025

<https://www.tananachiefs.org/2025-graduation-photo-submission-form/>



SCAN TO
SUBMIT

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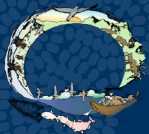


Mission

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



Tanana
Chiefs
Conference

Executive Board

Trimble Gilbert, Arctic Village
1st Traditional Chief

Andrew Jimmie, Minto
2nd Traditional Chief

Brian Ridley, Eagle
Chief/Chairman

Sharon Hildebrand, Nulato
Vice-President

Charlie Wright, Rampart
Secretary/Treasurer

Herbie Demit, Tanacross
Upper Tanana

Claude 'Joe' Petruska, Nikolai
Upper Kuskokwim

Nancy James, Gwichyaa Zhee
Yukon Flats

Ivan Demientieff, Grayling
Lower Yukon

Lori Baker, Minto
Yukon Tanana

Charlie Green, Galena
Yukon Koyukuk

Peter Demoski, Nulato
Elder Advisor

Mackenzie Englishhoe, Gwichyaa Zhee
Youth Advisor



Letter from the Chief

Dear Tribal Leaders and Tribal Members,

On May 5th, we honored Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples (MMIP) Awareness Day. In Fairbanks, a Gathering of Remembrance was held to acknowledge the many unsolved murder cases in our region. These cases represent our loved ones—our family members, friends, and neighbors—and they must never be forgotten. I thank those who organized and attended this event and encourage continued efforts to raise awareness and demand accountability.



Also in May, I traveled to Gwichyaa Zhee (Fort Yukon) alongside leadership from the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC). Our visit focused on the critical water and sanitation needs in the community. Access to clean water is not a luxury—it is a basic necessity, and a foundational part of protecting the health of our people. I am grateful to the leaders and community members of Gwichyaa Zhee for their openness and to ANTHC for their partnership as we work together toward long-term solutions.

In April, TCC leadership and I visited Anvik and Nikolai to meet directly with Tribal leaders and community members. These village visits are essential in helping us understand local priorities, from infrastructure improvements and water access to concerns over federal funding and self-governance. The honest conversations we had during these visits will help guide our advocacy and planning in the months ahead. Thank you to both communities for your hospitality and for sharing your time and insights with us.

I also want to take a moment to address a matter many of you are already aware of. Last month, TCC issued a public statement in response to a comment made by Fairbanks Mayor David Pruhs, where he suggested that people from the villages come to Fairbanks to be homeless. This statement was hurtful and harmful—it reinforced negative stereotypes and dismissed the real issues that many of our people face. I testified before the Fairbanks City Council to call for accountability. While the Mayor has since apologized and committed to restarting regular meetings with Alaska Native organizations in Fairbanks, the work of rebuilding trust is just beginning. We will continue advocating for respectful partnerships and equity in the way our people are treated.

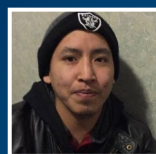
As we move into the summer months, I remain deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve as your Chief and Chairman. I am also looking forward to more village visits as we continue to listen to the needs of our communities.

Mahsi' Choo,
Chief Brian Ridley
Tanana Chiefs Conference

MISSING



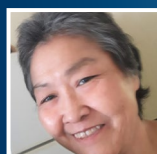
Lorraine
Ginnis



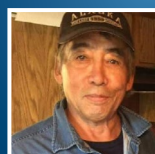
Willis
Derendoff



Doren
Sanford



Debbie
Nictune



Frank
Minano

SUBMIT TIPS ANONYMOUSLY:

Text AKTIPS followed by your tip to
84711 or visit
<https://dps.alaska.gov/ast/tips>



Call the Alaska State Troopers at
907-451-5100, Fairbanks Police
Department at 907-450-6500 or
TCC Public Safety at 907-452-8251
ext.3269.
Visit www.tananachiefs.org/missing
for more information.

New Leaders Emerge: Leadership for Results Cohort 2 Graduation

Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) is proud to announce the graduation of Cohort 2 of the Leadership for Results program, which took place on May 1, 2025, in Fairbanks. This year's cohort included 26 participants—Tribal members, leaders, TCC staff, youth, and Elders—who dedicated themselves to a five-month journey of learning and growth.

Leadership for Results is a transformative leadership development program that helps participants strengthen their social-emotional well-being while gaining the tools to uplift their organizations and communities. The program focuses on capacity-building, fostering sustainable change, and enhancing leadership skills to address community and organizational challenges. Participants also learn strategies for maximizing resources and building effective partnerships.

A key element of the program is the Action Learning Project, where teams apply their new knowledge to

a real-world issue in their community or organization. To ensure community voices were central to the process, teams interviewed Elders, adults, and youth to gather input before developing and implementing their plans. These projects were showcased and celebrated at the graduation ceremony.

This year, graduates of Cohort 1 returned as facilitators, supporting the new cohort and contributing to the success of the Action Learning Projects. Their guidance and collaboration added valuable depth, and many remarked on the impressive growth and leadership demonstrated by participants from both cohorts.

TCC congratulates these exceptional leaders and looks forward to continuing this work together. If you're interested in joining a future cohort, please contact learninganddevelopment@tananachiefs.org or Tiffany Simmons at ext. 3438.



CAIHC Pharmacist Honored with National Preceptor Award

Tanana Chiefs Conference is proud to congratulate Brittany Karns, PharmD, on receiving the 2025 Patient Care Practice Preceptor Excellence Award from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Pharmacy. This national honor recognizes exceptional mentors in the field of pharmacy who go above and beyond in guiding and educating the next generation of healthcare professionals.

Dr. Karns, a dedicated member of the Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center (CAIHC) pharmacy team, was praised by her students as not only a knowledgeable and compassionate mentor, but as someone who fostered a warm, supportive environment during their clinical rotations. "She taught us not just about medicine, but about how to be good people," one student shared.

In her humility, Dr. Karns credited the entire TCC pharmacy team for the award, embodying the true spirit of Ch'eghwtsen'—working together with respect, empathy, and shared purpose.

TCC celebrates this well-deserved recognition and thanks Brittany for her continued leadership in patient care and education.

Cowles Street Summer Road Construction

Alaska Department of Transportation is closing a portion of Cowles Street over the summer as they work to reconstruct the road.

This closure will change how you access Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center and the Fairbanks Memorial Hospital Emergency Department. This closure will last most of the summer.

Scan to learn more or visit

<https://www.tananachiefs.org/cowles-street-summer-2025-closure-and-alternate-access-route-for-chief-andrew-isaac-health-center/>



ROAD
WORK

TCC & ANTHC Host Opioid Use Disorder Training

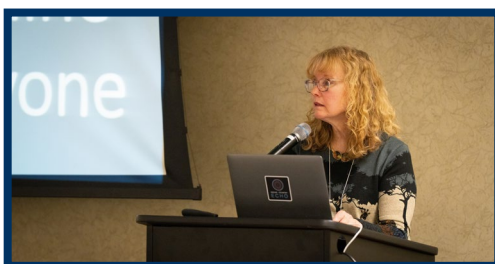
Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) and Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) Liver Disease and Hepatitis program jointly hosted a two-day Fairbanks based Opioid Use Disorder Training in April.

The Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) Syndemic Training seminar offered attendees Continuing Medication Education/Continuing Education Unit accreditation through the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC). The training approached substance use disorder (SUD) from a syndrome aspect, including clinical education on SUD, Hepatitis C,

HIV, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), as well as stigma and harm reduction.

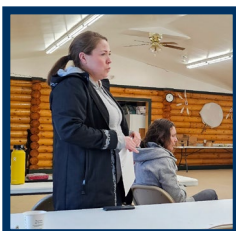
"The program received overwhelming staff support and positive feedback," says Dr. Gayle Hornberger, TCC Physician and Primary Care Medical Director, who helped facilitate the training. "The plan is to build on the education received and begin to gradually incorporate MOUD into the Primary Care model."

TCC is proud to partner with other organizations within the medical community to bring the highest level of care and compassion to our patients!



TCC Leadership Visits Anvik and Nikolai

On April 30, 2025, Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) Leadership and departmental staff traveled to the villages of Anvik and Nikolai to meet with Tribal leaders and community members. These visits provided an important opportunity to hear directly from the communities about local priorities and challenges, ranging from infrastructure and clean water access to youth programs, healthcare transitions, and federal funding concerns. TCC extends its sincere thanks to the Tribes of Anvik and Nikolai for their hospitality, open dialogue, and continued partnership as we work together to support the well-being of our people and communities.




Day of Peaceful Protest for the Survival of the Yukon River Salmon

June 20, 2025

Show solidarity with the communities along the Yukon and Tanana Rivers. Join us in bringing awareness to the fight to save our salmon and our way of life!

Scan to access our toolkit to help you fight to save our salmon



<https://tinyurl.com/PeacefulProtest25>

Celebrating Northern Dene Star Knowledge

On the evening of May 2nd, community members gathered at the Morris Thompson Cultural & Visitors Center to celebrate the launch of *In the Footsteps of the Traveller: Northern Dene Astronomy* by Chris M. Cannon — a remarkable work honoring the traditional star knowledge of the Northern Dene.

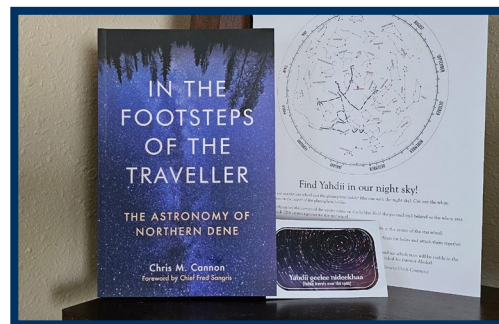
The event, sponsored by Tanana Chiefs Conference's (TCC) Family Services & Support Department, featured powerful reflections from a panel of special guests who joined Cannon to share their experiences and insights, including Gwich'in elders Paul "Snook" Herbert (Fort Yukon) and Rev. Doc. Trimble Gilbert (Arctic Village), along with Dr. Nettie La Belle-Hamer, Deputy Director for the UAF Geophysical Institute and Teisha Simmons, Dean of the UAF College of Indigenous Studies. Their stories and perspectives highlighted the depth and cultural importance of Dene astronomical teachings passed down through generations.

Attendees enjoyed screenings of

Molly of Denali, stepped inside UAF's inflatable planetarium for a tour of the northern night sky, and listened to an engaging introduction to the book in the MTCVC theatre. The Geophysical Institute provided free copies of the book, while TCC provided free T-shirts with the Yahdii constellation. With refreshments, hands-on activities, and a welcoming, family-friendly atmosphere, the evening brought together Elders, youth, and families to celebrate Indigenous knowledge and storytelling.

Rooted in years of collaboration with over 65 Dene Elders across 34 communities, in the U.S. and Canada, including Arctic Village, Fort Yukon, and Tetlin, Cannon's book shines a light on how constellations like Yahdii serve as guides, guardians, and teachers in Northern Dene culture.

In the Footsteps of the Traveller is now available in stores and online — a stunning, meaningful work that invites readers into a universe where stars are not only seen but deeply understood.



TCC's Public Safety Manager Appointed to Dunleavy Administration's MMIP Review Commission

David Atteberry, Tanana Chiefs Conference's (TCC) Public Safety Manager, has been appointed by Governor Dunleavy to the administration's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP) Review Commission.

Formed earlier this year, the nine-member commission reviews unsolved MMIP cases and reports findings to the Alaska Department of Public Safety (DPS) and the Alaska State Legislature. Additionally, the MMIP Review Commission analyzes trends and establishes policy, practice, and service recommendations before reporting to the DPS.

"I am honored to accept this appointment to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Review Commission," says Atteberry. "This is an issue that deeply impacts our communities, and I'm committed to working collaboratively to bring attention, accountability, and solutions to the crisis."




The commission also includes members from victims' advocacy as well as other Alaska Native Tribal organizations.

TCC is grateful for the additional support that Indigenous communities will receive in solving the cases of our missing and murdered loved ones and remains positive that the addition of Sergeant Atteberry will bring answers to those in our region who are still seeking answers.

NEED TO TALK?
Help is just three digits away.

988

Connects You to Careline, Alaska's
Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.


CARELINE
CRISIS SERVICES INC.

TCC Responds to Discriminatory Remarks Made by Fairbanks Mayor David Pruhs

In April, Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) responded to a Facebook post by Fairbanks Mayor David Pruhs that deeply disparaged many in our communities — especially rural Alaskans and Alaska Native people. The post, made after a walk-through of Golden Heart Plaza, referenced people “coming in from the villages or out of shelters to live their lifestyle,” and stated, “We operate downtown on behalf of Fairbanks residents, because we live here, not for visitors.”

In the days that followed, TCC heard from Tribal members, leaders, and residents across the Interior who voiced their disappointment and concern. Fairbanks Native Association (FNA) and TCC issued public statements condemning the remarks and calling for accountability. At the April 28th Fairbanks City Council meeting, more than 20 individuals testified — nearly all addressing the harmful nature of the Mayor’s words and urging reflection, education, and real change.

TCC Chief/Chairman Brian Ridley addressed the council directly, saying, “For decades, Alaska Native people have fought against racial profiling and stereotyping here in Fairbanks. While progress has been slow, we believed we were moving forward. Yet the com-

ments made — and the flood of racist and hateful remarks that followed — showed how fragile that progress remains.”

Fairbanks’s economy and culture is shaped and supported by rural Alaskans. In 2016 alone, Alaska Native organizations contributed nearly \$600 million to the Interior economy. Native people come to Fairbanks not just to visit, but to live, work, seek medical care, attend school, and support the city’s businesses and services; proving that Alaska Natives are not outsiders — we are integral to the fabric of the community.

Mayor Pruhs has since issued a public apology and stated that his words were not intended to insult or denigrate anyone. He acknowledged that his phrasing could be construed as insensitive and expressed a desire to learn and do better. TCC recognizes this apology as a first step — and echoes what many of our people have said: Accountability is not only about words after the fact; it is about how you show up when it matters most.

TCC is hopeful that this painful moment can be the catalyst for something better. Mayor Pruhs has said he intends to convene conversations around racism, colonization, and com-

munity healing. He has also agreed to re-establish regular meetings between the city and local Native organizations like TCC and FNA. TCC remains hopeful that Mayor Pruhs will uphold the promises he has made, recognizing that future actions will be the true measure of his intentions.

As Chief Ridley stated in his comments to the City Council: “But accountability isn’t just about words after the fact. It’s about action in the moment when it matters most. Leadership means ensuring people from all walks of life feel safe, respected, and valued — not just when it’s convenient.”

This moment also reminds us why voting is so important.

When we vote, we shape the kind of leadership we see in our communities. We elect those who reflect our values, who understand our history, who respect the diversity and dignity of our people, and who stand with — not against — the communities they serve. Let this moment be a wake-up call. Let it energize our efforts to register, show up, and vote for leaders who will uplift, not divide.

Our voice is our power — in council meetings, in public forums, and especially at the ballot box.

Subscribe to our newsletter for updates on advocacy, civic engagement, and regional news that matters.





Free Prenatal Breastfeeding Class

Open to All Patients, Staff, & WIC Participants

Third Wednesday of Each Month | 12:00 - 1:00 pm | Virtual

In this class you will learn:

- How do you get a good start breastfeeding your baby?
- When and who to call for help if challenges arise?

To Register, Contact: TCC WIC Program
 (907) 451-6682 ext. 3773 | wic@tananachiefs.org

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



Future Dates:
 June 18, 2025
 July 16, 2025

Community Health Aide *Spotlight*

Kimberly Ulery - Itinerant Health Aide for Nenana

By Linden Staciokas

Many of us fumble around trying to find a career that pays enough and makes us feel useful. Not Health Aide Kimberly Ulery, who works for Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) as an itinerant assigned to Nenana.

Born and raised in Nenana, Kimberly was just 16 years old when she earned her Emergency Trauma Technician (ETT) certificate and began volunteering for the Nenana Fire Department. As soon as she turned 18, the minimum age required to become an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), she achieved that ranking. Around that time, Kimberly moved from Nenana to Tyonek, where she had two children. Soon after voluntarily stepping in to help with an accident, various Tribal members discovered that she was an EMT, and they suggested she apply for their open health aide position.

The health aide certification program for that part of the state is run through the Southcentral Foundation, the Alaska Native-owned, nonprofit health care organization that serves Alaska Natives and American Indians who live in Anchorage and nearby villages. After passing the course, Kimberly spent the next five years as the Tyonek health aide, until she and her family decided to move back to her hometown of Nenana. She remained an itinerant health aide for Southcentral Foundation until 2024. Eventually she decided to switch to working as a health aide for TCC, since they



oversaw the Nenana Clinic. Kimberly had to complete a special course to make sure her knowledge and methods were the same as those taught by the TCC program, in order to be one of their certified health aides. She passed and has been working in Nenana since 2024, although she also has been sent to other Interior villages as needed.

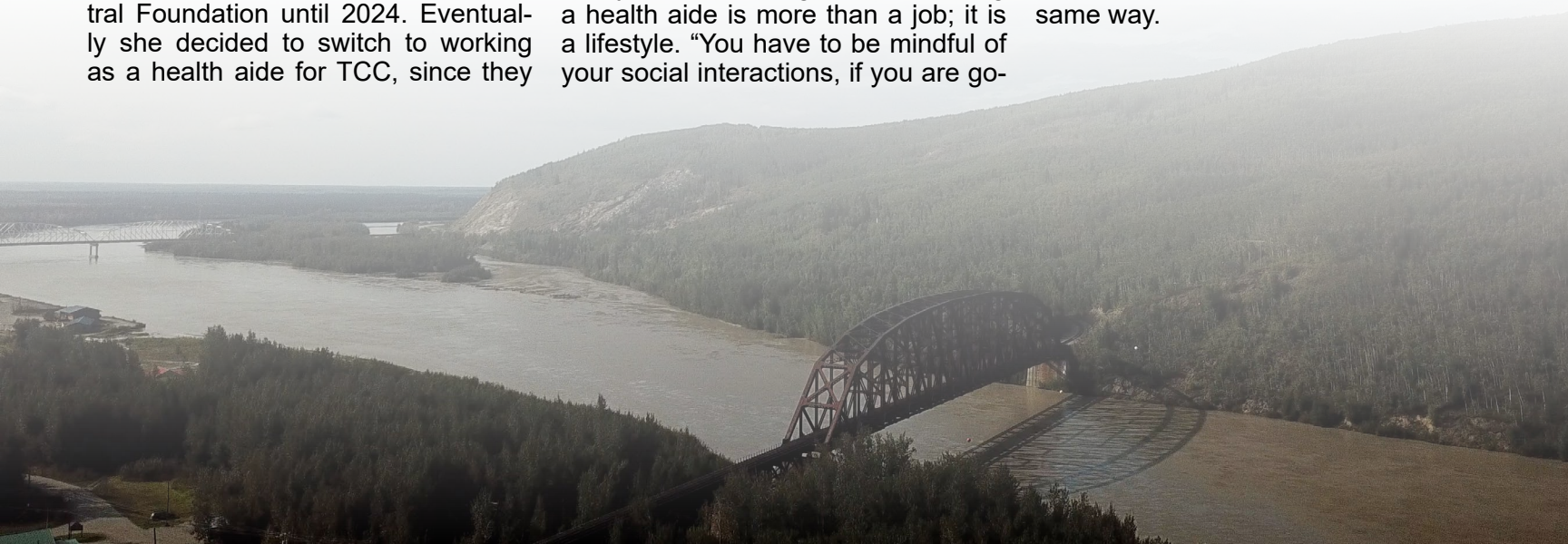
She may have gone from working for Southcentral to TCC, but Kimberly's dedication to her health career has only increased since those early days of being a teenager volunteering for the Nenana Fire department. As she says, "I have always aspired to help people, and when we are in a medical emergency, we are all at our most vulnerable. It is a great joy to me to have the knowledge and skill set to bring a sense of calm to an emergency and help someone." One of the hardest, yet most rewarding aspects of the job is when "the little ones are undergoing a trauma, and I can help the child and family get through it."

Dealing with the pain of others takes a toll on first responders. Kimberly says that one of the things that has changed about being a health aide is the recognition that burn out is a very real issue. TCC's health aide program has instituted practices that support the mental health of their health aides. Everyone now recognizes that being a health aide is more than a job; it is a lifestyle. "You have to be mindful of your social interactions, if you are go-

ing to get people to trust you professionally. You have to limit your social interactions so that you are not seen as being out of control or behaving indiscreetly. That may not seem fair that you are always being watched, but it is something you take on with the job. You want people to trust you, so you have to behave in a trustworthy fashion."

Kimberly is a "natural born homebody," which is an asset. "My social circle is small and right now it consists mostly of my family; I have four girls from the ages of two to eight. We like to travel but when we are home, we do things like work outside berry picking or gardening. Indoors we play games, especially card games. One way I decompress from job stress is to play video games when my kids have gone to bed. I am an avid gamer, and a lot of my social needs are met through my interactions with other gamers."

She finds herself constantly encouraging others to consider the health aide field. "The compensation is good, the job is intellectually interesting, and it is emotionally very satisfying to help others. I tell people to try becoming an ETT if they want to just get a small taste of what they will be facing; they don't have to make a full-blown commitment to being a health aide right away. I was very lucky that I received constant encouraging and mentoring by the entire Nenana Fire Department when I started out. They all were a part of my success." She hopes to be part of someone else's success in the same way.



TCC GO Celebrates Another Successful Year

By Angela Rutman & Puresdyn Milk, TCC GO Student Support Coordinators

Exciting things have been going on in the TCC GO Program! As we wrap up the year and say goodbye to our 2025 graduates, we take time to reflect on the school year. Here is what is happening with our students!



"Thank you, TCC GO, for offering a program that encourages students to pursue their education. With support from TCC GO, I was able to earn my certificate as a CNA while still in high school, and I am now working as an on-call CNA."

Kailey Kriska, Hutchison High School

What is TCC GO?

TCC GO is a program within Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) Family Services division. The program is dedicated to helping high school students prepare for a career after graduation. There is a wide range of potential job opportunities for our graduates, and rural communities, in particular, need trained professionals in fields such as healthcare and education. Engaging in TCC GO's career exploration activities may help you identify a career path while you are still in high school!

How do I participate?

If you are a Fairbanks-based student, you must be enrolled in a federally-recognized Tribe. Any student living in one of the villages within the TCC region that is off the road system is eligible to participate.

For more information, visit our website, <https://www.tananachiefs.org/services/tcc-go/> or send us an email at tccgo@tananachiefs.org.

Here are all the exciting highlights of our 2024-2025 school year:

Thirty-five TCC GO Seniors Graduated! Congratulations to our Seniors!

Nineteen Effie Kokrine students had the opportunity to be a part of the Career Explorers class! TCC GO has partnered with Effie Kokrine and the UAF College of Business and Security Management to bring forth the Career Explorers program. Effie Kokrine High school students get the opportunity to learn more about careers within their community and receive college credit! Students also get the opportunity to attend amazing field trips! In partnership with the Alaska Pipeline training center, students were able to tour the facility and meet with different unions, such as the laborers, plumbing and pipefitters, teamsters, electricians, etc. This spring, students also heard from administration and leaders within TCC programs. A special thank you to Chief Ridley, Amber Vaska, Jason Johnson, Stephanie Hinz, Whitney Paolino, Sean Rice, Shannon McClenahan, Karlon Tuluk, VPSO Matthew Williamson, and K-9

Jack for taking time out of your busy schedules to provide valuable information on essential functions and programs within TCC. Your dedication to our Tribes and our youth does not go unnoticed!

Huslia & Minto Career Explorers: This academic year, the Career Explorers program offered engaging, hands-on learning experiences in both Huslia and Minto. In the fall, seven 11th and 12th grade students from Huslia participated in the course, followed by another group of seven



Huslia Career Explorers

upperclassmen in Minto during the spring.

Students were enrolled in Career Exploration and Introduction to Professional Skills, a one-credit university course developed in partnership with the University of Alaska Fairbanks College of Business and Security Management and the Yukon-Koyukuk School District (YKSD). The course is designed to help students explore potential career paths while building essential employability skills tailored for entry-level job candidates.

Participants gained confidence, developed professional skills, and expanded their networks—setting a strong foundation for future success in the workplace.

Dual Credit University Courses: This school year, a total of thirty-eight high school students (outside of the career explorers programs) in our region took advantage of dual credit opportunities by enrolling in university courses. Twenty students earned credit in the fall, and eighteen students enrolled in the spring semester.

Dual credit courses allow high school students to earn both high school and college credit at the same time. This opportunity gives students



Effie Kokrine students with Chief Brian Ridley.

a head start on their postsecondary education, helps reduce the overall cost of college, and builds academic confidence in a university setting. By participating in these courses early, students gain exposure to college-level expectations, explore areas of interest, and develop time management and study skills that will serve them well beyond high school. These experiences can also ease the transition to

college and increase the likelihood of academic success after graduation.

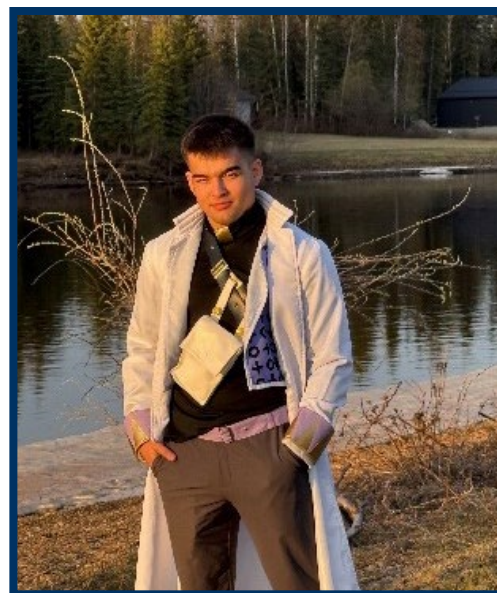
Why Programs Like TCC GO Matter

Programs like TCC GO are vital to students in the TCC region because they bridge the gap between rural high school education and future career or college pathways. By providing access to dual credit courses, career exploration opportunities, and academic support, TCC GO empowers students to see what's possible beyond high school without having to leave their home communities.

These programs not only help students build confidence and real-world skills, but they also create a sense of purpose and direction. TCC GO encourages students to take ownership of their futures while honoring their unique strengths, culture, and community values.



Minto Career Explorers



"TCC GO has allowed me to reach my full potential, through career exploration and opportunities for me to connect to my community. The people there are so kind and helpful, I recommend TCC GO to any young high school student trying to find their way. Thank you!"

-Travis Chiu, North Star College (West Valley),
graduating with 29 college credits!



TCC Public Safety Re-examining Outstanding MMIP Cases: Community Tips Still Critical

By David Atteberry, TCC Public Safety Manager

Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) Public Safety is committed to bringing justice and closure to the families affected by Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP) cases. Our department is actively reviewing outstanding MMIP cases throughout the region, looking for opportunities to move these investigations forward. These efforts reflect our ongoing dedication to accountability, transparency, and the deep respect we hold for the individuals and families impacted.

However, many of these cases remain at a standstill—not because they've been forgotten, but because they lack the crucial pieces of information needed to take the next step. This is where we need your help.

Investigations often hinge on a single tip—someone remembering a small but important detail, or someone deciding it's finally time to come forward. You may think what you know isn't relevant, but even the smallest piece of information can be the key to

unlocking an entire case.

We want to encourage anyone who might have knowledge about a missing or murdered loved one, or who may have heard or seen something over the years, to share what they know. This includes things you may have been unsure of at the time or thought weren't important.

To make reporting easier and safer, we recommend using the AKTips app, offered by the Alaska State Troopers. This tool allows community members to submit tips anonymously and securely. You can share information without revealing your identity, and you can also attach images or documents if needed. The AKTips app is available on both Apple and Android devices and can also be accessed through the Alaska Department of Public Safety website.

Your voice matters. Families are still waiting for answers, and communities deserve closure. By coming forward, you could help bring peace to some-

one who's been waiting far too long—and you may help prevent future tragedies.

If you have any information, please consider submitting a tip through the AKTips app. Together, we can continue the work of justice, healing, and hope.

For questions or to speak directly with someone from TCC Public Safety, please contact our office. We're here to listen—and we believe every person's voice could make a difference.

Scan here to learn more about the AKTips app



<https://dps.alaska.gov/AST/Tips>

Growing Fruit in Interior Alaska: Apples, Cherries, Plums, and Pears

By Heidi Rader, Professor of Extension at University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Steve and Sara Masterman grow fruit near Fairbanks, Alaska. I had the pleasure of interviewing them about their decades-old orchard and was blown away by the depth of their knowledge of growing fruit in a cold climate. Steve described it as an addiction.



Sara and Steve Masterman in their orchard in August 2025. Photo by Elizabeth Smith

Steve grew up on a 12-acre farm in Wales, United Kingdom. His family raised cattle, chickens, turkeys, and ducks, and had a small orchard. He couldn't believe it when he heard about a guy growing apples off Chena Hot Springs Road. He had to see it for himself and soon bought his first two apple trees from Clair Lammers.

It was 2007, and those were some of the last trees Clair sold. [For many years, Clair](#) was the master fruit grower in Interior Alaska and taught Steve how to graft.

In Alaska, a scion, or part of a tree that will fruit in our short growing season and that is also tasty, is joined with a very cold-hardy crabapple rootstock. Two trees quickly turned into 50 or 60 trees on a quarter-acre lot, which the Mastermans describe as their test orchard. They later acquired an additional lot (about 3 acres), which they cleared and planted over a period of about eight years. They used what they learned from their test orchard to plant their larger orchard. Still, Sarah laments they don't have quite enough space for everything they want to do — which is a lot.

In addition to hosting a u-pick apples site, they sell trees in Alaska and to growers in other states with cold climates and short growing seasons. Over the years, they've tested more than 300 varieties of fruit (mostly apples but also cherries, plums and pears). Many of these were also tested or grown by Clair and developed by the [University of Saskatchewan Fruit Program](#), which is one of the coldest sites for fruit and berry breeding in North America.

But it's even colder in Interior Alaska. Now Steve and Sarah are breed-

ing their own varieties and rootstock. They're experimenting with grafting techniques, including timing, which is important in short growing seasons. They've learned how to care for the fruit trees in the winter and summer in Fairbanks.

"None of this is written down. A lot of it is by trial and error," Steve said.

Sarah added, "There just is not a lot of research that has been done in this kind of climate."

To be successful, they've had to develop their own manual, techniques, and varieties. They freely share what they've learned on their website, in workshops and on the farm.



Prairie Sun apples on a 4-year-old tree. Photo courtesy of the Mastermans

Testing and breeding varieties

When it comes to breeding, first they ask if the plant will survive the winter. Then, will it fruit during the short growing season? Finally, does the fruit

Testing and Breeding Fruit Tree Varieties at Alaska Fruits

	Number of Varieties of Fruit Being Grown	Most Reliable / Easiest to Grow	Most Productive	Tastiest for Fresh Eating	Tastiest in a Pie
Apples	95	Trailman, Prarie Sun, Alma Sweet	Trailman, Prarie Sun, Alma Sweet	Trailman, Lee 31, Clair 9 but it depends on the year	A matter of opinion but Lee 17 stands out
Cherries	8	Carmine Jewel, Valentine, Juliet	Evans, Valentine, Carmine Jewel	Juliet, Romeo, Evans	All are good
Plums	14	Lee Red, Brookred, Vic Red	Manchester, Lee Red, Vic Red	All equally good (except Assiniboine, which some don't like)	
Pears	14	None	None		

taste any good? Other questions may be whether the fruit is best fresh, good in a pie, or suitable for cider? Most of the apple varieties grown in Alaska will not store long, although there may be some that store for a couple of months. When looking at rootstock, they're looking mostly at survivability, productivity and compatibility with different varieties.



A Geographic Information System shows an aerial view of the Mastermans' orchard in 2023. Photo courtesy of the Mastermans

Testing 300 varieties of fruit trees over the years takes a lot of time and space. They've come up with more efficient ways to test varieties. Instead of planting individual trees to test each variety, they now graft up to 30 different varieties on one tree so that what would have required 300 trees now only requires 10 trees. Further, they've found that some apple trees do fine when they are covered by the snow, but then once they get above the snowline, they suffer. The solution is to graft on more mature trees that are already above the snow line.

Here are some of the highlights of their research over the years. For more information about the varieties they've tested, visit their website, www.alaskafruits.com.

This year, they're looking forward to seeing cherries fruit and their trial apples make it through the winter. Last year, their Lubsk Queen fruited for the first time, and they're excited to plant some of the new cherry varieties from the University of Saskatchewan. They're also excited to grow their own rootstock and propagate more plants.

Want to plant a few fruit trees or an orchard?

Here are some of the basic steps to planting and maintaining a few fruit trees or an orchard in Alaska. You can find more detailed information in UAF Extension's [Growing Tree Fruits in Alaska](#) as well as University of Minnesota Extension's [Growing apples in the home garden](#).

Step 1. Test and develop your soil. You'll want well-drained soil with a pH between 6-6.5, high in organic matter with a depth of at least 18 inches.

Step 2. Decide on how you will protect your trees from moose and other would-be fruit tree eaters. Ideally, you will have a sturdy, 8-10 foot high fence to dissuade the moose with smaller gauge fencing to keep out rabbits, etc.. Use tree guards to protect the trees from small animals and other injuries from tools like weed whackers. You can also fence each tree individually although this can be hard to remember each year and hard to time.

Step 3. Choose the fruit and variety carefully and make sure you have a cold-hardy rootstock as well. The Mastermans have identified 50 apple varieties, six sour cherries (plus Nanking and Ping Cherries), six plum varieties, and five varieties of pears that are cold-hardy in Interior Alaska.

Step 4. Plant your trees at the recommended distance apart for the variety, which varies from 10 to 30 feet.



An Evans cherry grows in the Mastermans' orchard. Photo courtesy of the Mastermans

Step 5. Water, fertilize as needed with a little nitrogen, and weed regularly.

Step 6. Each year, prune your trees (see the links below for instructions) and thin the fruit. Additionally, the Mastermans have found that

pruning above the level of snow helps keep branches from breaking when the snow starts to melt and settle in the spring. This is not a concern for cherries, which grow more in a bush format. Romeo cherries grow as a short bush and may benefit from being covered by snow to keep moose from finding them.

Step 7. In the winter, the Mastermans recommend brushing off the snow every time it snows and spreading coffee grounds to speed spring melt-off and add fertilizer.

Step 8. After three to five years you should be able to enjoy your fruit! Apple and cherry filling are some of the Mastermans' favorite ways to use and preserve their fruit. Apple dumplings are one of my favorite ways to cook with apples.

Step 9. At some point, you may want to try purchasing rootstock and scion wood to graft your trees yourself.

Want to learn more? The Mastermans offer a wealth of information on their website and teach grafting and pruning workshops for the [Folk School](#) in Fairbanks. Fruit trees from the Mastermans can be purchased at the [Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District Annual Tree and Shrub sale](#). The Mastermans have also had students from the [AFFECT Farmer Training program](#) visit their farm.

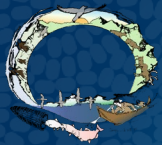
Questions about gardening or the Tribes Extension Program? Visit www.uaf.edu/ces/tribes Contact Heidi at hbrader@alaska.edu or (907) 474-6620. For more articles like this, go to: <https://it-growsinalaska.community.uaf.edu/>

Heidi Rader is professor of Extension in partnership with TCC. This work is supported by the Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program Project 2022-41580-37957. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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Fairbanks	Digital Workplace Services Supervisor
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Fairbanks	Intake Coordinator
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Fairbanks	Program Manager - Graf Rheeneerhaanjii
Fairbanks	RN - Regional Float
Fairbanks	Wildland Fire Fuel Specialist
Galena	Dental Health Aide Therapist (DHAT) I
Kaltag	Elder Nutrition Cook
Koyukuk	Tribal Family Youth Specialist
Koyukuk	Tribal Office Administrative Assistant
McGrath	Village Public Safety Officer
Minto	Home Care Provider
Old Minto	Traditional Counselor II
Region-Wide	Addictions Counselor I
Region-Wide	Behavioral Health Clinical Associate I
Tanacross	Tribal Family Youth Specialist
Tok	Home Care Provider

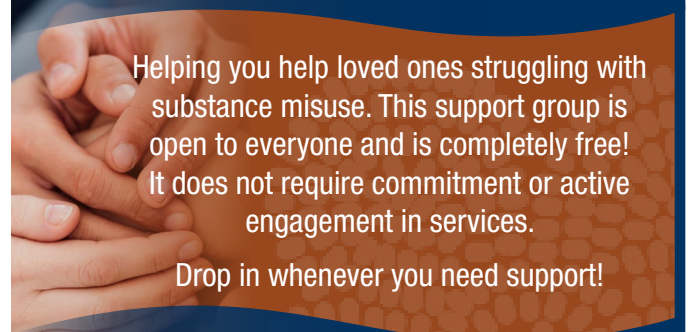


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UPCOMING EVENTS

**JUN
2-10**

North Pacific Fisheries Management Council Meeting

Agate Beach Best Western | Newport, Oregon
<https://www.npfmc.org/three-meeting-outlook/>

**JUN
8-12**

NCAI Mid-Year Convention

Mashantucket, CT

**JUN
13**

TCC Staff Picnic

Limited Services Available 10:00am - 5:00pm

**JUN
19**

TCC Offices Closed

Juneteenth

**JUN
20**

Day of Peaceful Protest for the Survival of Yukon River Salmon

More information to come | tinyurl.com/peacefulprotest25

**JUL
3-4**

TCC Offices Closed

Independence Day