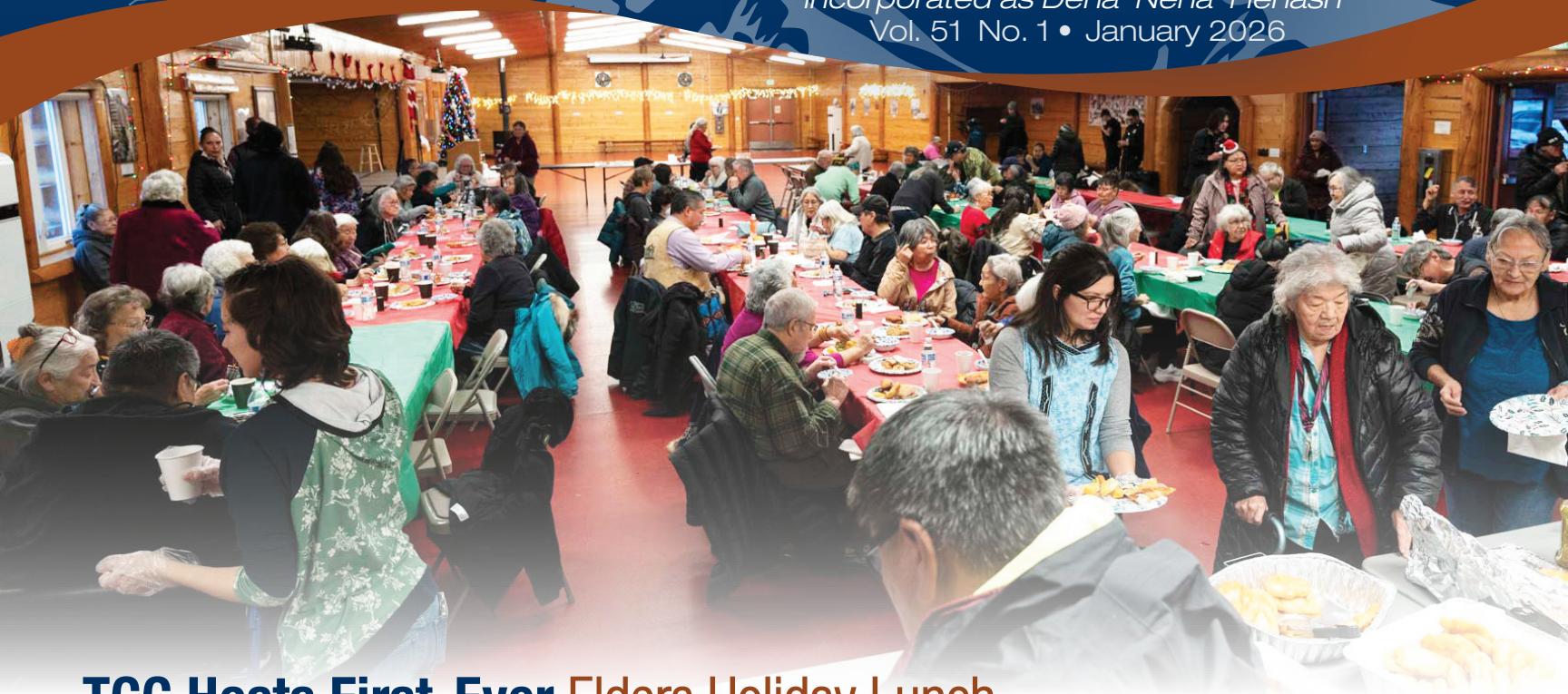




# The Council

Incorporated as *Dena' Nena' Henash*  
Vol. 51 No. 1 • January 2026



## TCC Hosts First-Ever Elders Holiday Lunch

Last month, Tanana Chiefs Conference hosted our first-ever Elders Holiday Lunch in Fairbanks—a gathering created to honor and uplift our Elders during a time of year that can often feel lonely, especially for those missing family and life back in their home village. The event welcomed Elders with a warm meal of moose soup and frybread and offered a space for connection, laughter, and shared community.

TCC staff, volunteers, and partners came together to make the gathering possible. Doyon Foundation vol-

unteers helped serve meals, Effie Kokrine students assisted with preparation and serving, and Korwin Joseph, Elijah Wigley, and Isaac Boyles cooked the moose soup—braving temperatures of  $-30^{\circ}$  to ensure the meal was ready. Additional thanks go to Margaret Sagers and Alivia Gonzalez for chopping vegetables and assisting in the kitchen.

Chief Brian Ridley reflected on the importance of the event, sharing: “We wanted to honor our Elders and remind them that they are not alone this holiday season—especially those who may be missing home. A warm

bowl of moose soup is good for the soul, but the true comfort comes from being together as a community. It was heartwarming to see so many people come together to take care of our Elders, and I am deeply grateful for everyone who helped make this gathering possible.”

TCC looks forward to continuing this new tradition and creating more opportunities for our Elders to come together, share stories, and feel supported throughout the year.

**SEE PAGE 4 FOR MORE PHOTOS.**

**Happy New Year!**  
**2026**  
From Your Friends at Tanana Chiefs Conference

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# Letter from the Chief



## 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 Englishoe, Gwichyaa Zhee  
Youth Advisor



Dear Tribal Leaders and Tribal Members,

Happy New Year. I hope this season finds you well and surrounded by family and community. As we welcome 2026, I look forward to a year filled with progress, partnership, and continued strength for all of our Tribes. Together, we will keep moving forward on the issues that matter most to our people.

Last month was an especially active one for advocacy—both here at home and at the federal level. Early in December, I testified before the Fairbanks City Council on the importance of adopting a Native land acknowledgement at their meetings. Fairbanks sits on the ancestral lands of the Lower Tanana people, where our ancestors lived, governed, traded, raised families, and cared for this place for thousands of years. A land acknowledgement is a small but meaningful act of respect—one that helps bridge longstanding divides, honors our role as the original stewards of this land, and sets a tone of understanding and inclusion for everyone who calls Fairbanks home.

I also traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with federal officials and advocate on several critical issues. We pushed for an extension of the Veteran's Allotment Act, recognizing how important this effort is for our veterans and their families. We met with legislators and federal agencies to restore Huslia's \$20 million EPA grant and the \$62 million Solar for All grant—both of which are essential investments in community health and energy security. Additionally, we continued our strong advocacy for salmon, urging federal partners to advance legislation that helps more of our fish make it through the Bering Sea and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council so they can return to our rivers and sustain our communities.

Later in the month, we welcomed members of the Alaska State Legislature to meet with TCC leadership and staff. Together, we discussed several key priorities, including securing reliable SNAP benefits, advancing land transfers for our villages, strengthening rural healthcare, protecting public safety, expanding broadband access, and lowering energy costs for our communities. We were grateful for their willingness to engage, ask questions, and work collaboratively on these issues.

As we look ahead, TCC's Annual Convention is quickly approaching this March. This is always an important time for us to come together, reflect on the past year, and plan for the road ahead. Several seats on the Board—including my own—will be up for election this year. I look forward to a productive and meaningful convention!

Mahsi' Choo,  
Chief Brian Ridley  
Tanana Chiefs Conference

## MISSING



Lorraine  
Ginnis



Willis  
Derendoff



Doren  
Sanford



Debbie  
Nictune



Frank  
Minano



Craig  
Albert

### 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](http://www.tananachiefs.org/missing) for more information.



# Voices of Our Villages

## *The Stories We Share*

### Neerazhii Zheh Opening

By Gwichyaa Zhee Gwich'in Tribal Government

Like many of our sister Tribes throughout Indian country, the Gwichyaa Zhee Gwich'in Tribal Government (GZGTG) advocates for victims of crime through funds from the Department of Justice's Tribal Set Aside Formula Grant. Since 2018, we've helped over 100 survivors who've made the decision to begin their healing process, welcoming their choice to reclaim self-empowerment. Through this grant, leadership proposed using funds to renovate an existing structure to better serve relatives who seek help, need safe temporary housing, and want to attend traditional healing events.

The plan took two years to come to fruition. With help from the Tribal housing department and staff, the building became exactly what we hoped for. On October 24th, 2025, chiefs, council members, community members, Elders, and youth gathered for a grand opening that included prayer in Gwich'in, ribbon cutting, and unveiling of the new sign that reads "Neerazhii Zheh"—translating to Healing House—with traditional beadwork in the background made by the late

Minnie Peter.

Michelle VanDyke, the program's grant manager and victim advocate, presented the formal plan to the council in October of 2024. With blessings

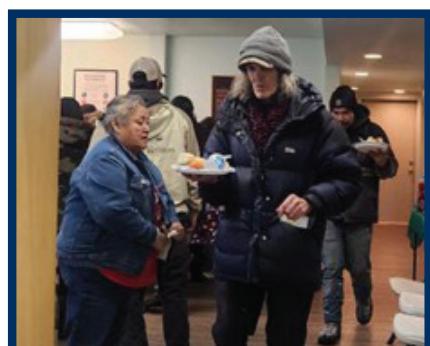
from the chiefs and council, the plan laid the framework to further develop infrastructure, which is now open to the public. It includes a healing room for events, an open lobby designed to welcome people from all walks of life, a fully stocked kitchen, a Village Public Safety Officer lodging room, and most importantly, a safe housing room for temporary shelter.

This initiative supports healing within our community, which has long suffered from colonization, segregation, a Bureau of Indian Affairs territorial school, an invasive Air Force base, and now a lack of fundamental public safety. Through our resiliency and Tribal sovereignty authority, we will spearhead the initiative in promoting wellness to encourage sustenance of our culture and erase the stigma around mental well-being. Our local



data shows that domestic violence and bullying make up 85% of the crime types we've helped survivors with. With this data, we'll measure successful outcomes through community participation, compassionate & spirited leadership, and collaboration with healers, artists, sister organizations, and Elders and youth.

We're excited to share this monumental moment for our Tribe and look forward to continuing to help our people begin healing for a healthier community. Mahsii choo to those who've had a hand in building a successful outcome: Chief James, Chief Peter, Melanie Herbert, Diana Peter, Marilyn Savage, Debra Van Dyke, GZGTG Housing Staff, Everts Air's Hannah & Josh, and our people of Gwichyaa Zhee.



### Do you have a community story to share?

The Council is currently accepting submissions from communities across the TCC region highlighting your successes. Share your stories with us so that we can all celebrate the creativity, resilience and unity of our communities!

Scan the QR Code or visit [www.tananachiefs.org/community-stories/](http://www.tananachiefs.org/community-stories/)



# TCC Hosts First-Ever Elders Holiday Lunch

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1.



## Alaska Native Vietnam-Era Veteran Land Allotment Extension Act Passes the U.S. Senate

Last month, the U.S. Senate passed H.R. 410 – the Alaska Native Vietnam Era Veterans Land Allotment Extension Act of 2025. This important legislation extends the deadline for eligible Alaska Native Vietnam-era veterans—and their heirs—to apply for their federal land allotments from 2025 to December 29, 2030.

Tanana Chiefs Conference has strongly advocated for this extension, recognizing the significant barriers many veterans have faced in navigating the application process. By extending the deadline an additional five years, Congress has provided more time for veterans and families to secure the land they were promised.

Chief Chairman Brian Ridley noted, “This extension is a long-overdue victory for Alaska Native Vietnam-era veterans and their families. TCC is proud to stand with our veterans and ensure they receive a fair opportunity to claim their land.”

TCC extends its appreciation to Senator Dan Sullivan, who brought the bill forward on the Senate floor; Senator Lisa Murkowski; and Congressman Mary Peltola Begich for championing this effort.

TCC will continue working with federal partners and Tribal leadership to ensure veterans and heirs have the support they need during the extended application period.

Learn more—including how to apply: <https://ow.ly/YRqQ50XxT2j>

### Need help?

Contact TCC Realty at 907-452-8251 ext. 3253.

## 2026 TCC Calendars Available Now!

Send your mailing address to  
[TCC\\_Communications@tanachiefs.org](mailto:TCC_Communications@tanachiefs.org)  
or call 907-452-8251 ext. 3424 to get your calendar today.

You can also stop by any of our buildings to  
pickup your copy!



# TCC Offers Master/Six-Pack License Training in Fairbanks

In December, Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) hosted a Master/Six-Pack License Training in Fairbanks. The 4-day training certified participants in the legal operation of water vessels with six or fewer passengers and is regulated by the United States Coast Guard (USCG). This license is essential for various types of commercial and residential boating activities, including fishing charters, sightseeing tours, and diving trips.

In Alaska, having a Six-Pack license allows people to take advantage of the growing tourism industry. Wildlife viewing, cultural tours and educational retreats, fly fishing trips, guiding, and emergency response are all activities that require a Six-Pack license when operated as businesses.

Attendees of the class learned chart navigation skills, practiced emergency procedures and cold-water immersion, developed an understanding of cargo handling and regulations, and more. They left the training equipped, prepared, and licensed to use their vessels and local knowledge to take part in the expanding tourism industry.

TCC hopes to offer future Master/Six-Pack trainings, so stay tuned in to our social media accounts and keep an eye out for upcoming trainings!



## Win \$50! TCC GO FAFSA Event

### 3 Simple Steps to Win:

1. Complete your 2026-2027 FAFSA Application at <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>
2. Take a screenshot of the FAFSA confirmation page
3. Email the screenshot to [tccgo@tananachiefs.org](mailto:tccgo@tananachiefs.org)



Drawings will take place weekly through January 2026.

Giveaway is open to both high school and college students. One winner of \$50 will be selected at random each week. Giveaway is intended for anyone living in the TCC Region who completes the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form to apply for financial aid for college.

## Mark Your Calendars! Behavioral Health is Coming to Town!

In January, Behavioral Health Staff will visit the following communities:

- Chalkyitsik - January 5-7
- Rampart - January 26-29

Call your local clinic to make an appointment with these providers.

Need help now? 24/7 crisis support is available! Dial 988.



# 2025

## A Year in Review

### JANUARY



**Graf Rheeneerhaanjii Re-Opened to Support Youth in Need.** TCC reopened Graf Rheeneerhaanjii, offering culturally grounded residential mental health support for youth ages 13–17.5. The program provides therapy, life skills, education, and cultural activities, with active family involvement and priority for TCC-affiliated youth.

### FEBRUARY



**Tribal Leaders Called for Change at NPFMC Meeting.** In February 2025, Tribal leaders, including TCC, urged the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council to address the salmon crisis, highlighting the cultural, nutritional, and economic impacts of bycatch and calling for conservation-focused, ecosystem-based management.

### MARCH



**Indigenous Healing Gathering Brought Culture, Connection & Celebration.** TCC's Indigenous Healing Gathering at Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center united beneficiaries, Elders, and healers for a day of traditional healing, plant medicine, arts, and dance, celebrating culture, community, and intergenerational knowledge.

### MAY



**Second Cohort Completed the Leadership for Results Program.** On May 1, 2025, TCC celebrated Cohort 2 of the Leadership for Results program, honoring 26 Tribal members, leaders, youth, and Elders who completed five months of leadership development and showcased community-focused Action Learning Projects.

### JANUARY



**Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center Introduced Open Access Scheduling.** This new system allows for same-day, next-day, or same-week appointments with your Primary Care Provider, reducing wait times and offering flexible in-person or telehealth options for improved access to care.

### MARCH



**Guided By Culture, Focused on Tomorrow.** The 2025 TCC Annual Convention united Tribal leaders and community members to address funding, healthcare, and cultural preservation. Highlights included a keynote speech in the Gwich'in language and resolutions guiding TCC's focus on wellness, sovereignty, and intergenerational knowledge.

### APRIL



**Celebrated CHAP Graduation.** On April 18, TCC celebrated 8 Session IV CHAP graduates, honoring their dedication, clinical training, and commitment to serving rural Alaska communities as essential Community Health Aide Practitioners.

### JUNE



**Engaged in a Day of Peaceful Protest.** On June 20, 2025, over 150 Tribal leaders and allies gathered statewide to protest Yukon River salmon declines, raising awareness of bycatch impacts, honoring cultural traditions with prayers and offerings, and advocating for conservation, food security, and the protection of Alaska Native ways of life.

## JUNE



### Launched TCC Weekly.

In June, TCC launched TCC Weekly, our podcast and radio show sharing news, upcoming events, highlights, and more. This short-form audio production keeps our communities, partners and employees informed about what's happening across the region. Learn more about TCC Weekly here: [www.tananachiefs.org/tcc-weekly/](http://www.tananachiefs.org/tcc-weekly/).

## JULY



### Hosted State & Federal Leaders During Annual Partner Boat Trip.

This year's trip brought policymakers to Evansville, Allakaket, Alatna, Hughes, and Huslia. This trip fostered dialogue on housing, healthcare, public safety, and salmon conservation and strengthened partnerships while highlighting the resilience of rural communities.

## SEPTEMBER



### Dedicated MMIP Memorial in Fairbanks.

At the direction of a Full Board Resolution, TCC dedicated an MMIP memorial bench beside the Chena Bingo Hall- a space for reflection, remembrance, and healing. The ceremony honored missing and murdered Indigenous persons and emphasized the importance of remembering and advocating for affected families.

## NOVEMBER



### Supported Food Security.

TCC and partner organizations hosted the Gathering for Food Security to discuss local trends and share resources. Panelists shared insights, 43 food boxes were distributed, and a food drive collected a truckload of donations. The event highlighted community collaboration to support families and build long-term resilience.

## JULY



### Honored Elders Through Day of Caring.

On July 21, TCC hosted the first Elders Day of Caring, where over 90 volunteers completed 20 home projects for Alaska Native Elders in the Fairbanks area, celebrating Athabascan values of respect and community service.

## AUGUST



### Met with Federal Leaders to Advocate for Alaska Native Healthcare.

In August, TCC leadership met with federal officials, including HHS Secretary Kennedy and Alaska's Senators, to advocate for Interior Alaska Native healthcare needs and showcase services at the clinic ensuring Tribal voices influence high-level decision-making.

## OCTOBER



### TCC Returned to AFN Convention.

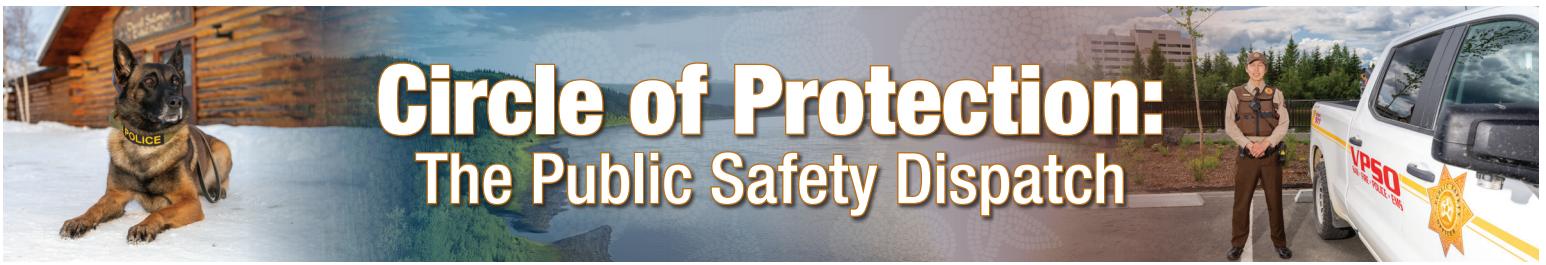
TCC and Doyon, Ltd officially rejoined AFN for this year's annual convention. Interior representatives were honored, four TCC resolutions on cultural preservation and Tribal sovereignty passed, and Sharon Hildebrand was elected AFN Interior Village Representative.

## NOVEMBER



### Showed Strong Presence at the 2025 NCAI Convention.

Over 100 Alaskan delegates advanced Tribal sovereignty and Native priorities at this year's convention. Chief Brian Ridley and Clinton Cook were re-elected as Alaska Area representatives. TCC championed resolutions reinforcing unity and advocacy for Alaska Tribes.



# Circle of Protection: The Public Safety Dispatch

## Protecting Our People, Strengthening Our Communities

By David Atteberry, Public Safety Manager

Each January, communities across the nation observe Human Trafficking Awareness Month. This is a time to bring attention to an issue that affects people everywhere, including right here in Interior Alaska. While trafficking is often portrayed as something that happens far away or only in major cities, the truth is that Alaska Native people, particularly women and youth, experience higher rates of vulnerability to exploitation than many other groups. Understanding the issue is an important step in preventing harm and protecting our communities.

Human trafficking includes both sex trafficking and labor trafficking. It occurs when a person is forced, coerced, or manipulated into providing labor or commercial sex against their will. In Alaska, traffickers often take advantage of people who are experiencing economic hardship, isolation, lack of transportation, unstable housing, or past trauma. These risk factors are found more frequently in rural and village communities due to historic injustices, limited resources, and the ongoing impacts of generational trauma.

In the Interior, trafficking does not always look like it does in movies or news stories. It may involve someone

being pressured to exchange sexual acts for food, shelter, drugs, or transportation. It may involve teenagers being groomed online by adults who promise love, opportunities, or safety. It may involve labor exploitation, where someone is brought into Fairbanks for work and then controlled through intimidation, withheld pay, or threats. Trafficking often happens quietly and is frequently hidden within relationships, families, or trusted circles.

Alaska Native women and girls are especially targeted. Information from the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP) movement shows that individuals who go missing or are murdered often face the same vulnerabilities that traffickers seek out. Geographic isolation, limited access to services, and the absence of local law enforcement in some communities can increase the risk even further.

Although the issue is serious, our communities are not powerless. Awareness and vigilance save lives.

- Some signs that a person may be experiencing trafficking include:
- Sudden changes in behavior, isolation, or withdrawal
- Signs of physical abuse or malnourishment

- Someone else controlling their movements, phone, or money
- A young person with an older partner who appears controlling
- Fearful or evasive behavior when asked about their situation

Protecting our people begins with watching out for one another and speaking up when something does not feel right. Increasing access to safe housing, mental health support, cultural healing programs, and trusted local responders also reduces the conditions that allow trafficking to occur.

This month and every month, Tanana Chiefs Conference Public Safety remains committed to supporting Tribal communities, assisting survivors, and working with our local, Tribal, state, and federal partners to promote safety across the Interior.

If you or someone you know is in danger, contact your local VPSO, Tribal Peace Officer, law enforcement agency, or call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888.

By staying informed and supporting one another, we can strengthen our communities and work toward a future where trafficking has no place in Alaska.

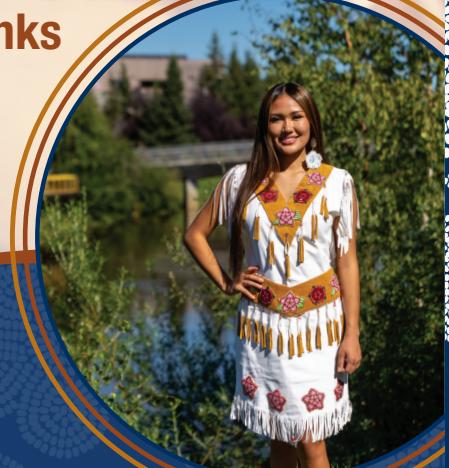
## Unifying Voices: Collaborative Approaches to Education 2026 Annual Education Summit

January 15, 2026 | Westmark Hotel, Fairbanks

### Registration Required

Register online using the QR code  
or email [Education\\_Dept@tananachiefs.org](mailto:Education_Dept@tananachiefs.org)

SCAN ME TO  
LEARN MORE



Tanana  
Chiefs  
Conference

# Understanding Glaucoma: What You Need to Know to Protect Your Vision

Glaucoma is one of the leading causes of blindness worldwide, and it often develops so quietly that many people don't know they have it until permanent vision loss has already occurred. Known as the "silent thief of sight," glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that damage the optic nerve, the vital link that carries images from your eyes to your brain.

The most common form, primary open-angle glaucoma, progresses slowly and without pain. Vision loss usually begins at the edges (your peripheral vision), making it easy to miss until the condition becomes more advanced. Another form, angle-closure glaucoma, is far more sudden and can cause severe eye pain, headaches, blurry vision, halos around lights, or nausea. This type is a medical emergency. If you experience these symptoms, seek care right away.

## Who Is at Higher Risk?

Some people are more likely to develop glaucoma, including:

- Adults over age 60
- African Americans over age 40
- Individuals with a family history of glaucoma
- People with high eye pressure
- Those with certain medical conditions, such as diabetes or high blood pressure
- Individuals who have had eye injuries

Because glaucoma can progress without early warning signs, regular comprehensive eye exams are the best way to protect your vision. An eye care professional can measure your eye pressure, examine your optic nerve, and detect early changes before vision loss begins.

While glaucoma cannot be cured, treatments—including medicated eye drops, laser procedures, and other interventions—can lower eye pressure and slow or stop further damage. Early detection is key.

## Protect Your Vision Today

If you are in a higher-risk group or haven't had an eye exam recently, now is the time to schedule one. Early detection helps preserve your sight and supports lifelong eye health.

To learn more, visit trusted sources such as the American Optometric Association (<https://www.aoa.org/>) or the National Eye Institute (<https://www.nei.nih.gov/>). For specific questions or to make an appointment, contact the Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center Eye Clinic at 907-451-6682, Option 4.

Your eyesight matters—take steps today to keep it strong for years to come.



# Now Hiring! Ruby Tribal Council

Join Our Team!

We're looking  
for dedicated  
people to support our  
community & Tribal  
members!

## Positions Available:

- **Finance Director\***: Manages Tribal Quickbooks account, which includes verifying documents, entering accounting transactions, and managing financial affairs. Follow existing financial controls to create reports. Maintains relationships with banks and financial agencies, grantors, and performs budgeting and financial strategic planning. Completes bi-weekly payroll, payroll taxes, end-of-year transactions, monthly and annual reporting to grantors.
- **Victim Services Coordinator\***: This Coordinator is responsible for the Office of Victims Crime grant, to develop and establish a program to provide services to crime victims that are culturally appropriate and include traditional knowledge and trauma informed approach. Provide outreach events, support, referrals and information related to crime victims' rights and victim compensation information and applications.
- **Tanana Chiefs Conference Tribal Family Youth Specialist**: This position supports families in Ruby by coordinating Child Care and ICWA services, advocating for clients, conducting home visits, assisting with foster care recruitment and training, organizing community activities, and helping families access resources. The role includes reporting, budgeting support, and close coordination with the Tribal Council and TCC Tribal Development. To learn more and apply for this position, visit [www.tananachiefs.org/careers](http://www.tananachiefs.org/careers).

\*Please contact the Ruby Tribal Council at 907-468-4479 for these job descriptions and applications.

# Navigating the Chum Salmon Bycatch EIS: Impacts, Options, and Next Steps

By Diloola Erickson, Tribal Resource Stewardship Division Director

As you may recall, Tanana Chiefs Conference's (TCC) Tribal Resource Stewardship (TRS) team has worked closely with the National Marine Fisheries Service over the past few years on the Chum Salmon Bycatch Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This EIS has now been finalized and published in the Federal Register.

To help explain this complex issue, TRS staff, in collaboration with partners, have created a 30-minute video that breaks down the EIS and its significance. The Chum Salmon Bycatch EIS video provides a clear, accessible overview of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC), the purpose and history of the EIS, and the broader context of Western Alaska's ongoing chum salmon crisis.

Developed in partnership with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC), with TCC serving as a formal cooperating agency on the EIS, the video connects

federal fisheries management to the lived realities of Tribal communities. It highlights how chum salmon are essential to food security, cultural continuity, and regional stability. The video also explains the Council's authority, the legal and scientific factors that led to the full EIS, and why Tribes and regional organizations have long called for stronger bycatch management.

The video then walks viewers through the five alternatives evaluated in the EIS, including the differences among fixed hard caps, abundance-based caps, sector-specific measures, corridor closures, and the no-action baseline. Each option is explained clearly, with attention to how it could affect Western Alaska chum stocks, subsistence access, and ecosystem health. This approach helps viewers understand the tradeoffs involved and consider which management options may offer the greatest protection.

The goal of this video is to support Tribes, community members, and the public in understanding the EIS process and engaging meaningfully in federal decision-making on this critical issue.

To stay informed about advocacy efforts or learn how to get involved, please email [TRSP@tananachiefs.org](mailto:TRSP@tananachiefs.org) and ask to be added to the advocate email list. You can also find the video and additional information by scanning the QR code.

Scan here for the video:



[www.tananachiefs.org/get-involved/yukon-river-salmon-decline/](http://www.tananachiefs.org/get-involved/yukon-river-salmon-decline/)

## Fish Distribution Supports Elders in Fairbanks & North Pole

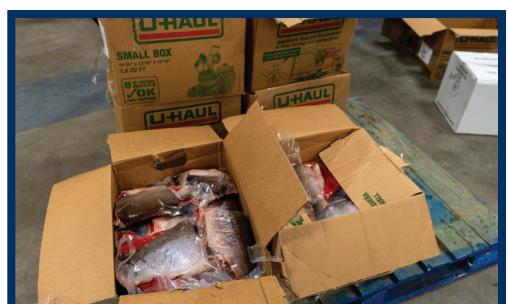
Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) completed its annual Elder fish distribution last week, delivering 200 boxes of wild-caught salmon to rural Elders in the Fairbanks and North Pole area. This year's distribution included filleted, vacuum-sealed salmon, along with the heads and eggs, ensuring Elders received the full benefit of this traditional food.

TCC's Elder Nutrition Program also provided boxes of locally grown potatoes and carrots, adding fresh, Interior-raised produce to each delivery.

More than 40 volunteers—many of them TCC staff from programs and departments across the organization—came together to package and prepare the food for shipment. Their teamwork made it possible to honor Elders with nutritious, culturally meaningful foods as winter sets in.

TCC Chief Chairman Brian Ridley shared his appreciation, noting, "Supporting our Elders with traditional foods is one of the most important responsibilities we carry. I'm proud of our staff and volunteers who came together to make sure these foods reached the people who deserve them most."

TCC is grateful to everyone who contributed time and energy to help preserve and share these resources for our Elders this year.



# Two Upcoming Opportunities to Make Your Voice Heard on Salmon Advocacy

Protecting our salmon is protecting our way of life. Over the next several weeks, Tribal members and community advocates have two important opportunities to speak up and ensure that the experiences of Yukon River families are reflected in state and federal decision-making: the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) and the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF).

Both bodies will be considering actions related to salmon management, and public testimony is one of the strongest tools we have to advocate for our river, our food security, and future generations.

Below is a brief overview of how to participate in each process. For step-by-step instructions, deadlines, and additional support, please visit: [www.tananachiefs.org/get-involved/yukon-river-salmon-decline/](http://www.tananachiefs.org/get-involved/yukon-river-salmon-decline/)

## 1. North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC)

Chum Salmon Bycatch Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) – Final Action in February 2026

The NPFMC will take **final action** on the Chum Salmon Bycatch EIS at its February 2026 Council meeting. This is a critical moment for community voices to be included in the official administrative record.

### *How to Submit Written Testimony*

- Go to [NPFMC.org](http://NPFMC.org)
- Select Our Meetings → Current or Next Council Meetings
- Open the February 2026 Council Meeting agenda
- Navigate to Council → Agenda
- Scroll to C2: Chum Salmon Bycatch – Final Action
- Click Comment to submit your testimony

**Written comment deadline:** January 30, 2026 at 12:00 PM (Noon AKST)

## 2. Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF)

2025–2026 Meeting Cycle: Opportunities to Testify on Proposals Affecting Yukon River Salmon

The Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) will accept public testimony on proposals affecting Yukon River salmon during the **2025–2026 meeting cycle**, including at the **Area M** and **Statewide** meetings. This is another key venue for Tribal members and subsistence users to speak directly to state decision-makers.

### *How to Submit Written or Oral Testimony*

- Visit the Alaska Board of Fisheries website: [adfg.alaska.gov](http://adfg.alaska.gov)
- Select Fishing → Board of Fisheries
- Navigate to the 2025–2026 Meeting Cycle
- Select either the Area M (Alaska Peninsula / Aleutian Island / Chignik Finfish) or Statewide Meeting
- Follow the links to submit a written comment or sign up for oral testimony

Deadlines and testimony windows vary by meeting, so be sure to check the specific dates for the AYK session. **Area M deadline:** 2/3/2026 and Statewide 3/2/2026

## Need Step-by-Step Help or Support Preparing Testimony?

Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) will post its recommendations on key proposals once available, providing guidance for those preparing comments or testimony.

A detailed walkthrough for both the NPFMC and BOF processes—including screenshots, deadlines, and guidance is available on our website: [https://www.tananachiefs.org/get-involved/yukon-river-salmon-decline/](http://www.tananachiefs.org/get-involved/yukon-river-salmon-decline/)

For personalized assistance, please contact:

**TCC Tribal Resource Stewardship Department**

907-452-8251, ext. 7001



# Indigenous Language Films Draw Crowds to Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center

On December 5th, TCC co-sponsored a special screening of the short film, "Shaaghan Neekwaji," known in English as "Two Old Women."

If you grew up in Alaska, Two Old Women, by Velma Wallis, was most likely required reading in middle school. It tells the harrowing and inspiring tale of two elderly women abandoned by their Tribe during famine. The short narrative film adaptation of the book is directed by Princess Daazhraii Johnson, and stars Gwich'in actors Brenda Kay Newman and Margaret Henry, with a special appearance by Chief Galen Gilbert of Vashraii K'oo. The film is acted entirely in Dinjii Zhuh K'ya, the Gwich'in language, and costumes were designed by Georgie Engler of Gwichyaa Zhee.

The screening opened to a packed audience, with the theater at Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitor Center being filled to capacity.

Velma Wallis was also in attendance and said during a speech preceding the screening that the book and its film adaptation are a story for the ages. "It belongs to all of us, it tells all of our story," she said.

Two other short films were also shown. "Diiyeghan naii Taii Tr'eedaa, (We Will Walk the Trail of Our Ancestors)" also directed by Princess Daazhraii Johnson, depicts a grandfather's teachings of reciprocity and its connection to sustainability of Indigenous culture and lifestyle to his granddaughter, a young Gwich'in mother. The film is part of the Reciprocity Project, which uplifts the value of recipro-

city in Indigenous ways of storytelling through film, podcasts, and other creative mediums.

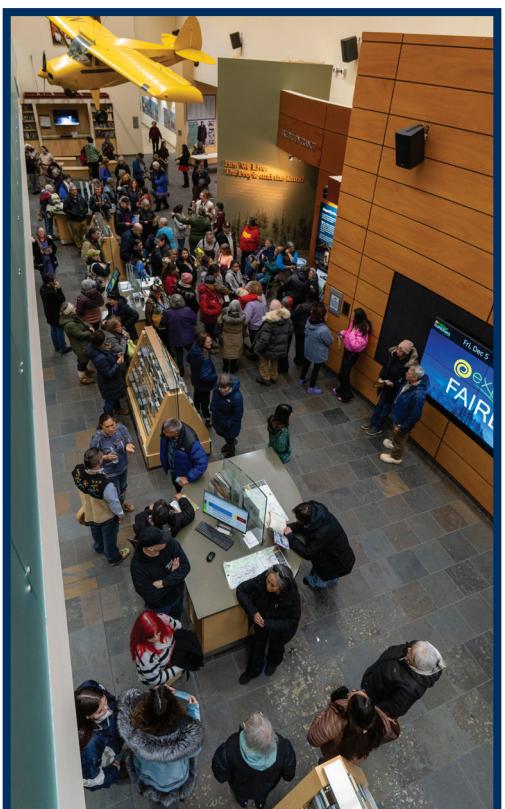
You can view "Diiyeghan naii Taii Tr'eedaa and learn more about the Reciprocity Project at <https://www.reciprocity.org/films/diiyeghan-naii-taii-treedaa>.

"Vidrii Tr'ahtloo (We are Warming Her Heart)," is a Dinjii Zhuh K'ya music video directed by and starring film student Na'ni'eezh Ch'igiiontà, from Shonto, Arizona (in Navajo Nation) and Vashraii K'oo (formerly known as Arctic Village). She discusses the lack of Indigenous language representation in media, and her mission to change

that circumstance. "Our Indigenous languages are alive and just like us, they are adapting to this mainstream culture," says Ch'igiiontà, "Dinjii Zhuh K'ya is so poetic and beautiful that I figured it was time to highlight that." Ch'igiiontà encourages language learning as a way to show Elders that their languages remain relevant. "Through my music video, I want to show the potential our languages can hold in modern spaces," she says. Currently, her video is under review for showing at a film festival.

As for "Shaaghan Neekwaji," future plans include more screenings across the state and hopes for a feature-length film. TCC is proud to see the people of our region collaborating on such big projects that protect and preserve our way of life, our stories, and our history.

**"Our Indigenous languages are alive and just like us, they are adapting to this mainstream culture."**  
**Na'ni'eezh Ch'igiiontà**



# Fairbanks City Council Adopts Native Land Acknowledgement Ordinance

Last month, several Alaska Native leaders attended a Fairbanks City Council meeting to advocate for the adoption of a standing Native land acknowledgement at the start of Council meetings. Leaders from Denakkanaaga, Inc., the Fairbanks Native Association (FNA), and Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) spoke in support of the ordinance, emphasizing the importance of recognizing the original stewards of the land on which Fairbanks is built.

The ordinance, which was originally submitted by Denakkanaaga, Inc., calls for the City of Fairbanks to formally acknowledge that it sits on the ancestral lands of the Lower Tanana Dena people. After hearing testimony from Native leaders and community representatives, the Fairbanks City Council voted to pass the ordinance on December 15.

Chief/Chairman Brian Ridley of Tanana Chiefs Conference testified before the Council, highlighting both the historical significance and present-day importance of a land acknowledgement.

"Fairbanks sits on the ancestral lands of the Lower Tanana Native people, who have lived, governed, raised families, and cared for this place for over ten thousand years," said Chief Ridley. "For many decades, there has been strain between the City of Fairbanks and the Native community. A land acknowledgement is one small but meaningful way to begin bridging that gap. It is an act of respect that says, 'We hear you, we see you, and you are part of this community.'"

Tanana Chiefs Conference would like to thank Denakkanaaga, Inc. for bringing forward this important ordinance and for their leadership.



## Energy Assistance Is Here for You This Winter

As temperatures across our region continue to drop, keeping your home warm and safe becomes more important than ever. TCC's Energy Assistance Program is here to help eligible beneficiaries with the cost of home heating during Alaska's long and extremely cold winters.

Energy Assistance can help cover a portion of your heating expenses, easing the financial burden during a time when many families are already facing higher costs. When it's this cold, reliable heat isn't just about comfort—it's about health, safety, and well-being.

If you are a TCC beneficiary and are concerned about staying warm this winter, please know you are not alone. TCC is here for you, and our team is ready to help guide you through the application process and answer your questions.

Applications are accepted while funding is available and are processed in the order they are received, so we encourage you to reach out as soon as possible.

To learn more or to apply for Energy Assistance, call 907-452-8251 ext. 3521.

During this especially cold season, we encourage you to take advantage of the support available. TCC remains committed to standing with our people, helping ensure homes stay warm and families stay safe.

FEBRUARY 19-25, 2026

## Ride for Life Snowmachine Tour

Join TCC to learn important information about how to stay healthy and safe this spring!

**2/19 - Minto • 2/20 - Manley Hot Springs • 2/21 - Ruby**

**2/24 - Takotna • 2/25 - McGrath • 2/26 - Nikolai**

This wellness-centered journey brings together TCC's VPSO program, Wellness & Prevention, Tribal Courts, Family Services, Re-Entry and the American Red Cross, Alaska Veterans' Outreach, and My Grandma's House to share resources, supports, and services that help strengthen our communities. We look forward to connecting, offering hope, and building safety together. A community dinner and door prizes will be provided at every stop.



**Questions?**

**Call 907-452-8251  
ext. 3291 or 3177**

# Election Criteria 2026 TCC Annual Convention

## SUBREGIONAL ADVISORY BOARD ELECTIONS

### Executive Board of Directors

#### Subregional Positions:

Upper Tanana Subregion ..... 3-year term (2026-2029)

Currently Chief Herbert Demit, Tanacross

Yukon Koyukuk Subregion ..... 3-year term (2026-2029)

Currently Chief Charlie Green, Louden

### Advisory Boards

The three TCC Advisory Boards make recommendations to the TCC Executive Board and Chief/Chairman. The Regional Health Board is selected by each respective subregion or organization as noted in the bylaws (Article 7, Section 2). The Chief/Chairman has the authority to appoint all individuals to the other advisory boards (Article 7, Section 5), but the most recent process has been for the subregions to democratically select representatives to each advisory board. All candidates must be Alaska Native.

### Regional Health Advisory Board

Yukon Flats Subregion ..... 3-year term (2026-2029)

Currently Patricia Salmon, Chalkyitsik

### Education Council

Yukon Tanana Subregion ..... 3-year term (2026-2029)

Currently Phyllis Erhart, Tanana, Seat D

### Interior Athabascan Tribal College Board of Trustees

Upper Kuskokwim Subregion ..... 3-year term (2026-2029)

Currently VACANT, Seat B

Yukon Tanana Subregion ..... 3-year term (2026-2029)

Currently Alex Hanna, Minto, Seat D

Yukon Flats Subregion ..... 3-year term (2026-2029)

Currently VACANT, Seat E

#### Eligibility Criteria:

- Must be a current village director, as authorized by Tribal/village resolution. (Article 4, Section 2)
- Must be residents of the State of Alaska and Alaska Native Members of member villages of the corporation. (Article 4, Section 1)
- Full Time employees of the corporation shall not be eligible to serve as Directors or officers of the corporation with exception of the Chief/Chairman. (Article 4, Section 2)
- Compliance with the TCC Board of Directors' Drug and Alcohol Free Policy #50-5001 applies to all TCC Executive and Health Board of Directors, with the exception of the Chief/Chairman of the Board who is an employee who follows the employee policy.
- Must successfully pass the ICPA and (DHSS) Alaska Barrier Crimes Act Background check. (See also Executive Board Policy 50-5003). Executive and Health board candidates must turn in a completed and correct background check application to Human Resources by February

13<sup>th</sup> to guarantee background checks will be completed by February 26<sup>th</sup>. Individuals contemplating running for a board position should turn in a background check application immediately to ensure the ability to make corrections to mistakes in the lengthy application. All background check applications will be confidential and only Human Resources will have access to the application and the names of individuals. Those individuals that do not submit complete paperwork or fail to pass a background check will not be eligible candidates for the TCC Chief/Chairman, Executive Board or Health Board positions.

## FULL BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTIONS

### Officer Positions

Chief/Chairman ..... 3-year term (2026-2029)

Currently Chief/Chairman Brian Ridley, Eagle

#### Eligibility Criteria for Chief/Chairman:

- Officers must be Alaska Native members of a member village of the corporation and eligible to be selected as a Director of a member village. (Article 5, Section 1)
- Compliance with the TCC Employee Drug and Alcohol Free Policy #10-810. All candidates must take and pass a drug test prior to the election, according to policy #10-107 in order to serve their term if elected.

### IRHA Board of Commissioners

Seat E ..... 3-year term (2026-2029)

Currently Kristen Moreland, Fairbanks

#### Eligibility Criteria:

- Must be eligible to serve on TCC Board of Directors (Article 18)
- Employees of TCC or IRHA are not eligible to serve as IRHA Commissioners (Article 18)

## ICPA & DHSS BACKGROUND CHECK

### INFORMATION:

TCC Executive and Health Board of Directors must successfully pass a federal ICPA background check, and the Alaska Barrier Crimes Act background check. The TCC Executive Board has made the commitment to both comply with current laws, Board policies and advocate for reasonable changes in background check requirements. As part of compliance, TCC Executive Board and Health Board candidates must submit their complete background check application which includes fingerprints by February 13<sup>th</sup> submitted to the Human Resources Director. This allows enough time for the check to be completed. Only those candidates that successfully pass the background check will be eligible to continue as official candidates for the respective elections.

## Important Dates and Deadlines

### January 27<sup>th</sup> - Declaration of Candidacy Opens

January 27<sup>th</sup> at 8:00am the open period in which a candidate may declare written candidacy begins. Please confirm receipt of your letter of intent.

### February 6<sup>th</sup> at 5:00pm - Full Board Resolutions Due

Full Board Resolutions must be written as TCC resolutions, not Tribal resolutions. Please confirm receipt of your resolutions.

### February 13<sup>th</sup> - Background Check Deadline

The last day TCC is able to guarantee a background check will be completed in time for the required 10 day announcement of candidates before the meeting.

### February 26<sup>th</sup> at 5:00pm - Candidacy Window Closes

The open period in which a candidate may declare candidacy ends. Candidates must declare their candidacy in writing. TCC must provide a list of eligible candidates to member Tribes.

### March 12<sup>th</sup> - Elections

TCC elections held at the TCC Full Board of Directors Annual Meeting in Fairbanks.

# 2025 TCC FULL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## ELECTIONS: ELECTION RULES

### RULE 10. MAJORITY VOTE REQUIRED

To be elected to a position, nominees are required to receive a majority vote from the votes cast by the TCC Board of Delegates. If no nominee receives a majority vote on a ballot, the Election Committee shall conduct a subsequent ballot provided by these Election Rules until a nominee receives a majority vote.

### RULE 11. FAILURE TO ACHIEVE MAJORITY

1. In the event of a tie occurring for a Subregional seat after the third ballot, a coin toss will occur to determine the outcome of the election.
2. Ballots where there are four (4) nominees or more. If no nominee receives a majority vote on the first ballot the following rules will apply with the intent to eliminate candidates to achieve a majority:
  - The Election Committee will eliminate all nominees except for the three (3) nominees receiving the highest number of votes and conduct a subsequent ballot.
  - If there are three (3) or more candidates that receive the second highest number of votes, all those with the second highest number of votes will proceed to the next ballot including the candidate with the most votes. The remaining candidates will be eliminated.
  - If there is a tie for candidates with the third highest vote and there are two (2) or more candidates that receive the first and/or second highest number of votes, only the two (2) or more candidates that receive the highest number of votes will proceed to the next ballot.

## Full Board Resolutions

All resolutions must be received by fax, email, mail or in-person by 5:00pm Friday, February 6, 2026 to be considered for review at Convention. If you choose to mail in your proposed resolution, call 1-800-478-6822 ext. 3275 to notify Legal so that you do not miss the deadline.

Fax, email, or mail proposed resolutions & information sheets to:

Tanana Chiefs Conference  
ATTN: Keith Rueben, Legal Department  
200 First Avenue I Fairbanks, AK 99701  
FAX: (907) 459-3953  
Email: [keith.rueben@tananachiefs.org](mailto:keith.rueben@tananachiefs.org)

REMINDER: PLEASE SPECIFY RESOLUTIONS AS TCC RESOLUTIONS AND  
NOT TRIBAL RESOLUTIONS



Download the resolution  
form on our website.

The rest will be eliminated.

- If there are more than three (3) candidates tied for first highest vote, all of those receiving the first highest will proceed to the next ballot. The rest will be eliminated.
- If all but one candidate ties for second, the Election Committee will distribute an "elimination ballot" that includes only the nominees who tied for second. The Election Committee will eliminate the one nominee receiving the lowest number of votes on the "elimination ballot" and resume the balloting between all remaining nominees.
- 3. Ballots where there are three (3) nominees. If no nominee receives a majority vote on a ballot having three (3) nominees, the Election Committee will eliminate the one nominee receiving the lowest number of votes, and conduct a subsequent ballot. If all three (3) nominees tie for the votes cast, the Election Committee shall conduct a subsequent ballot including all nominees. If two nominees tie for the fewest votes cast, the Committee will distribute an "elimination ballot" that includes only the two nominees who tied for the fewest votes cast on the prior ballot. The Election Committee will eliminate the one nominee receiving the lowest number of votes on the "elimination ballot" and resume the balloting between all remaining nominees.
- 4. Ballots with two (2) nominees. The nominee receiving a majority vote shall be elected. If neither nominee receives a majority vote, the Election Committee will prepare another ballot without elimination of the nominee receiving the fewer votes. This Election Committee will repeat this process as necessary until one nominee receives a majority vote.

*\*\* Majority is based on the number of Directors present for the 2026 Full Board of Director's roll call.*

## Declaration of Candidacy

Individuals who want to declare themselves a candidate must submit a written, signed and dated letter of intent between 8:00 AM January 27, 2026 and 5:00 PM February 26, 2026.

Letters of intent must be received by fax, mail, or delivered in person no later than 5:00 PM on February 26, 2026 to:

Tanana Chiefs Conference  
ATTN: Chelle Johnson, Executive Coordinator  
200 First Avenue I Fairbanks, AK 99701  
1-800-478-6822 ext. 3044 | FAX: (907) 459-3953  
Email: [chelle.johnson@tananachiefs.org](mailto:chelle.johnson@tananachiefs.org)

2026 TCC Full Board elections process follows the TCC Elections Rules; A copy of the elections rules can be requested by contacting Robin Brown, General Counsel at [robin.brown@tananachiefs.org](mailto:robin.brown@tananachiefs.org).



Download the letter  
of intent form on our  
website.

## LETTER OF INTENT

DATE (Must be between 8 a.m. January 27, 2026 and 5 p.m. February 26, 2026)

I, \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ declare my intent to run for the Tanana Chiefs Conference  
(Name) (Village/Enrolled to)

position of \_\_\_\_\_  
(Insert seat you intend to run as a candidate for. Example: Secretary/Treasurer, Subregional Executive Board, TCC Health Board, TCC Education Council, IRHA Board of Commissioner, or /ATC)

Signature

Mailing Address

City, State, Zip Code

Print Name

Phone Number

Email Address





Tanana  
Chiefs  
Conference

## The Council Newsletter

(907) 452-8251 ext. 3424

communications\_dept@tananachiefs.org

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

Communications Division  
122 First Avenue, Suite 600  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701



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our E-Newsletter!

Get important  
updates straight  
to your inbox.



# FIND YOUR PURPOSE

## Join Our Team!

### New Vacancies

Evansville	Tribal Administrator - Onsite Supervisor
Fairbanks	Addictions LPN
Fairbanks	Administrative Assistant I - Family Services and Support
Fairbanks	Administrative Assistant II - Clinical Staff Office
Fairbanks	Audio Visual, Video Systems Technician
Fairbanks	Clinical Support Assistant - Medical Services
Fairbanks	Empanelment Specialist
Fairbanks	Fund Accountant I
Fairbanks	Medical Laboratory Scientist
Fairbanks	Referral Coordinator Apprentice
Fairbanks	Referral Coordinator II
Fairbanks	Referral Coordinator III
Fairbanks	Release of Information (ROI) Specialist I
Fairbanks	Residential Care Coordinator I
Fairbanks	Surgical Technologist II - ASC
Fairbanks	TANF Case Manager
Fairbanks	Village Bookkeeper I
McGrath	Preschool Lead Teacher
Tok	Nurse Practitioner - Upper Tanana Health Center
Tok	Physician Assistant - Upper Tanana Health Center



### Apply Online or Learn About Our Benefits!

Visit our website at [www.tananachiefs.org/careers](http://www.tananachiefs.org/careers) to see a full list of open positions and learn more about the benefits available through Tanana Chiefs Conference.

## The Council Newsletter

(907) 452-8251 ext. 3424  
communications\_dept@tananachiefs.org  
[www.tananachiefs.org](http://www.tananachiefs.org)

Communications Division  
122 First Avenue, Suite 600  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701



## Let's Talk!

Helping you help loved ones struggling with substance misuse. This support group is open to everyone and is completely free! It does not require commitment or active engagement in services.

Drop in whenever you need support!



Scan the QR Code for more info &  
join us Wednesdays via Zoom  
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

## UPCOMING EVENTS

JAN  
1-2

### TCC Offices Closed

New Years Day

JAN  
15

### 2026 Education Summit

Westmark Hotel | Fairbanks, AK

Register Here: [www.tananachiefs.org/services/education](http://www.tananachiefs.org/services/education)

JAN  
19

### TCC Offices Closed

Martin Luther King Jr Day

JAN  
20-22

### TCC Executive Board Meeting

8:30am - 5:00pm | Fairbanks, AK

FEB  
16

### TCC Offices Closed

President's Day

FEB  
19-25

### Ride for Life Snowmachine Tour

Minto | Manley Hot Springs | Ruby  
Takotna | McGrath | Nikolai