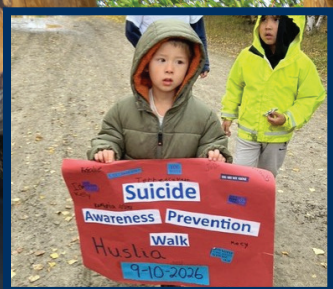




Tanana
Chiefs
Conference

The Council

Incorporated as Dena' Nena' Henash
Vol. 51 • No. 10 October 2026



Walking for Hope on World Suicide Prevention Day

On September 10, communities across the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) region came together to mark World Suicide Prevention Day with a shared message: **You Matter. You Are Not Alone. Help is Here.**

From Fairbanks to Northway, Galeana, Nulato, Hushia, and Arctic Village, people of all ages came together to remember loved ones, raise awareness, support those who may be struggling, and remind one another that hope and connection are always worth carrying forward.

Walking to Remember in Fairbanks

In Fairbanks, more than 80 people braved the rainy weather and joined together at the Chief Peter John Tribal Building Pavilion where they were given flowers and bibs on which they could dedicate their walk to a loved one they had lost to suicide. Participants selected strands of colored beads, signifying their purpose in walking: purple to remember someone who died by suicide, blue for suicide survivors, gold for hope, green

for allyship, red to break stigma, and orange for mental health field workers.

Laverne Huntington opened the event with a touching personal story and a prayer of hope and healing for everyone present. Kameron Reitan, the TCC's Wellness & Prevention Native Connections Project Coordinator, then asked participants to raise their beads in an honoring dedication ceremony.

Sierra Sommer from the Alaska Careline also shared about Fairbanks's local 988 hotline, saying, "When you call, you get someone here."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4.

Save the Date TCC Fall Summit

November 12-13, 2026

8:30am - 5:00pm

8 Star Events Center • Fairbanks, AK

Learn more on page 3!



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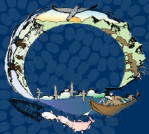


Mission

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

Sharon Hildebrand, Nulato
Chief/Chairman

Rhonda Pitka, Beaver
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,

I want to begin by extending my heartfelt prayers to everyone across our region who is experiencing loss. My prayers are with you, your families, and your communities during these difficult times. One of the most beautiful things about our culture is the way we come together to grieve, support one another, and lift us up. It is during these times that we are reminded of the strength of our people and the importance of caring for one another.

September was a busy month, and I was blessed to have the opportunity to spend some time out on the land with my family. This time is so important to me. It allows us to reconnect with our traditional ways of life, with the land, and with each other. Being out on the land reminds me of what matters most and the importance of protecting our way of life for future generations.

Over the past several months, my team and I have also been actively engaged in advocacy efforts on behalf of our Tribes. We have met with state commissioners, policymakers, members of our congressional delegation, and their staff to ensure that the priorities and concerns of our Tribes remain at the forefront of important discussions and decisions. These meetings provide valuable opportunities to strengthen relationships, share the needs of our communities, and advocate for the resources and support our people deserve. We will continue this important work to ensure that the voices of our Tribes are heard at every level of government.

Looking ahead, the General Election is coming up on November 3, and I encourage everyone to make a plan to participate. In August, our Executive Board passed a resolution supporting ranked choice voting. This November, Alaskans will vote on Ballot Measure 2, which would repeal Alaska's current open primary and ranked choice voting systems. We are encouraging people to vote no on this measure to keep ranked choice voting. I encourage you to learn about the measure and make your voice heard at the polls. Whether you choose to vote early or on Election Day, please take the time to make a plan and encourage your family and friends to do the same. Your voice matters, and your participation is important to the future of our communities.

We are also in full swing planning our first-ever TCC Fall Summit, which will take place November 12–13 in Fairbanks! We are excited to bring Tribal leaders and members together for this special event, which will feature a wide range of topics identified as important to our Tribes. These include Tribal governance, community development, funding and resources, economic opportunities, health and wellness, housing, and food security. Our goal is to create an opportunity for meaningful discussions, shared learning, and collaboration as we work together to address the priorities of our region. Please keep an eye out for more information in the coming weeks. We look forward to seeing you there!

As we move into the colder months, I encourage everyone to continue looking out for one another, checking in on our Elders, and supporting our families and neighbors.

Ana Maasee',

Sharon Hildebrand
Chief/Chairman
Tanana Chiefs Conference





Tanana
Chiefs
Conference

Fall Summit

November 12-13, 2026

8:30am - 5:00pm

8 Star Events Center • Fairbanks, AK

Save the date for TCC's Fall Summit, a two-day gathering bringing Tribal leaders and participants together to share knowledge, explore resources, and discuss opportunities and challenges impacting our Tribes and communities.

This year's Summit will feature main panel discussions and breakout sessions, allowing participants to engage more deeply in topics that are most relevant to their communities.

Sessions will explore topics of interest identified by our Tribes, including those related to Tribal governance,

community development, funding and resources, economic opportunities, health and wellness, housing, food security, land and natural resource stewardship, and community resilience.

Participants will have opportunities to ask questions, learn from subject matter experts, exchange ideas, and connect with others working on similar priorities throughout the TCC region.

Lunch will be provided both days. Shuttles will be available.

University Credit Opportunity

Participants may also have the opportunity to earn one university credit through University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) in connection with the Fall Summit. Advance registration and participation in a one-hour Zoom session at a later date will be required.

Additional information regarding registration, breakout sessions, travel, university credit, and the full Summit agenda will be shared as details are finalized.

Mark your calendar and stay tuned for more information!



ROOTED IN CULTURE • STANDING IN STRENGTH • STORYTELLERS

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY

Monday, October 12, 2026

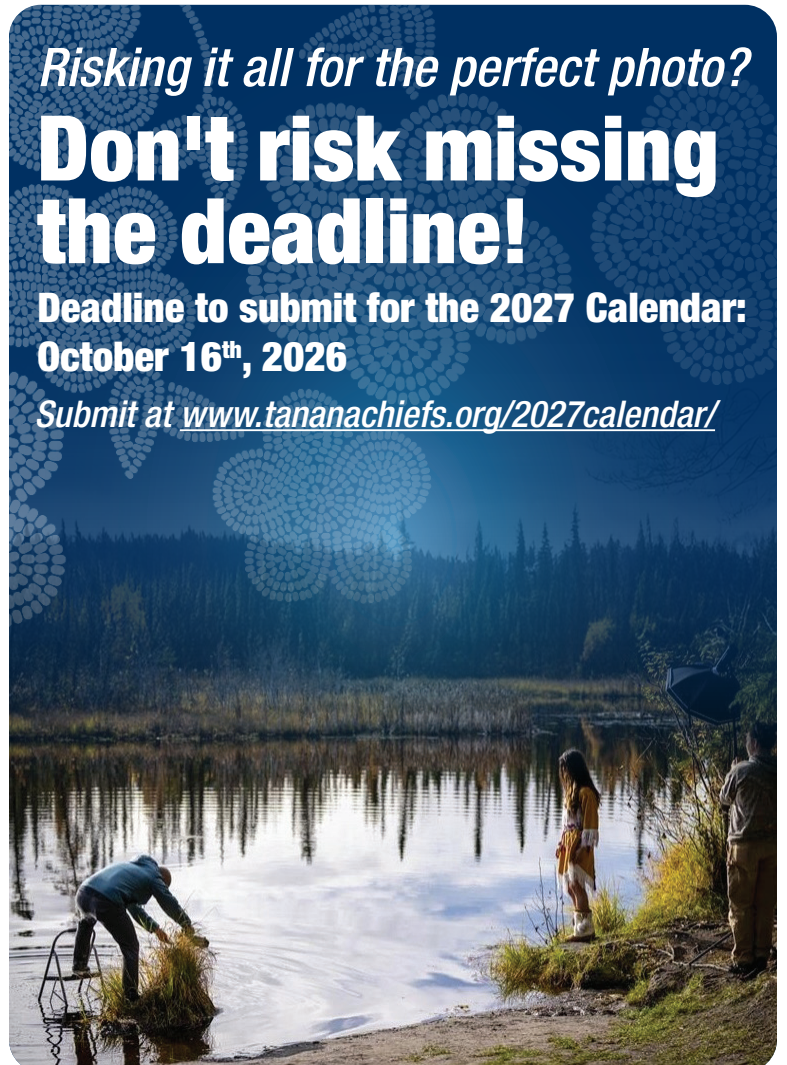
STEWARDS OF THE LAND • RESILIENT VOICES • CULTURE BEARERS

Risking it all for the perfect photo?

Don't risk missing the deadline!

Deadline to submit for the 2027 Calendar: October 16th, 2026

Submit at www.tananachiefs.org/2027calendar/





Someone who knows what the cold and the dark are like. Someone who gets it.”

Participants then joined together for a short walk to the Golden Heart Plaza and back. Despite the persistent rain, spirits were high with much laughter, remembrance, and tears throughout the walk. As the walkers returned to the pavilion, it was clear that the rain could not dampen the message they carried with them: together, we can remember those we have lost, support those who are struggling, and keep hope moving forward.

Walking to Raise Awareness in Northway

In Northway, about 30 people, including students as young as first grade through adults, turned out for their Suicide Prevention Walk.

Joetta Colquette, TCC’s Behavioral Health Clinical Associate II at the Upper Tanana Health Center, opened the event with the Musk Ox Story and shared the Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) sequence to remind participants how they can help someone experiencing a suicidal crisis access the help they need.

Participants then took to the road wearing T-shirts stating “You Matter” across the front and carrying signs with messages of love and support. Walkers shared that this was a meaningful event on a beautiful day.

Ana masee’ to the staff and volunteers who helped make these events possible, as well as everyone who turned up in all kinds of weather to support this important cause.

Walking for Support in Galena

In Galena, TCC’s Department of Wellness and Prevention partnered

with My Grandma’s House and Alaska Commercial Company (AC) to host a Suicide Prevention Awareness Walk alongside AC’s Customer Appreciation Day.

My Grandma’s House provided snacks, water and resources for participants. The event brought together 25 youth from kindergarten through 12th grade and 20 community members.

Participants wore “Walking in Memory” bibs to honor loved ones while walking together in support of hope, healing and connection.

TCC also hosted a Wall of Hope, where students and community members shared encouraging messages for anyone who may be struggling or feeling alone. Following the walk, TCC staff remained available to provide support and connect participants with resources.

Walking for Prevention in Nulato

In Nulato, the Nulato Tribal Council partnered with TCC Systems of Care and Andrew K. Demoski School to bring youth, Elders and community members together for a Suicide Prevention Awareness Walk.

The September 10 event brought together 25 youth, 29 young adults and adults, and five Elders. Participants wore blue and purple as they walked together to honor loved ones lost to suicide while raising awareness about suicide prevention services and resources.

The event was also an opportunity for the community to heal together and demonstrate the strength that comes from supporting one another. Nulato Tribal staff shared, “Maasee’ to our community, TCC System of Care,

and our Andrew K. Demoski School. We would also like to thank our subregion for participating; we are stronger together.”

Walking for Community in Huslia

In Huslia, community members gathered on September 10 for a Suicide Prevention Awareness Walk. Participants decorated T-shirts donated for the event with messages supporting suicide prevention and awareness.

The walk brought together 41 participants ranging in age from 1 to 92 years old, creating an opportunity for multiple generations of the community to walk together in support of hope, healing and connection. Participants also enjoyed door prizes donated by Karen Kallen-Brown and the Huslia Tribe.

Walking for Connection in Arctic Village

Arctic Village also joined communities across the region by hosting a Suicide Prevention Awareness Walk on September 11.

The Arctic Village walk continued the region-wide message that no one has to face difficult times alone and that every person has a role in building connection, hope and support within their community.

Help is Here

If you or someone you know is struggling with thoughts of suicide, help is here. Call or text the Alaska Careline at 988 or visit 988lifeline.org to chat with live support. TCC Behavioral Health is also here to help at 907-459-3800 (option 2 for after-hours care).



STATE OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS REGIONAL OFFICE BUILDING



REAA
Election Info



Municipal
Election Info

It's Time to VOTE!



2026 Municipal Elections: Tuesday, October 6th

2026 State and Federal Elections: Tuesday, November 3rd

2026 Elections: Municipal and Regional Educational Attendance Area

The October 6 Municipal and Regional Educational Attendance Area (REAA) elections are quickly approaching. These local elections determine who represents our communities on school boards, city councils, borough assemblies, and other local governing bodies.

Local elected officials make decisions that directly affect our communities. Borough Assembly members help establish borough-wide policies, services, budgets, and taxation; City Council members oversee municipal ordinances and operations; and School Board members help guide district education policy, budgets, and administration.

Alaska Native voices are an important part of the decisions that shape our communities. Make a plan to vote and make your voice heard on or before October 6!

REAA Elections

REAA elections are held in Alaska's unorganized boroughs and are administered by the Alaska Division of Elections. REAA school boards govern public school districts serving communities throughout rural Alaska.

The 2026 REAA Election is Tuesday, October 6, with school board seats up for election in districts across the state, including several communities in the TCC region.

Municipal Elections

The Fairbanks North Star Borough Regular Municipal Election will also be held Tuesday, October 6.

This year, voters in the Fairbanks North Star Borough will elect members of the Borough Assembly, School Board and Interior Alaska Natural Gas Utility Board, along with City Council seats in Fairbanks and North Pole. Municipal elections are nonpartisan.

Voters will also see three borough-wide propositions on the ballot addressing the Borough's tax revenue cap, the date of future regular municipal elections, and the method used to count ballots.

How Much Does My Vote Count?

Did you know that in 2018 in House District 1, Bart Lebon defeated Kathryn Dodge by one vote? Or that in 2020 in House District 27, Liz Snyder won her race against Lance Pruitt by 11 votes? And in 2016 in House District 40, in a Primary race between Dean Westlake and Ben Nageak, Westlake beat the incumbent Pruitt by just 8 votes, and went on to run in the General Election.

Alaskan voters have demonstrated the power to shift the balance with just a singular vote, which is why in our elections, every single vote counts.

Voting your values is using your voice in the most impactful way possible in Alaska, and we have a lot to fight for. Get out the Native vote this year and every year!

ALASKA ELECTION TERMS

Knowing election terms helps us understand the voting process and empowers us to be more confident voters!

Incumbent:

The person who currently holds an elected office and is running to keep that position.

Challenger:

A candidate who is running for an office that is currently held by someone else.

Unseated:

When a Challenger wins an election against an Incumbent, the Incumbent is unseated.

Open Primary:

Alaska's Primary Election system, where all candidates run in the same primary election - regardless of party affiliation. All registered voters can vote for any candidate.

Closed Primary:

Alaska's former election system, where voters could only vote for candidates from the political party they are registered with. In a closed primary, both the incumbent and the challenger are also registered with the same political party.

2026 General Election

Alaska's General Election will be held Tuesday, November 3. Voters will decide races for federal and state offices, including Governor and Lieutenant Governor, U.S. Senate, U.S. House of Representatives, and seats in the Alaska State Legislature.

The race for governor is one of the major statewide contests on this year's ballot. Because Governor Mike Dunleavy is completing his second consecutive term and is not seeking another term, Alaska voters will elect a new Governor and Lieutenant Governor in November.

The Governor serves as the State's Chief Executive and is responsible for administering state government, proposing budgets, signing or vetoing legislation, appointing leaders to state departments and boards, and working with the Alaska Legislature on statewide policy and funding priorities.

The deadline to register to vote or update your voter registration for the General Election is October 4. Early, absentee in-person, electronic transmission, and special-needs voting begins October 19.

Before voting, Alaskans are encouraged to review their sample ballot and learn about the candidates and issues that will appear on their ballot.

For official information about voter registration, candidates, sample ballots, polling locations, absentee voting, and election deadlines, visit the Alaska Division of Elections.

Early & Absentee In-Person Voting

Early and absentee in-person voting begins on October 19 and goes through Election Day. Early voting and absentee-in-person locations open beginning 15 days before Election Day, although specific locations, dates, and hours vary by community. Early voting locations verify eligibility when you vote; absentee-in-person ballots are placed in an affidavit envelope and later reviewed for voter eligibility.

FIND YOUR
EARLY VOTING
PLACE HERE!



Electronic/Online Delivery Absentee Voting

Alaska also allows voters to receive an absentee ballot electronically. This requires an email address, computer, and printer.

Applications open on October 19 and close on Election Day. After the application is received, voters generally receive their ballots and voting instructions within 24-48 hours.

Election Day

Election Day is Tuesday, November 3. Polls open at 7:00am and close at 8:00pm.

Make Your Plan to Vote

Whether you plan to vote early, absentee, or at the polls on Election Day, taking a few steps ahead of time can help make the voting process easier. Check your voter registration, review your sample ballot, learn about the candidates and ballot measures, and make sure you know where and when you plan to vote.

For the most current information about voting locations, absentee voting, sample ballots, and election deadlines, visit the Alaska Division of Elections: www.elections.alaska.gov/.

Important Dates to Remember

October 4: Deadline to register to vote or update your voter registration

October 19: Early and absentee in-person voting begins

November 3: Election Day; polls are open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

TCC Supports Protection of Ranked Choice Voting

TCC supports Alaska's open primary and ranked choice voting system and believes it gives Alaskans greater choice and a stronger voice in selecting the people who represent us.

In 2024, the TCC Executive Board approved a resolution supporting the system, citing its importance to Tribal and rural voters. Again in 2026, our Board reaffirmed our position on ranked choice voting in opposition to Ballot Measure 2, which will appear on the General Election ballot this year.

TCC believes open primaries give voters more opportunities to support candidates who represent their priorities, regardless of political party, while ranked choice voting encourages candidates to appeal to a broader range of Alaskans.

For Interior Alaska Native communities, representation matters. Decisions made by elected officials can have significant impacts on issues including subsistence, public safety, infrastructure, healthcare, and the well-being of rural communities. TCC supports an election system that provides voters with more choices, creates diversity, and encourages elected leaders to work collaboratively across political and geographic differences.

We support a NO vote on Ballot Measure 2!

Make A PLAN To Vote!



Building Partnership Around the Ambler Road Project

In August, Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) leadership and Tribal leaders met with a group of U.S. Senate staff members and representatives of the American Lands Project to share information about TCC, Interior Alaska Tribes, and Tribal perspectives on the proposed Ambler Road Project.

The group included legislative staff representing seven U.S. Senators from across the country, along with two board members from the American Lands Project, a Seattle-based nonprofit that connects policymakers with public lands and the communities who depend on them. The organization works to provide decision-makers with firsthand experiences of federally protected lands and opportunities to hear directly from the people connected to those places.

During the meeting, Chief Hildebrand provided an overview of TCC and its work with the 42 Tribes of Interior Alaska. The discussion also focused on the proposed Ambler Road, the concerns raised by TCC Tribes about its potential impacts on subsistence, wildlife, waterways, cultural resources, and Tribal communities, and how the visitors could support TCC's advocacy efforts.

Ana maasee' to everyone who took part in this meeting. We look forward to our continued partnership as we work together to protect our land.



Garden of Roses

December 2-4, 2026 • Fairbanks, AK

Tanana Chiefs Conference and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium are providing a free camp for Alaska Native girls ages 10-17 who are survivors of sexual assault.

This is an opportunity for young girls to heal from the trauma they have experienced.

Registration Deadline: Friday, October 23, 2026, or until filled.

Travel scholarships will be filled as registration requests are received. Please contact us early if you are interested.

Garden of Roses is a safe space to share feelings and be supported. Girls are accompanied by an adult parent or guardian who will participate in their own healing circles throughout the weekend.

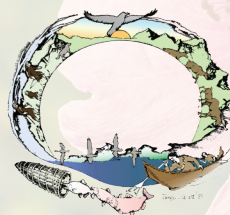
To register or learn more, contact:

Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
dvprevention@anthc.org • 907-729-3795

Roxanne Frank, Trauma & Grief Recovery Specialist
roxanne.frank@tananachiefs.org • 907-451-6682 ext. 3581



**ALASKA NATIVE
TRIBAL HEALTH
CONSORTIUM**



**Tanana
Chiefs
Conference**

This project was supported by Grant No. 15JOVW-23-GG-02855-CSSP, awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Chief Hildebrand Meets with State Commissioners

In September, TCC Chief/Chairman Sharon Hildebrand traveled to Anchorage to meet with several State of Alaska commissioners, continuing TCC's work to strengthen State-Tribal partnerships and advocate for the needs of Tribes and communities across Interior Alaska.

Chief Hildebrand met with Commissioner James Cockrell of the Department of Public Safety; Commissioner Tracy Dompeling of the Department of Family & Community Services; Major General Torrence Saxe of the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs; Commissioner Heidi Hedberg of the De-

partment of Health; and Commissioner Julie Sande of the Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development.

The meetings provided an opportunity to recognize the progress being made across state departments and thank commissioners and their teams for their continued partnership. In recent years, TCC has seen state leaders respond to feedback and make important changes to policies and operations that impact Tribes and rural communities.

Chief Hildebrand also discussed several priorities important to the TCC region, including public safety and the

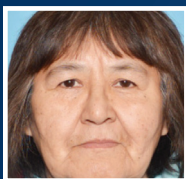
Village Public Safety Officer program, child welfare, emergency response, health and behavioral health services, public assistance, and opportunities for economic and community development.

Looking ahead to a new state administration, conversations also focused on maintaining the progress that has been made and identifying opportunities to continue working together.

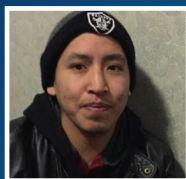
Strong relationships with state leadership are an important part of TCC's advocacy on behalf of our Tribes. TCC looks forward to continuing these partnerships and ensuring the needs, experiences and voices of Interior Alaska communities remain part of the conversation.



MISSING



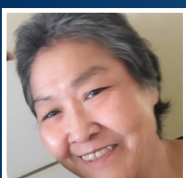
Lorraine Ginnis



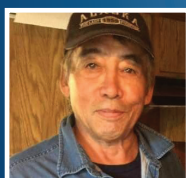
Willis Derendoff



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 for more information.



Paul Williams House: Helping Clients Build Independent Lives

Sometimes, meaningful progress starts with the everyday things we all do - preparing a meal, keeping a living space clean, managing a budget, making an appointment, or finding something enjoyable to do in the community.

At TCC's Paul Williams House (PWH), those everyday skills are part of a larger goal: helping adults living with serious mental illnesses build confidence, strengthen their independence, and create the lives they want to live.

PWH is a supportive living program that provides intensive case management and individual and group

Community and Recovery Support Services. Staff work alongside clients to develop independent living skills, navigate their mental health, coordinate healthcare appointments, and connect with resources that support recreation, socialization, and financial independence.

Life at PWH is intentionally structured to feel as normal as possible. Residents have household responsibilities, spend time in the community, and engage in regular outings with staff. They are encouraged to discover activities they enjoy and build connections beyond the house, including through Fairbanks North Star Borough

Parks and Recreation's Adaptive Recreation Program.

Success looks different for every client. Some may transition to living with family or into an apartment, while others may move into a group home or assisted living setting. Some continue receiving outpatient case management and participating in PWH groups after moving on.

Most importantly, the program meets clients where they are and supports them as they work toward their individual goals.

Talk with your provider today about whether PWH may be a good fit for you!

TCC Awarded \$2.5 Million to Advance Broadband

Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) has been awarded \$2.5 million through the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program to support efforts to improve broadband readiness and expand digital opportunities across the TCC region.

The funding will support broadband planning and design work in Ruby, Galena, Nulato, and Koyukuk, helping lay the groundwork for future high-speed internet infrastructure in these Yukon River communities. While the award does not fund broadband construction, the planning and design work is an important step toward preparing communities for future infrastructure investments.

The award will also support a digital workforce development program in Holy Cross, providing technology training, equipment, and stipends to

participants who complete the program. The initiative will help build local technology skills and create opportunities for residents to participate in an increasingly connected workforce.

In September, TCC's leadership and staff also had the opportunity to meet with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Administrator Arielle Roth and members of the NTIA team during their visit to Alaska. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss broadband needs, challenges, and opportunities throughout the TCC region.



Reliable internet access plays an increasingly important role in health-care, education, employment, and communication. TCC looks forward to continuing its work with communities and federal partners to advance broadband readiness and expand digital opportunities throughout Interior Alaska.

Senator Murkowski Visits Future Site of the Nenana Health and Wellness Complex

On September 3, Tanana Chiefs Conference's (TCC) Chief Sharon Hildebrand joined Nenana City Mayor Josh Verhagen, Chief of Nenana Donald Charlie, and 2nd Chief Brian-na Ketzler in welcoming Senator Lisa Murkowski and her staff to Nenana.

During the visit, leaders toured the site of the future Nenana Health and Wellness Complex and discussed the importance of the project to the community, as well as the continued collaboration needed to move it forward. The complex, which will include a new health clinic and fire station,

represents a joint effort between the Nenana Native Association, the City of Nenana, and TCC to strengthen health care and emergency services in the community.

Following the site visit, Senator Murkowski attended a community meeting at the Nenana Tribal Hall, where she heard directly from residents about local priorities and answered questions.

TCC appreciates Senator Murkowski taking the time to visit Nenana, see the project firsthand, and connect with community members and leadership.



TCC Expands Beneficiary Services Through Medical-Legal Partnership with Alaska Legal Services Corporation

Beginning November 1, Alaska Legal Services Corporation's Equal Justice Works Medical-Legal Partnership Attorney, Hannah Grage, will be on-site at the Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center to provide legal assistance to TCC beneficiaries who are referred by their healthcare providers.

The new Medical-Legal Partnership brings healthcare and legal services together to help address challenges that can impact the health and well-being of TCC beneficiaries. Areas of assistance may include Medicaid issues, wills, powers of attorney, advance healthcare directives, and other qualifying legal needs. By connecting beneficiaries with legal resources through their healthcare providers, the partnership helps address barriers that may otherwise affect access to care, services, and resources.

Beneficiaries must meet Alaska Legal Services Corporation's eligibility requirements to receive assistance. Eligibility is generally based on income and case criteria. More information can be found here: <https://www.alsc-law.org/eligibility/>.

Hannah will be at Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 9:00am – 12:00pm, and from 1:00pm – 4:00pm.



Bringing Nutrition to Elders Across Interior Alaska: How TCC Adapted the Shelf-Stable Meal Model for Rural Communities

By Paul Ostbloom, TCC's Home Care Manager

Providing nutrition services in Interior Alaska is unlike delivering meals anywhere else in the country. Vast distances, extreme weather, high transportation costs, and remote roadless communities all create challenges for Elders who wish to remain safely in their homes and villages.

Nutrition Is About More Than Food

Good nutrition plays a critical role in helping Elders remain healthy, independent, and connected to their communities. Nutrition programs help reduce food insecurity, support healthy aging, improve overall health outcomes, and provide regular wellness checks.

For many Elders, a meal delivery may also be one of their few consistent points of contact each week. These interactions help reduce social isolation while providing opportunities to identify additional support needs.

In July 2026 alone, TCC's Nutrition Services reached hundreds of Elders throughout the region. The program distributed **3,568 shelf-stable meals to 446 Elders**, while an additional **174 Elders received Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) food boxes** through a partnership with the Fairbanks Food Bank.

Lessons Learned During Challenging Times

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of flexibility in nutrition service delivery. Traditional congregate meal programs became increasingly difficult to operate in many rural communities due to limited facilities, small Elder populations, and staffing shortages.

TCC looked to successful models developed by organizations such as the North Star Council on Aging, Fairbanks Senior Center, Fairbanks Resource Center, local church groups, and the Alaska Air National Guard. These partnerships helped shape a new approach that emphasized preparedness, adaptability, and sustainability.

The result was an expanded shelf-stable meal program designed specifically for the unique realities of rural Alaska.

Building a Program Through Partnerships

Creating an effective shelf-stable meal program required collaboration at every level.

Village Tribal Administrations helped identify Elders in need, assisted with outreach, and provided critical local knowledge. Community organizations, church groups, volunteers, postal ser-

vices, and multiple TCC departments all contributed to the program's success.

The effort behind each meal box is significant. Every month, approximately **90 to 120 volunteers** help assemble, tape, label, and package meals. Together they prepare roughly **15 pallets of shelf-stable meals** for shipment throughout Interior Alaska.

This community-wide effort demonstrates how much can be accomplished when organizations and volunteers work toward a common goal of supporting Elders.

Selecting Meals for Rural Alaska

Choosing appropriate meal components involves more than simply purchasing food.

Items must be nutritionally balanced, shelf-stable, easy to prepare, durable enough to withstand long-distance transportation, and affordable. TCC sources products through vendors such as Amazon, Costco, and approved nutrition suppliers to ensure meals meet program standards while remaining practical for storage and use in remote communities.

Every meal component is carefully selected to provide reliable nutrition that can be stored safely and available when Elders need it most.





Overcoming Logistics Challenges

Once meals are assembled, the next challenge begins: getting them to communities across Interior Alaska.

The distribution process includes ordering supplies, assembling meal kits, packaging shipments, and coordinating delivery with village partners. Transportation methods may include USPS shipping, Limited Overland Route (LOR) services, and local community coordination.

Weather delays, seasonal transportation changes, and freight limitations require flexibility and constant communication. Success often depends on careful planning and strong relationships with local partners.

Community Partnerships Make the Difference

TCC's strongest asset is its partnership with village communities.

Village Tribal Administrations assist with Elder identification, outreach, eligibility verification, and communication with participants. Their local knowledge helps ensure services reach Elders efficiently and effectively.

These partnerships create stronger local ownership, improve program responsiveness, and help the program adapt to changing community needs.

A Comprehensive Nutrition System

No single nutrition program can meet every Elder's needs.

TCC uses a combination of services that includes:

- **Home-delivered meals** that provide regular nutrition support and wellness checks.
- **Congregate meal programs** that encourage social engagement and community participation.
- **Shelf-stable meals** that enhance emergency preparedness and increase access in remote communities.

Together, these programs form a comprehensive nutrition system designed to support Elders under a wide range of circumstances.

Supporting Family Caregivers

Strong caregiver support is also a key component of healthy aging.

Nutrition assistance can reduce household food costs, ease financial stress, improve food security, and help caregivers focus on supporting aging family members. Through opportunities available under Title VI Part C and other aging services programs, eligible caregivers can access additional support resources that strengthen family caregiving networks.

When caregivers are supported, Elders benefit as well.

Balancing Innovation and Compliance

As nutrition programs evolve, TCC continues to balance innovation with federal requirements.

Programs must comply with Title III and Title VI nutrition standards while maintaining accurate data collection, participant eligibility verification, reporting requirements, and nutritional guidelines.

Maintaining this balance ensures accountability while preserving the

flexibility needed to respond to local village needs.

Food Creates Connection

While meal delivery provides important nutrition, the impact extends far beyond the food itself.

Nutrition programs foster socialization, wellness monitoring, cultural connection, community participation, and the ability for Elders to age in place. Whether through a congregate meal gathering, a delivery visit, or caregiver engagement, each interaction helps strengthen the social fabric of a community.

For many Elders, these connections are just as important as the meal itself.

Looking Ahead

The success of TCC's shelf-stable meal program demonstrates the value of flexibility, partnership, and community-driven solutions.

Moving forward, TCC will continue working to:

- Expand nutrition access across the region
- Strengthen emergency preparedness efforts
- Increase caregiver support services
- Explore traditional food partnerships
- Enhance Elder engagement opportunities
- Improve long-term program sustainability

By combining innovation with strong community partnerships, TCC remains committed to helping Elders throughout Interior Alaska maintain their health, independence, and connection to the communities they call home.



Circle of Protection: The Public Safety Dispatch

Protect Your Home: Use Lithium-Ion Batteries Safely

By Nathan Becker, TCC Regional Public Safety Officer

An increasing number of the devices we use are powered by lithium-ion batteries, and as their use increases, so do the number of fires caused by them. This article will share a few simple practices you can use to greatly reduce the chances of fire developing in your home from lithium-ion batteries.

The Hidden Power in Your Home

- Lithium-ion batteries store massive energy in compact, portable forms. For this reason, they are found in many modern electronics, including smartphones, laptops, and e-bikes.
- Because these batteries use flammable electrolytes, damage or improper charging can lead to thermal runaway, where heat spreads between cells and triggers rapid, toxic fires.

Buy Smart and Stay Certified

- Always purchase batteries and chargers that are listed by a nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as UL, ETL, or CSA, to ensure they meet rigorous safety standards.

- Avoid the temptation of cheap, off-brand chargers, as they often lack the essential protection circuitry needed to prevent overcharging or overheating.

The Rules of Safe Charging

- Only use the original, manufacturer-approved charging cable for your specific device to prevent damage and heat stress.
- Always charge on a hard, flat, and non-combustible surface like a desk or bare floor. Never charge under pillows, on beds, or on couches, which trap heat and increase the risk of ignition.
- Once a device is fully charged, unplug it promptly to avoid unnecessary battery stress.

Charging Large Devices and Extreme Environments

- Large-format batteries found in e-bikes, scooters, and power tools should be charged outdoors whenever possible, away from doors and windows, to ensure that if a fire occurs, it does not trap occupants inside.

curs, it does not trap occupants inside.

- Avoid charging in extreme temperatures; bring cold batteries to room temperature before charging, and never charge in hot, enclosed environments to prevent internal failure.

When to Stop Using a Battery

- Stop using your device immediately if you notice strange odors, smoke, unusual heat, swelling, leaking, or popping noises.
- If a battery shows these signs, move it to a safe, isolated area if possible and contact your local emergency services; do not attempt to use or repair damaged batteries.

Learn More from Your VPSO

During National Fire Prevention Week, October 5-11, TCC's Village Public Safety Officers (VPSOs) will be visiting schools and communities to talk about the hidden dangers of lithium-ion batteries. Reach out to your VPSO or Tribal office for more information about when your visit will take place.

Whitney Paolino Named Wellness & Prevention Director

Whitney Paolino has stepped into the role of Wellness & Prevention Director at Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC), bringing more than a decade of experience serving TCC and its communities.

A lifelong Alaskan, Whitney grew up in North Pole and comes from a family with roots throughout Alaska. Her mother's family is from Nome and Ruby, with ties to Tanana. These connections have given Whitney a deep appreciation for the people, communities, and culture that make Alaska home.

Whitney began her career with TCC in 2014 as a Medical Assistant Intern. Since then, she has served in multiple roles across the organization, gaining experience in different areas of healthcare and learning from the people and communities TCC serves.

In her new role, Whitney hopes to strengthen proactive approaches to health and well-being throughout the TCC region. Her vision includes promoting health education, healthy Indigenous lifestyles, early prevention, and culturally grounded wellness practices.

Outside of work, Whitney is a wife and proud mother of two, Landon and McKenna. She is also a dedicated hockey fan, enjoys traveling, and is a dog lover who has three dogs of her own.

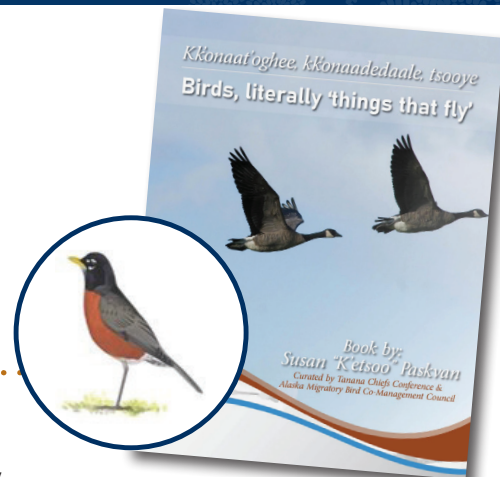
TCC welcomes Whitney to her new role and looks forward to the work ahead to support wellness and prevention across our communities.





Bird of the Month: The Robin

This article is from Kk'onaat'oghee, kk'onaadedaaale, tsooye (Birds, literally 'things that fly'), a project of the TCC Migratory Bird Regional Co-Management Council and is a compilation of the Koyukon people's rich history and personal stories that truly show the deep relationship with migratory birds that the Alaska Native people of the TCC region hold.



Fast Facts About Robins

Denaakk'e: Delk'ehoo, delk'ooahaa (U), kaalnoy (L), bel onh hooldloye

Common: Robin red breast

Scientific Names: *Turdus migratorius*

Important Characteristics: Does much foraging on the ground, running, and pausing on open lawns; apparently locates earthworms by sight

Habitat/Description: Lives in woodlands, suburban backyards, parks, and grasslands with shrubs. Robins can be found year-round in the continental United States, and some migrate north to spend summers in Alaska.

Elder's Stories

Late Alda Frank of Galena sang the song but said that the robin doesn't sing it plainly now. She said her late father (Chief Henry of Huslia) used to say that the robin is changing its ways because it is learning the white people's ways. He said the robin only sings parts of the song now. The late Benedict Jones stated that the robin isn't singing its full song.



Origin Story

Dotson' Sa Ninin' Atltseen, 'Great Raven Who Shaped the World'. In this origin story, there was to be a great flood. Great raven arranged for pairs of all the animals, birds, and insects to board a raft. The seagull and robin were a big help in building the raft. After the flood, raven and seagull took off in opposite directions to look for land, to no avail. He asked the water animals to dive deep to look for land. Slowly, they brought back up mud, in which they made land and rivers. At first, he made the rivers flow in two directions, but that was too easy, so he changed it so they only flow in one direction. Then great raven created people, first out of rock, then clay so that they only live once. During the *K'edon ts'ednee* times, all of the animals were able to talk like people. Once he made people, the animals started being animals.

In the tenth story in the *Ketetaalkkaanee* series, *Sooge*, Marten, the traveler *Betotoh* comes upon a man who realizes he is following someone. Both the man and *Betotoh* go in circles as they continue to see the tracks left by *Betotoh*. The other man decides to snare him. *Betotoh* hears him talking away so he decides to play a trick on him by taking off his marten skin parka and stuffing it with rotten birch. *Betotoh* turns himself into a hawk owl and watches the man, laughing at the marten who has been fooled. The man, talking as if he were talking to many people, says he will roast the marten he caught. He makes a fire and sticks many skewers in the ground around the fire. He then goes to the spruce trees and creates a place to relieve himself. All set, he starts to cut into the marten, but only birch falls out. It is for this reason that when people tease each other's, they say "*Onts'aa k'etleedzode k'etltanh*." 'just like a hawk owl'. Today, the raven teases the hawk owl as it flies. The *delk'ehoo*, robin, teases it by flying towards it as if to hit it, then flies off again. The *zuhge*, camp robber, does this as well. They do this because the *k'etleedzode* teased the marten man.

Robin Song

Dodo selenh "k'oolkkoy ts'eege' teelzoot teelzoot." selnee, selnee. Hee Hee! (Yukon River version)
 Dodo selenh "k'oolkkoy ts'eege' teelzuk teelzuk." selnee, selnee. Hee Hee! (Koyukuk River version)
 Dodo selenh "ch'oolkkoy ts'eeje' teelzuch teelzuch." selnee, selnee. Hee Hee! (Upper dialect version)
 My brother-in-law downriver around the bend told me to slurp down the pike guts. Hee Hee!

Allakaket and Hughes version

Version by the late Lydia Simon, Huslia

Dodo selenh "k'oolkkoy ts'eege', teelzook teelzook." selnee, selnee. Hee! Hee!
 Dodo selenh "k'oolkkoy ts'eege teelzuk, teelzuk, teelzuk." selnee, selnee. Hee! Hee!

Translation:

- Dodo - down around the bend
- selenh - my brother-in-law (man speaking)
- k'oolkkoy, k'oolkkoy (U) - pike
- ts'eege', ts'eeje' (U) - guts, intestines
- teelzoot (YR), teelzuk (KR) - slurp (eat something like spaghetti without chewing, just sucking it into your mouth and down)
- selnee - he tells me



Tanana
Chiefs
Conference

The Council Newsletter

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New Vacancies

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Fairbanks	Administrative Assistant I - Medical Services
Fairbanks	Behavioral Health Clinician I
Fairbanks	Residential Care Coordinator I
Fairbanks	Staff Occupational Therapist
Fairbanks	Executive Director of Tribal Government & Client Services
Fairbanks	Registered Nurse III - Orthopedic Clinic Advanced
Fairbanks	Registered Nurse II - Orthopedic Clinic
Fairbanks	Registered Nurse III - Surgery Clinic Advanced
Fairbanks	Registered Nurse II - Surgery Clinic
Fairbanks	Instructor - CHAP Training Center
Fairbanks	Community Health Aide Practitioner - CHAP Instructor
Fairbanks	Primary Care Deputy Medical Director
Fairbanks	Clinical RN
Fairbanks	Lead Pediatric Dental Assistant
Fairbanks	Biomedical Equipment Apprentice I
Fairbanks	Home Care Program Coordinator
Fairbanks	Tribal Justice Program Administrator
Fairbanks	RN Case Manager Advanced
Fairbanks	RN Case Manager
Fairbanks	Security Officer I
Hughes	Community Health Aide/Practitioner
Huslia	Community Health Aide/Practitioner
Koyukuk	Community Health Aide/Practitioner
Old Minto	OMFRC Camp Laborer
Region-Wide	Business Intelligence & Digital Solutions Analyst II
Stevens Village	Community Health Aide/Practitioner
Tok	Security Officer I
Village Subregion	Home Care Provider



Apply Online or Learn About Our Benefits!

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

JOBS LISTED WERE OPEN AS OF SEPTEMBER 25, 2026

Not Sure What Job is Right for You?

You Don't Have to Guess.

If you're Alaska Native or American Indian, apply through our 'General Posting for Alaska Native/American Indian Applicants.' Submit your resume once, and our Human Resources team will match you with jobs that fit your skills and experience.

Apply today at www.tananachiefs.org/careers.



UPCOMING EVENTS

**OCT
3**

Feeding Our Souls: An Indigenous Healing Event

11:00am - 4:00pm • Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center, Building A • Follow our social media for more information.

**OCT
12**

TCC Offices Closed

Indigenous Peoples Day

**OCT
16**

TCC Executive Board Meeting

8:30am - 5:00pm • Chief Peter John Tribal Building, 6th Floor Board Room

**OCT
18-22**

National Congress of American Indians

Palm Springs, CA • www.ncai.org/event/83rd-annual-convention-and-marketplace

**OCT
22-24**

Alaska Federation of Natives

Anchorage, AK • nativefederation.org/convention/

**NOV
12-13**

TCC Fall Summit

8 Star Events Center • Fairbanks, AK
More information to come.