

Nupuat



A quarterly publication of Chugachmiut, the tribal not-for-profit organization serving the Alaska Native peoples of the Chugach Region.

Spring 2024 Edition

The Nanwalek Basketball Team visited Chugachmiut recently.

Back (left to right): Daria Swenning (chaperone), Coach Alyssa Romanoff, Margareta Demas, Phontina Demas, Macarius Evans, Dmitri Kvasnikoff, Ashton Meganack & Coach Kevin Seville.

Front (l-r): Kenji Simmons, Jr., Alyson Seville, Royanna Berestoff, Hailey Hetrick, Emma Tanape & Shane Moonin.



Nanwalek Basketball Team, page 19

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Career Opportunities	2	Nourishing Snacks.....	13
State's New VPSO Division Director	3	Exercise and Brain Health	15
VPSO Program at Chugachmiut.....	3	Tribal Home Visiting	16
Forestry and Fire Program Update	4	Litnaurwik Education Department.....	17
Employee Spotlight – Robert Lacy	5	Employee Spotlight – Robert Tippetts	17
Employee Spotlight - Clay Hoyt.....	6	Employee Spotlight – Michael Horton.....	18
Jeremy Cook Earns CDL	6	Tobacco Prevention Support Group.....	19
Story Submissions.....	7	Employee Spotlight – Melodie Fair	19
Mandy Wood's Sobriety Journey	10	Nanwalek Basketball Team Visit.....	19
Housing Improvement Program.....	11	Contact Info and Board List	20
Health Services Division News.....	12		

Career Opportunities

Chugachmiut is a rapidly growing 501(c)(3) non-profit agency the Tribal consortium created to promote self-determination to the seven Native communities of the Chugach Region. We are seeking highly motivated, talented candidates to join us on our journey to excellence. At Chugachmiut, you not only start a job but a career that truly makes a difference in the lives of others. We offer robust benefits for full-time employees. Join our team!

Opportunities Throughout the Region

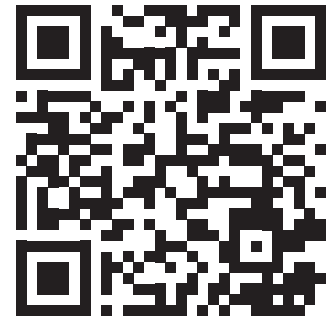
- Behavioral Health Cerner Specialist (Anchorage)
- Community Health Aide (CHA) Trainee (Tatitlek)
- Dental Assistant Itinerant (Any Regional Community)
- Dental Coordinator/Dental Assistant (Seward)
- Finance Division Director (Anchorage)
- Head Start Teacher Substitute Aide/Cook/Janitor (Nanwalek & Port Graham)
- Health Administrative Assistant (Chenega)
- Health Administrative Assistant Itinerant (Chenega & Port Graham)
- Health Administrative Assistant Part-time (Tatitlek)
- Health Benefits Specialist (Seward or Anchorage)
- HRIS Coordinator (Anchorage)
- Medical Director (Seward)
- Project Accountant Temporary (Anchorage)
- RN Case Manager (Seward)
- Starlink Satellite Dish Technician (Nanwalek & Port Graham)
- STEP Program Manager (Any Regional Community)
- Vehicle Service Specialist (Nanwalek, Port Graham, and Tatitlek)
- Village Advanced Practice Provider (Seward)
- Village Public Safety Officer (Nanwalek, Port Graham & Tatitlek)
- Youth Advocate (Any Regional Community)

Scan this QR code to apply and learn more about our openings.



Connect with us on

LinkedIn



2024 Fire Crew Recruitment

Join the 2024 Fire Crew in Kenai and be part of something extraordinary! We're looking for dedicated individuals to fill various positions on the Yukon Fire Crew and Denali Wildland Fire Module.

- Denali Module Leader
- Yukon Fire Crew Crewmember FFT2
- Yukon Fire Crew ICT5 Squad Boss
- Yukon Fire Crew Superintendent
- Yukon Fire Crew Assistant Superintendent

Chugachmiut has a hiring preference for qualified Alaska Native and American Indian applicants pursuant to P.L. 93-638 Indian Self Determination Act. For any questions, please reach out to the HR department at Employment@Chugachmiut.org. Browse and apply for openings on our website.

APPLY NOW

www.vscyberhosting.com/Chugachmiut

Introduction to New VPSO Division Director

The new Director of Village Public Safety Operations Division for the Department of Public Safety, **James Hoelscher**, reached out to introduce himself recently. He was recently appointed by Commissioner Cockrell, a champion for rural Alaska, a leadership role for which he feels grateful and humbled.

Mr. Hoelscher began his career in 1994 as a Village Police Officer for the City of Hooper Bay, progressing to a certified Officer and eventually becoming Chief of Police for the Hooper Bay Police Department in 1998. He joined the Association of Village Council Presidents Village Public Safety Officer Program in 2009, serving as a First Sergeant in Hooper Bay and as a trainer for VPSOs, VPOs, and TPOs.



James Hoelscher taken by Leonard Wallner.

Under legislation sponsored by Representative Bryce Edgemon, Mr. Hoelscher was one of only two Alaska VPSOs to receive firearms training from the Alaska State Troopers and to be an armed officer. In 2015, he was hired as an Investigator by the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development Alcohol and Marijuana Control Office and subsequently appointed the Enforcement Chief for AMCO.

Mr. Hoelscher and his wife, Teresa, have six children and two grandchildren. Rooted in their Yup'ik traditions and values, they live a subsistence lifestyle in Anchorage, where Mr. Hoelscher crafts traditional Yup'ik masks, hunting tools, and ulu knives, preserving their cultural legacy.

Having walked a mile in the shoes of VPSOs, Mr. Hoelscher understands the challenges of the terrain but also acknowledges it as one of the most rewarding experiences in his life. He says, "I know that all of you who serve as a VPSO have a heart full of grace and souls generated by love. Thank you for your selfless service for your communities and people of Alaska."

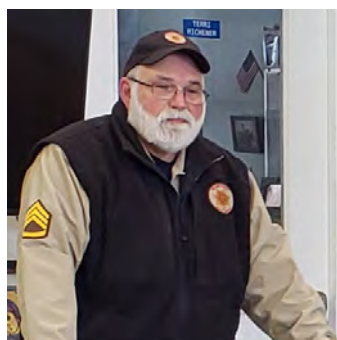
Learn more about the VPSO Program at <https://dps.alaska.gov/ast/vpso/home>.

VPSO Program at Chugachmiut

Village Public Safety Officers (VPSOs) play a vital role in providing public safety services, which include enforcing local ordinances and state laws. These officers undergo comprehensive training and education to effectively respond to emergencies such as fires, medical situations, and search and rescue operations. They work in partnership with local councils and the Alaska State Troopers. Meet our dedicated team below. Interested in becoming a VPSO in Nanwalek, Port Graham or Tatitlek? See details on page two.



Leonard Wallner
VPSO Coordinator



Kenneth Parker
VPSO of Chenega



Brandon Murphy
VPSO of Nanwalek

Forestry and Fire Program Update

Cama'i from the forestry and fire program as spring blooms around us! With summer on the horizon, our wildland fire program is gearing up for the upcoming blazes, while the forestry team is diligently planning this season's field projects.

Wildland Fire Recruitment

We are actively seeking candidates to join the Yukon and Denali Fire crews. Positions are filling up fast, so if you're up for the challenge of being a wildland firefighter, don't delay in submitting your application. Additionally, there are openings available to work with our hazardous fuels reduction crew, primarily stationed at the Kenai Peninsula Fire Camp throughout the season. For application details, please see page 2.

Forestry Program News

Our team is progressing with the allotment forest inventory project scheduled for this summer, including planned field trips to Nanwalek and Port Graham. Our goal is to wrap up the inventory project by fall of 2024. Recent accomplishments include the delivery of grant-funded logging equipment to Port Graham and the acquisition of a tree mulching track loader, enhancing our fuel reduction capabilities. A big congratulations to our fuels crew foreman, **Jeremy Cook**, for obtaining his CDL, a milestone that will significantly benefit our program (see page 6).

We've also expanded our technical capacity with three forestry staff members obtaining their FAA Part 107 drone pilot licenses this winter, bringing our total certified drone operators to four. The use of drones is poised to revolutionize how we monitor forest health, gather inventory data, support firefighting efforts, and contribute to community education and storytelling. We look forward to integrating drones into our work and developing opportunities for our communities to learn with us. Additionally, we're collaborating with the education program to develop a regional drone training program, aiming to bring this technology to our villages. Stay tuned for more details on this project.

In exciting community news, the Port Graham Corporation has invested in a sawmill and secured grant funding for training opportunities in sawmill operation. Interested Port Graham residents are encouraged to reach out to the Port Graham Corporation at info@portgraham.tech for more information.

Quyanaa for your continued support and interest in the Forestry and Fire Program. If you have any questions feel free to email Staff Forester **Clay Hoyt** at forestry@chugachmiut.org.



Chugachmiut's Jaylon Lacy and BIA foresters Casey Sigg and Jesse Wooten find their way to the boat after a day of timber cruising in the Port Graham area. Photo by Clay Hoyt.



Forester Clay Hoyt flies a drone to capture imagery of Fuel Break Treatments on the Kenai Peninsula. Photo by Nathan Lojewski.

Employee Spotlight – Robert Lacy

Robert Lacy celebrated a remarkable 20-year milestone with Chugachmiut in 2023.

His journey in wildland fire began at the age of 18 when he joined the North Star Fire Crew based out of Ft. Wainwright by Fairbanks in 1994. Following this, he became a member of the Midnight Sun Hotshot crew, spending four seasons with them and rising to the role of squad boss and qualified Crew boss during his final year (1995-1998).

While stationed in Fairbanks, Robert concurrently pursued his education at UAF but gradually shifted his focus towards his firefighting career. In 2000, after a brief hiatus in 1999 to prioritize family responsibilities, Robert returned to firefighting, joining Chugachmiut for a season with the Denali Hotshot crew. Subsequently, in 2001, Robert diversified his work, engaging in construction and truck driving on the North Slope, following his wife Doreen's acceptance of a teaching role in Nuiqsit.

Feeling drawn back to firefighting in 2003, Robert reapplied for Chugachmiut's Denali Hotshot crew, securing the Assistant Superintendent position. Transitioning to the Yukon Fire Crew in 2005, he initially served as the crew boss with support from his former Saw Boss, Steve Boatman. Despite fluctuations in the crew's composition over time, it continues its operations, now entering its 19th fire season.

Robert is a key representative of the Wildland Fire and Fuels Program. The program now includes three crews, two fire crews and one project crew. It's Robert's organizational skills, wildland fire qualifications and extensive experience, including the ability to train crew members up to the wildland fire crew boss qualification, that has served as the nucleus of Chugachmiut's program.

Robert's journey to his current position as Wildland Fire Manager & Safety Officer required extensive training and sacrifice, often involving prolonged periods away from home during the summer months. His current national qualifications include Task Force Leader and Incident Commander Type 4. Robert has undergone comprehensive training in various aspects of wildland firefighting, including incident management, incident command systems, firefighter skills, wildland fire behavior, air operations, urban interface operations, crew leadership, firing operations, incident business management, and leadership development. In his current role, he leads the Yukon Fire Crew of 20 and Denali Wildland Fire Module Crew of 10 and the Project Crew of 10 personnel.

In his free time, Robert enjoys spending time with his family, along with playing basketball (although less frequently now) and watching football as a devoted Raiders fan.



Robert Lacy at a fire



Robert Lacy



Robert Lacy (bottom row at right) with the fire crew during the ground breaking of the Kenai Peninsula Fire Camp

Employee Spotlight - Clay Hoyt

Clay Hoyt joined the Chugachmiut team as staff forester in 2018. He was born and raised in the town of Charlo, located on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana. He first came to Alaska after high school to work as a commercial fisherman in Cook Inlet, the Gulf of Alaska, and the Bering Sea. He eventually pursued a career in forestry and worked seasonal jobs in timber harvest systems and recreation before landing his first permanent job as a field forester for Northwest Management, Inc. based in Moscow, ID. Before joining Chugachmiut, he was a member of the Alaska-based Pioneer Peak Hotshot Crew in 2017.

Clay holds a bachelor's degree in forestry from the University of Montana. In 2023, he earned a master's degree in environmental science from Alaska Pacific University in 2023, where he developed a drone-based tool for early detection of spruce beetle infestations using multi-spectral imagery. Beyond his professional life, Clay is actively involved with the forestry community as the chair of the Cook Inlet Chapter of the Society of American Foresters.



Clay Hoyt with his two children, Eleida and Will. Courtesy photo.

Clay is instrumental in supporting Chugachmiut's forestry projects from the fire and fuels program to forest inventory and research among many other projects. Recently, he has been focused on developing forestry tools with drones for tasks like gathering forest and fuels inventory, monitoring forest health, and collecting high resolution imagery. His favorite part of the job is working with a small team to solve complex forestry problems and visiting the communities and people in our region.

Driving Toward Opportunity: Jeremy Cook Earns CDL

Jeremy Cook is a Project Squad Foreman for the Yukon Fire Crew and serves as the Fire Camp superintendent for Chugachmiut. He is from Nanwalek and is married and is a proud father of three and grandfather of one. After high school, Jeremy entered the workforce, exploring various roles until 2004 when he joined the fuels crew established by Chugachmiut that summer. Finding his passion in this line of work, he returned in 2005. After pursuing vocational training and exploring other job opportunities, Jeremy rejoined the fuels crew as a crewmember in 2009. He assumed the role of fuels crew foreman in 2013 until 2016 when it merged into the Yukon Fire Crew, becoming the Project Squad, where he has been since.

Jeremy pursued his Class A CDL training initially to meet the needs of Chugachmiut's equipment transportation requirements. He attended the training through the Kenai Peninsula Driving Instruction. However, he also recognized the potential for additional job opportunities outside the fire season or upon retirement. He enthusiastically encourages others to pursue vocational training, emphasizing the hands-on learning experience and the broad demand for skills acquired through such programs. He says, "I would recommend to anyone that is thinking of trying it out, whatever your intended certificate may be, to go for it, because no matter where you end up, in life, you'll have that certificate to fall back on."



Jeremy Cook completed Class A CDL training. Photo by Kenai Peninsula Driving Instruction.

Chugachmiut Vocational Support and Scholarship Opportunities

Interested in finding out about vocational support and scholarship opportunities with Chugachmiut? Contact **Donna Malchoff**, Social Services Coordinator, at (907) 562-4155 or donnam@chugachmiut.org.

Story Submission from Chugach Regional Writers

Flying High By Victoria Clark

As I get ready to ascend yet again into the confines of the small plane that will take me across the short distance to the northern paradise and warmth of this village community, I am filled with so many thoughts.

Excitement takes me as my mind races through all the things I must do and want to do when I reach my destination. A slight feeling of apprehension teases my mind, as I know with cars, trains and other moving vehicles, hazards do exist. Thoughts of the icy water, if we should go down. I have heard it feels like hundreds of needles prodding the skin. I shiver a second, as I briefly feel fear, but know it is in God's hands. Not that this is how I want to go. I would rather go in my warm bed with my family around me. But then the fear went as quickly as it came. I have done this many times in the past few years but there is always the "What if?" before getting on the plane.

After heaving myself in and fighting with the seatbelt, I relax in the exhilaration flying brings me. I close my eyes as I feel the plane gain speed and then the wheels leave the ground. I don't have to open my eyes to know we have lifted off. I know by the absence of the sound of tires rolling across the pebble strewn ground, and then we rise higher. I open my eyes to pierce the sunlit sky looking at the shimmering water below, its changing patterns of colors showing its different depths and revealing mysteries unseen when viewed from below. Ahead are the mountains: bright, powerful, and green with their summer finery that is still scattered with glistening white from winter's strong arms surrounding her shoulders.

Water lacing silver patterns of intricacy down her steep sides. Beauty is too subtle a word to describe her magnificence. Tiny dots on the water that are boats, carrying fishermen or passengers looking at the scenery from a different vantage. My mind drifts over the sights and the flight feels too short, as I see the village and landing strip ahead. We start to descend to the short air strip, water on three sides and rocks at the other end.

A different excitement catches me. We descend and the wheels hit the ground with a crunching sound and a feeling of speed sends a shiver through me. We stop and the door opens as again I close my eyes briefly and take a deep breath in, relishing the spicy scent of salt, spruce and flowers. It fills my body.

Thoughts of another beach flash through my mind; the beach I played on as a little girl. The screeching sound of seagulls and the intense call of an eagle makes me smile. I see friends waiting, hugs abound, and I feel the warmth of the village. I see the colors and sounds of laughter and bustling of work and play going on. I stepped down out of the plane to find the car waiting. I wave to the villagers and get a warm hug from those that know me. I look back to the plane that will be returning in a few days to take me up into the changing sky again, to bring me back to the other side, where my other family will be waiting for my return.



Quyanaa to **Mandy Wood** for sharing her art to accompany this article.

Story Submission from Chugach Regional Writers

Isumaq By Nancy Yeaton

My partner Lars was given the Sugt'stun name of Suunaraq. The original Suunaraq, of long ago, had a gimpy knee and it gave him a bit of gait as he walked around the village with his dog. Lars used to go crabbing in the winter around the Bering Sea and would be gone from October to March. Once, while Lars was away, my brother-in-law from Port Graham called to let me know he was holding onto something quite small and furry. He said he had just gotten a cute little puppy. This was before social media came into our lives and there was no way to view this puppy other than to stand there and listen to him on the other end of the phone making cute little puppy noises. At this point, I was totally piqued to see this little furry pup.

Our hometown of Nanwalek, is nestled next to its companion village of Port Graham on the southern tip of Alaska's Kenai Peninsula. No roads lead to our communities. When we leave the village, we fly to Homer in a small plane. This scenic flight over water takes about 15 minutes.

First There Was Rosie

Well, Richard, my brother-in-law sent the puppy by air on the five-minute hop between villages. Oh, she was cute, perfect little black curls and brown quagluk (eyebrows). She was so little. I would hold her, talk to her, and could not wait to tell Lars that we have a pet. After talking with my favorite cousin, Pauline (who also happened to have the Sugt'stun name Suunaraq) about the new little puppy, she shared that the original Suunaraq had a dog named Rosie. That is how the new little puppy got her name.

Rosie was such a perfect lady, held herself in high regard and never showed off as she observed what was going on around her. That summer Rosie went into heat. I wanted her to mate with this beautiful white Pomeranian from Port Graham, a beautiful dog belonging to one of Lars' cousins. After getting an okay from his cousin, Rosie was sent to Port Graham for breeding.

Then Came Isumaq

Rosie had seven puppies and one puppy was totally white. We were ecstatic! Lars often woke up throughout the night, old habits of a fisherman, and he would check on the puppies. The white one was the tiniest one of the bunch. He was struggling to survive. Lars held the little pup, massaging its chest until the puppy regained itself. This was the puppy we were keeping for sure! He was beautiful, all white and very dark eyes, Lars thought Isumaq was a good name for him, Isumaq means raisin in Sugt'stun. He was a beauty. Everyone loved him. My granddaughter came to visit quite often just to hold Isumaq. He was a mellow puppy. We were head over heels for this one. Rosie was happy to have her son romping and running around with her.



Nancy Yeaton's granddaughter, Alexis Romanoff, and dog, Isumaq.

After Isumaq was old enough to get neutered, we sent him over to the veterinarian. Soon he was sent home to rest and recover. We placed a cone on him to prevent him from licking his wound. Eventually, I felt comfortable enough to let Isumaq run outside with Rosie.

My daughter stopped by for lunch. We were chatting and snacking, Rosie was in the back yard, running back and forth barking. I opened the window to tell her to settle down. She kept barking, trying her hardest to tell me something. Then, the phone rang. On the other end was the ACS telephone repairman who was in Nanwalek for the day. "Nancy, there is a small white dog laying in the ditch."

Story Submission from Chugach Regional Writers

Isumaq By Nancy Yeaton, *continued*

My daughter and I ran out, there he was, beautiful white fluffy fur covered with mud, leaves, grass and blood. I ran back to the house and got a big blue towel in which to wrap Isumaq. As I carried him into the house, Isumaq looked at me with those raisin eyes, breaking my heart. I laid him down and called the Homer vet. She said, "Bring him over right away." This was an emergency.

Painful Flight to Homer

We boarded the next Smokey Bay flight to Homer. It was so painful for him as I gently cradled him close to me. This was a tough flight! We got to the Homer Vet's office. I told her there had been a dog fight. Isumaq got into the middle of it. Not a good idea considering he was little and had a wound from his surgery.

They took Isumaq into an exam room. After what seemed like an eternity, the doctor returned and motioned for me to follow her into the back. Isumaq had been sedated. I stood by with tears in my eyes as I listened to the verdict. She told me that Isumaq's back was broken! I had two options. We could go "out states" to get his back fixed, which would cost money. The second option was to euthanize Isumaq. This made me cry so hard! We didn't have thousands of dollars for a long trip like that.

Look at him, I thought, just beautiful, white and those eyes! I cried for him, for everything that was going on in my life at the time. The emotions were like climbing Mount Denali. The tears were unstoppable. It was as if I had no control over the release of pain!

Isumaq Forever

Nevertheless, beautiful Isumaq came into our lives just for mere seconds. Some people have told me that a beloved pet can sense when something is not right with their owner and would even die for them. Wouldn't you know, in January Lars ended up with a stroke, a light one, the beginning of heart problems. It may sound crazy, but I like to think Isumaq died so Lars could live. Isumaq will always be one that broke our hearts. Loving pets is like loving another human being.

Chugach Regional Writers comprises five members who gather weekly to share their writing and receive feedback. They enthusiastically welcome new members who are dedicated to the craft of writing and aspire to publish their work. Meetings take place every week, and newcomers are encouraged to join. For more information, please reach out to Sandra Kleven at sandrak@Chugachmiut.org.

Quyanaa to **Victoria Clark** and **Nancy Yeaton** for sharing their short stories. A renowned culture bearer of the Chugach Region, Nancy has developed a rich, multimedia, ethnography based on Sugpiak heritage, language and traditional knowledge. She has developed culturally based curriculum for use in classrooms throughout Alaska. She is a founding member of Chugach Regional Writers. She practices traditional methods, creating sewing needles from bone, twine from local plants, dyes from plants and berries.

Victoria Clark was born in Suffolk County, NY, during a blizzard and was raised in the small town of Bayport, NY. In 1987, she moved to Alaska, and her home is now on the Kenai Peninsula. She loves the outdoors and frequently embarks on long drives to observe the abundance of wildlife surrounding her remote home. She also has a passion for art, music and reading. Clark holds a master's degree in Mental Health Counseling from Walden University and is a licensed professional counselor, working for a tribal organization. As a member of the Chugachmiut Regional Writers, she recently read two new essays during an online writing presentation.

Mandy Wood's Sobriety Journey

Born and raised in rural Alaska, **Mandy Wood** is the mother of five and has been married to Nicholas for 18 years. With over four years of sobriety under her belt, she attributes her journey to her husband, who has been her rock, and a tragic loss in 2019 that served as a wake-up call. Reflecting on her path to sobriety, Mandy shares, “I sobered up fast, first out of fear then out of choice. I first admitted to God, myself, and another human being I had a problem. God took my hand as I started climbing the mountain of sobriety. I wanted to be present for my kids. I had to dig deep within me to find the answers to why I drank. It took a lot of forgiveness. I think forgiving myself was the hardest thing and it took acceptance.”



Mandy Wood. Courtesy photo.

To maintain her sobriety, Mandy utilized various tools such as AA meetings, Chugachmiut Llangcarwik Recovery Camps, daily readers, and YouTube videos. She has also found solace and healing in the arts, particularly writing and painting, since high school. Currently engaged in her second writing group, known as the Chugach Regional Writers, she finds great value in sharing her stories. Alongside her literary pursuits, Mandy has explored various hobbies through her sobriety journey, including participating in two Disability Art Shows. With five years dedicated to her recovery journey, marked by attendance at five recovery programs, she has found her true calling lies in this realm.

Every day, Mandy practices exposure therapy by dipping in the ocean to help combat depression. Inspired during her third recovery camp in Seward in March 2023 by a fellow camper's ocean dips, Mandy, accompanied by **Jim Miller** and **Sharon Whytal**, embarked on her own transformative journey at Lowell Point. Immersing herself three times, each dip held a specific purpose: shock, healing, and support for her fellow recovering alcoholics.



Mandy Wood and her daughter, Juanita. Courtesy photo.

Emerging from the water, Mandy felt a profound shift within herself, shedding the weight of depression and suicidal thoughts accumulated over her three years of sobriety. Motivated to address her mental health, she embraced cold exposure therapy, starting with snowy sessions in her front yard and progressing to daily ocean dips by May. These rituals, often shared with her daughter, became sources of strength and joy, offering holistic healing and a deeper connection to nature. Despite its rarity in her regional culture, Mandy advocates for ocean dipping, sharing its transformative impact on her well-being, from mental clarity to sustained vitality.

“Life can come at you like waves sometimes. You have to make that choice to sink or swim, and I choose to swim. I knew I wanted to do better and be better. My advice to anybody seeking sobriety is progress over perfection. Trust God, your higher power has got you. Keep going, stand back up, keep fighting; it gets easier. And my favorite motto: DO IT ANYWAY!” – Mandy Wood

Mandy Wood's Sobriety Journey, continued

Mandy nurtures a yearning to learn about her Sugpiaq identity and language, finding fulfillment and pride in her cultural heritage. Singing Gg'auí at a recovery graduation filled her heart with pride, motivating her to continue learning more about her culture and language. She proudly declares, "I am a proud Sober Sugpiaq! I feel like living sober is my way to honor the lives of people we've lost and live a little extra."

One of Mandy's biggest life challenges was overcoming self-destruction. Feeling beyond repair and waiting for someone to save her, she had to step out of her own way and start seeking happiness and validation within herself. Mandy derives profound joy from witnessing personal growth in others. Recently, she joined the Chugachmiut team as an Addiction Counseling Trainee within her community, feeling deeply honored to serve her people in this capacity.

About Llangarwik Recovery Camp

The Llangarwik Recovery Camp is a haven for individuals seeking to make positive changes in their lives. Whether facing challenges related to substance abuse or grappling with mental health issues such as anxiety or depression, our camp provides a supportive and empowering environment for transformation. If you know someone who could benefit from this life-changing experience, we invite you to refer them to us. Your gesture could be the catalyst for a new beginning. We will announce our future camps in our newsletter and on social media.

If you would like to participate in a future camp, please contact **Victoria Clark** at 907-252-3343 or Victoriac@Chugachmiut.org or Eydie Flygare at 907-602-8644 or eydief@chugachmiut.org.

Chugachmiut Housing Improvement Program

Applications are now open for the Chugachmiut Housing Improvement Program (HIP), a need-based initiative funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Designed to address housing challenges among Native American and Alaskan Native families, the HIP provides assistance for repairing or renovating existing homes, as well as support for purchasing new ones. Priority is given to disadvantaged individuals, including the elderly, disabled, low-income families with dependent children, veterans, and those living in overcrowded or unsafe conditions.

How do you qualify?

- Be a member of a Federally Recognized Tribe
- Reside within the Tribal Service area
- Meet whole household income requirements
- Be able to show the need for housing
- Have no other resources available for housing
- Has not already gotten HIP funds for housing
- Did not acquire housing from Federal Programs in the past 20 years

Services offered through HIP include minor repairs (up to \$7,500), major repairs or renovations (up to \$60,000), replacement homes or new housing (for modest homes), and down payment assistance (up to \$75,000). For more information and to access the application, visit www.chugachmiut.org/capacity-building/land-use-planning or contact **Georgina Sumstad** at georgina@Chugachmiut.org. The deadline for applications is **November 12, 2024**. Scan the QR code at right for the link to the application and more information.



Health Services Division News

Respiratory season continues with cases of RSV, Influenza, and COVID-19 confirmed throughout the region. Key tools available to individuals to minimize community risk include obtaining recommended immunizations, practicing preventive actions like hand washing, staying home when ill, and getting tested when symptomatic.

Medicaid Redeterminations

This process is already having a major impact on people. We stand ready to assist anyone who needs help with providing information to the Division of Public Assistance to ensure continued coverage. Reach out to any of our health clinics for assistance.



3 ways to update your contact info today

- Scan this code with a smartphone to update online.
- Go to medicaidrenewals.alaska.gov and click on the orange box that says “Save time”.
- Call our dedicated Medicaid Information Update Hotline at 833-441-1870.

Dental Services

We continue to dedicate efforts to recruiting new dental team members to ensure consistent dental services across the region, sharing the current dental service schedule and plans to expand dental service visits as we onboard additional staff. Here are some upcoming dates.

Chenega	Nanwalek	Port Graham	Seward	Tatitlek
DENTAL SERVICES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apr. 29-May 3• Aug. 1-2	DENTAL SERVICES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• June 10-14• Sept. 3-6• Sept. 9-13	DENTAL SERVICES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May 28-31• July 8-12	DENTAL SERVICES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apr. 1-5• May 6-10• June 3-7• July 15-19• Aug. 19-23• Sept. 23-27	DENTAL SERVICES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May 20-24• July 29-31
HYGIENE SERVICES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apr. 5-12	HYGIENE SERVICES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May 28-June 7• Aug. 5-14	HYGIENE SERVICES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• June 8-12• Aug. 15-23		HYGIENE SERVICES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mar. 29-Apr. 5

DENTAL SERVICES: Dr. Owens, Dr. Zimin, Southcentral Foundation (SCF)

HYGIENE SERVICES: Angela McKinney

Optometry Services (SCF)

Optometry services were provided in Tatitlek in October and in Chenega in February. The upcoming service dates are Nanwalek from April 8 to April 12, 2024, and Port Graham from April 15 to April 19, 2024.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

We will be working with tribal councils to assist with coordinating an EMS trainer, schedule, and sign-up sheet for village ETT training for 2024. If you are interested in this training opportunity, contact your local clinic to be added to the training list.

MyHealth Enrollment

A MyHealth account provides you with instant access to your medical records. Those who have accounts receive email notifications when lab results are ready and can communicate electronically through a secured portal directly with their healthcare team. We’ve surpassed our goal of 95 enrollments and now are aiming for 150. Take control of your health—sign up at your local clinic today!

Health Services Division News

Annual Health Fair Events

It's time again for planning local health fair events. Here's our current plan.

- Tatitlek - March 18th
- Chenega - March 20th
- Seward - April 13th
- Nanwalek & Port Graham - TBD (July/August)

Nourishing Snack Ideas for Healthier Habits

Article adapted from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics by **Joe Nyholm, RDN**

March is National Nutrition Month; let's explore some healthful snack ideas! Whether you're seeking to revitalize your snacking routine or lean towards a more health-conscious approach, we've got you covered. Snacks are an essential component of a balanced eating plan, providing an energy boost between meals when chosen wisely. Tailor your snacks to match your eating habits and activity level. While aiming to keep snacks under 200 calories is reasonable for most individuals, those who are more active or opt for smaller meals may target 200 to 300 calories per snack.

Transform snacking into a smart and enjoyable habit:

- **Snack only when you're hungry:** It's tempting to reach for a snack when boredom strikes or emotions run high, but this can lead to unnecessary weight gain. Check in with your hunger levels before reaching for a snack, and steer clear of mindless eating.
- **Plan and portion snacks ahead of time:** Prepare snacks in advance by washing and cutting up fruits and vegetables, air-popping popcorn, and opting for low-fat cheese. This not only saves time but also ensures you have healthy options readily available.
- **Practice food safety:** Maintain perishable foods refrigerated or in a cooler bag with ice packs to uphold freshness and minimize the risk of food poisoning.

Simplify your snacking by opting for a variety of fruits and vegetables, depending on what's in season or available at a good price. Whether fresh, frozen, canned, or dried, all options offer nutritional benefits. Check labels to limit snacks high in sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars.

Keep your snack selection vibrant by incorporating grains, particularly whole grains, lean protein, and healthy fats. Consider options like fat-free yogurt with fruit, whole-grain crackers with low-fat cheese, or raw veggies with hummus.

Experimenting with different food combinations can be both satisfying and effective in curbing hunger. Snacks containing fruit can also satisfy a sweet craving, making healthy choices even more enjoyable.



Nourishing Snack Ideas for Healthier Habits, cont'd



Here are some ideas for convenient and ready-to-eat snacks at home below.

Fruits and Vegetables:

- Cut fruit for kebabs served with low-fat yogurt dip.
- Enjoy sliced apple with 1 tablespoon of peanut, almond, or sunflower seed butter.
- Bake vegetable chips like kale or beets.
- Build veggie skewers with cherry or grape tomatoes, cubes of low-fat cheese, cooked tortellini, or lean luncheon meat.
- Make veggie pizza with whole wheat English muffin/pita, tomato sauce, fresh veggies, and low-fat mozzarella.



Photo generated by Adobe Firefly

Grains:

- Create trail mix with whole grain cereals, unsalted nuts/seeds, and dried fruit (portion into ¼ cup servings).
- Top graham crackers with nut/seed butter or dunk in low-fat vanilla yogurt.
- Serve whole wheat pita wedges with hummus or bean dip.
- Prepare instant oatmeal with fat-free milk, maple syrup, cinnamon, and dried fruit.
- Microwave a quesadilla with whole wheat tortilla, ¼ cup black beans, 1-2 tablespoons low-fat cheese, and 1 ounce of salsa.

Protein and Dairy:

- Make dips with low-fat cottage cheese or Greek yogurt for raw vegetables.
- Mix fat-free yogurt with 100% fruit juice, pour into paper cups, and freeze for a tasty treat.
- Blend smoothies with 1 cup fat-free milk and frozen fruit.
- Create yogurt parfait by layering fat-free yogurt with fruit and low-fat granola.
- Make a tuna apple sandwich by combining drained tuna, sliced apple, 1 tablespoon light mayo, spread on 2 slices of whole wheat bread.
- Roast chickpeas and season with spices.

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (www.eatright.org) offers information on nutrition and health, from meal planning and prep to choices that can help prevent or manage health conditions and more.

Exercise and Brain Health

Moving Towards Better Memory - The Link Between Exercise and Brain Health

Article by **Gala Davis**, Regional Health Coach

Research indicates that exercise contributes to enhanced cognitive abilities. This suggests that incorporating more physical activity into one's routine could be beneficial. Depending on the intensity of your training, physical activity is an essential component of everyday living. What we do in our day-to-day routine requires physical activity.

A study from Neuroscience has shown a link between physical fitness and brain development. Physically fit children tend to have more brain cells in their hippocampus, which helps with remembering things and learning new stuff. Adults also tend to have more volume in the hippocampus when they have cardiovascular fitness. This study focused on exercise's relation to the hippocampus, which plays a crucial role in memory and learning. A bigger hippocampus is associated with better spatial reasoning and cognitive tasks (Neuroscience, Sept. 15, 2010).

Another study demonstrates the relationship between adolescent fitness and intelligence later in life. The study, conducted by the University of Gothenburg and the Karolinska Institute in Sweden, involved over a million men who enlisted between 1950 and 1976. They compared their assessment of cardiovascular fitness at age eighteen to their intelligence later in life and found a strong association. It's worth noting that muscular strength was not as significantly related to intelligence (NIH, December 7, 2009).

However, it's important to note that muscular strength isn't the only crucial factor for your body. Cardiovascular fitness ensures good lung and heart capacity, delivering better oxygen and, therefore, enhancing cognitive function. This illustrates that staying physically fit during adolescence can have long-term effects on cognitive function in adulthood. Encouraging your children to be physically fit is essential for heart health and future success.

Engage in physical activities with your children, as it can be beneficial not only for their well-being but also for the entire family for a lifetime. Here are some general guidelines from the American Council on Exercise.

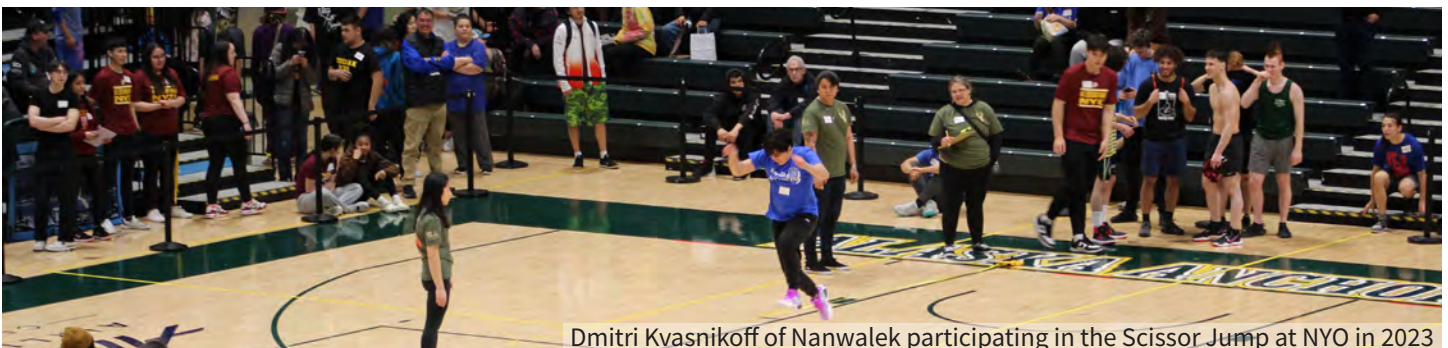
Adults:

- **AEROBIC ACTIVITY (AGES 18-65):** Moderate intensity for 30 minutes, 5 days per week.
- **VIGOROUS INTENSITY:** Minimum intensity for 20 minutes, 3 days per week.

Children (AGES 6-17):

- **AEROBIC ACTIVITY:** Moderate to vigorous intensity for 60 minutes daily.

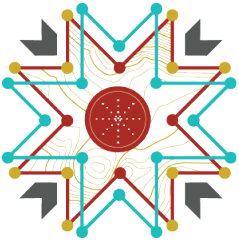
Join the Fall Prevention Exercise Class starting March 28th at Qutekcak Native Tribe in Seward. For more information, please contact Gala Davis at 907-224-4930 or gala@chugachmiut.org.



Dmitri Kvasnikoff of Nanwalek participating in the Scissor Jump at NYO in 2023

Growing Together: Childhood Programs Expand

Early Childhood Programs with Tribal MIECHV Grant



TRIBAL HOME VISITING

Chugachmiut is excited to share we have been awarded a 5-year Tribal Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting grant (Tribal MIECHV) from the US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families. We are working with Tribes, community partners and parents to develop culturally competent home visiting services for expectant parents and families with young children up to kindergarten entry. Our goal is to support

the development of thriving Alaska Native families and children who are happy, healthy, connected to their culture, and prepared for school.

What is home visiting?

- Home visiting helps families provide stimulating learning environments and nurturing relationships to prepare children for school and life.
- Families receive support, encouragement, and guidance from certified home visitors.
- Home visitors “walk alongside” parents, providing information and resources to ensure that families are confident in supporting the emotional, behavioral, and physical development of their children.
- Visits may take place in the family’s home or another location of the family’s choice.
- Home visiting is voluntary.

Why should we want home visiting services in our community?

Home Visiting programs provide valuable services to children and families. By meeting families where they are, home visiting programs have demonstrated improvements in the school readiness, health, and safety of children; maternal and infant health; and family stability and financial security. Home visiting adapted for and provided by Alaska Native communities will leverage community strengths and resources.

Where will home visiting services be offered?

We are currently in the planning phase of the project. We are seeking input from the following Tribes and communities to determine interest for early childhood home visiting services: Chenega, Qutekcak (Seward), Valdez, Eyak (Cordova), and Tatitlek.

How can I be involved?

Your input regarding your community’s strengths and desires for supporting families and healthy lifestyles in the Chugach region is invaluable to us.

- Complete our parent survey. Contact us below to access the survey!
- Join our advisory committee and share insights and resources to build program quality and strengthen home visiting.
- Connect us to community stakeholders who are champions for early childhood development.
- Connect with us below or at community events.

Quyanaa & Awa’ahdah for your support and involvement in our efforts to strengthen families and promote healthy lifestyles. For more information on the Chugachmiut Tribal Home Visiting program, please contact:

- **Lisa Goneau-Danielson:** lisa@chugachmiut.org, (907) 334-0135
- **Kristin Ramstad:** Kristin@chugachmiut.org, (907) 334-0123
- **Phone:** (907) 562-4155 or Toll-free: 800-478-4155

A community that is engaged and working together can be a powerful source. – Idowu Koyenikan

Litnaurwik Education Department

Introducing Paul McDonogh, Director of Education

Chugachmiut welcomed **Paasaa Paul McDonogh** as the new Director of Education. Paul hails from the Native Village of Perryville, an Alutiiq/Sugpiaq village nestled at the base of Mount Veniaminof on the Aleutian Peninsula. Although he spent his early years in Perryville, Paul has called Anchorage home since the second grade. Paul holds a Bachelor of Arts in Chemistry (K-12 Education) and a Masters of Curriculum and Instructional Design from Western Governors University.



As a former high school teacher, he has devoted his career to advancing indigenous education initiatives. During his tenure with the Anchorage School District, Paul initiated the Gui Kima program, which allows high school students to learn from Indigenous Master Artists. He also played a pivotal role in securing a Fostering Diversity federal grant to bolster the district's new Career Academies' diversity initiatives. Beyond his educational contributions, Paul is an active board member of the Bristol Bay Foundation, where he supports initiatives focused on teaching Alutiiq/Sugpiaq, Yup'ik, and Dena'ina cultures. A fervent advocate for the revitalization of Indigenous languages, Paul is currently collaborating with the Alaska Department of Education to establish Native Language literacy standards.

At Chugachmiut, Paul is set to lead the newly formed Litnaurwik team, which translates to "a place of learning." This new education department is dedicated to initiatives that promote the understanding of Sugpiaq and Eyak culture, as well as the Sugt'stun language. These efforts aim to build upon the commendable work of Chugachmiut's Heritage programs, fostering stronger partnerships with local K-12 school districts, enhancing cultural documentaries, and organizing Sugt'stun Summits. Litnaurwik's overarching goal is to educate the Chugach people about our cultural heritage and to expand opportunities for teaching the Sugt'stun language in classrooms.

Employee Spotlight - Robert Tippetts

Robert Tippetts joined Chugachmiut as the Addictions Outreach Coordinator in January. He was born and raised in Salt Lake City, UT. As the first college graduate among seven siblings, Robert is a strong advocate for higher education. He holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in criminal justice. He moved to Alaska with his family about five years ago. He loves spending time with them and also enjoys traveling and woodworking, especially restoring old furniture during his free time.

Robert is passionate about helping young people and adults who are going through tough family situations. His background includes direct involvement with youth and adult rehab programs, where he worked as a behavioral and substance abuse counselor within correctional facilities, aiding inmates in their transition back into the community. Having had the opportunity to visit various communities in Western Alaska over the past few years, he has developed a deep affection for the people and Alaska Native culture. He is excited to support individuals and families, delivering quality service in the Chugachmiut region.



Employee Spotlight - Michael Horton



Michael Horton has been an integral part of Chugachmiut for over a decade, initially as the Behavioral Health Director and later as the Community & Family Services Division Director starting January 2017. With 37 years of experience, Michael's passion lies in direct services. He began his journey as a counselor, addressing mental health and addiction issues across 38 Alaskan communities. In addition to serving the Chugach region, Michael's career spans key hub communities like McGrath, Utqiagvik (formerly Barrow), Kodiak, and Glennallen.

Although starting as a Behavioral Health Clinician in McGrath years ago, circumstances led Michael to take on administrative responsibilities after that McGrath-based agency faced challenges, including multiple director turnovers and financial instability. Through strategic grant proposals and contract development, Michael steered the agency back to stability, inadvertently transitioning into administrative roles. Michael has since written about 150 grants and has secured \$30 to \$40 million for various programs in his career. Upon joining Chugachmiut, he strengthened the Behavioral Health Department, enhancing services and staff. Under his

leadership, the department now employs 29 workers, holds CARF accreditation*, operates a 24/7 Behavioral Health Crisis Line, and has increased counselor accessibility to villages.

Beyond his professional achievements, Michael is an accomplished writer, having authored 14 books and maintained a popular newspaper advice column in Alaska for a decade. He's also dedicated over 30 years to Anger Management classes and served as a VPSO Coordinator in Copper River. Despite his administrative role, Michael's heart remains with direct services, and he continues to support and take pride in the Chugachmiut staff. As he embarks on another decade, his commitment to making a difference remains unwavering.

**Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that assesses and certifies a wide range of human services programs; and it signifies that a program meets rigorous quality standards and demonstrates a commitment to enhancing the lives of the people it serves.*

Tobacco Prevention Support Group

Cama'i! Are you ready to embark on a journey toward a healthier, tobacco-free lifestyle? We are thrilled to introduce our empowering new support group tailored for individuals who are determined to kick the habit or have recently begun their journey towards quitting tobacco. We will share insights, offer encouragement, and celebrate each other's successes on this transformative path.

Mark your calendars for our Thursdays at 6 pm via Zoom. Get the Zoom link by going to the calendar on our website at www.chugachmiut.org. To learn more, reach out to **Victoria Clark** at (907) 252-3343 or email at VictoriaC@Chugachmiut.org.

Let's get Tobacco Free!

Join us on Zoom to have fun and learn together on how to remain TOBACCO FREE!

Thursday nights at 6 pm

Employee Spotlight - Melodie Fair

Melodie Fair was born in Spokane, WA, and raised in Columbus, OH. Her parents named her after the “Melody Fair Theatre in the Round,” located in Buffalo, NY. She holds a bachelor’s degree in education from Allegheny Wesleyan College and a Masters in Adult Education from the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA). Before moving to Alaska in 1995, she taught for three years at private schools in Ohio, worked at The Ohio State University in various civil service positions, and then relocated to the University of Alaska Anchorage, for a “one-year experiment,” which in February, has become her 29th anniversary in Alaska.

Her diverse career has encompassed roles in education, international business, health research, and grant writing. Melodie has taught at both high school and college levels, worked in international business organizations, conducted health research, and contributed to grant writing efforts. She has collaborated with tribes across most parts of Alaska and pursued side jobs such as transcription work and teaching piano. Outside of work, she enjoys flower gardening, crafting, and artistic pursuits like calligraphy and stained-glass work. Melodie uses her musical training in her local church in Eagle River.

Melodie joined Chugachmiut in October 2018 as the Tribal Grants Writer, reaching her five-year mark in 2023. She has worked closely with all seven Chugach tribes, assisted with various capital or programmatic funding applications, and visited six of the seven tribal communities. She says, “Most rewarding in this position are the times when I can mentor Tribal Administrators, their staff, or new Chugachmiut employees to understand the grant process and construct their own grant applications.”



Melodie at Kenai Fjords



Melodie and friend, Dave, at Worthington Glacier

Nanwalek Basketball Team Visit



The Nanwalek Basketball Team visited Chugachmiut in February. They spent time with staff and partner organizations, Chugach Alaska Corporation and Chugach Heritage Foundation, learning about services and employment opportunities in the Chugach region. Staff shared tips for being successful in the working world, and about their careers in finance, human resources, social services, IT, administration, and communications. They also played some fun games.

Executive Director **Jan Vanderpool** (standing at left) encouraged students by saying they can have any job they want at Chugachmiut through dedication and hard work. She said, “Many people who work here have a heart for service.”



Chugachmiut

1840 Bragaw Street, Suite 110
Anchorage, AK 99508-3463
Toll Free Phone: (800) 478-4155
Behavioral Health Crisis Line: (844) 891-0444
www.chugachmiut.org

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Chugachmiut Board & Executive Leadership

A seven-member Board of Directors governs Chugachmiut; each board member selected by their tribal government. The Board of Directors appoints the Executive Director who manages the day-to-day operations of the organization.

Fran Norman, *Chair*
Port Graham

Larry Evanoff, *Vice Chair*
Chenege

Jim Ujioka, *Treasurer*
Valdez

Priscilla Evans, *Director*
Nanwalek

Arne Hatch, *Director*
Qutekcak

Pamela Smith, *Director*
Eyak

Nanci Robart, *Director*
Tatitlek

Angela Vanderpool
Executive Director

Nupuat Newsletter - Call for Submissions

Have a story, essay, or poetry to share? Have some suggested topics or feedback for our newsletter? We welcome submissions from Tribal/community members, councils and employees. To submit ideas, articles, stories, poetry, pictures for use in the Nupuat, please email to media@chugachmiut.org.