



CENTRAL COUNCIL
Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
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President's Weekly Update 2.20.21

Wáasá iyatee, Gasing.uu dang Giidang! I hope you are doing well this holiday weekend. Here are a few highlights of some of our recent activities over the past week that I wanted to share with you. It has been quite an exciting and celebratory week! I hope you continue to have a restful weekend and find time to recharge yourselves. Please reach out if you have any questions.

Tlingit & Haida Opens Anchorage Office

Elizabeth Peratrovich Day is not only a day we celebrate the life and accomplishments of our civil rights leader each year, it now marks an incredible moment in the Tribe's history – it is the day we celebrated the opening of our office in Anchorage, Alaska.

Although the gathering for the celebration was small due to COVID-19 precautions, it included a blessing and naming ceremony where Tlingit Elder and Anchorage Delegate Shirley *Shaax' saani Keek* Kendall announced the office will be called “Our Own House,” which translates to Náay íitl'aangaa (Xaad Kíl) and Haa aayí hít (Lingít).

With more than 2,500 tribal citizens in Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley area, the new office has been a top priority for the Tribe under our goal to expand our reach and meet our tribal citizens where they are at. The office is located at 670 I Street in Cook Inlet Housing Authority's renovated Elizabeth Place building and is in close proximity to the bus transfer station and short-term parking.

Recognizing there are more than 50 cases of tribal children in state custody within Anchorage and Southcentral Alaska, we have staffed an Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) specialist and attorney at the Anchorage office to assist families.

In addition to the ICWA staff, the following departments will also have office space in Anchorage: Finance Grants & Resources, Office of the President, Program Compliance (Tribal Enrollment), Tribal Child Support and Tribal Operations.

While we gathered to celebrate the opening of our offices, we also presented donations to Catholic Social Services and Abused Women's Aid in Crisis (AWAIC). The donations were made based on recommendations received from the Anchorage Tlingit & Haida Community Council (Anchorage Tribes Tlingit & Haida Indians of Alaska) to help the Tribe identify community-specific priorities to address the local needs of tribal citizens in Anchorage.

2nd Gathering of the Indigenous Guardians Network

The second Guardians Gathering was held on January 26, 2022. Over 35 participants, representing most tribal communities, were present. This month's gathering featured a presentation on abalone and created conversation on its cultural significance and Indigenous stewardship. The Guardians Gatherings is a place for tribal communities to share Indigenous knowledge and offer support to each other.

Our people have been stewards and guardians of our homelands since time immemorial. The Indigenous Guardian Network (IGN) of Southeast Alaska was formed through unique partnerships between tribal governments, federal government agencies, Alaska Native corporations and environmental non-governmental organizations. These groups have come together in a unified effort to provide support to Alaska Native communities that depend on marine and terrestrial resources for food security, health, and sustainable economies. The focus of the IGN is to incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) in the monitoring, protection, restoration, and management of traditional lands. The Indigenous Guardians Network is an important step in moving towards a true co-management relationship over our lands and waters.

Elizabeth Peratrovich Day Celebration

"Asking you to give me rights implies that they are yours to give." - Elizabeth Peratrovich

Tlingit & Haida was honored to co-sponsor the Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANB) & Alaska Native Sisterhood (ANS) Grand Camp's virtual Elizabeth Peratrovich Day celebration to honor the late Elizabeth Peratrovich. The virtual event was incredible in so many ways and reached our tribal citizens far and wide.

Elizabeth Peratrovich's legacy of advocating for civil rights continues to inspire us all to fight for what is right. The ANB and ANS have held an important role in our Southeast communities, state, and country. They were the boots on the ground and on the front lines advocating for the passage of the first anti-discrimination law in the nation. We still have an active ANB/ANS Grand Camp as well as local camps that continue to advocate for subsistence rights, voting rights, and so much more.

It's important that we continue this great work of advocacy and engage our youth in the process. This legacy of advocacy is still as important today as it was yesterday. We still have attempts being made to hinder our ability to vote and we need to stay vigilant and advocate at every opportunity.

VITA Tax Preparation & Support

Partnerships are an important part of providing the best services to our tribal citizens. Several of our Employment & Training department staff recently received training provided by IRS certified tax preparers to help Tlingit Haida Regional Housing Authority (THRHA) with their Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program every Tuesday evening through April 15, 2022.

The free income tax preparation program is available to many Southeast Alaska communities. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, taxes are prepared virtually or by telephonic appointment.

For more information on the VITA program and how to signup, please visit THRHA's website: www.regionalhousingauthority.org/manage-your-money/income-tax-preparation/.