



Wrangell, Alaska  
April 10, 2024

# WRANGELL SENTINEL

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PHOTO BY BECCA CLARK / WRANGELL SENTINEL

Holly Churchill works on a cedar hat during a class she taught in Wrangell on March 27.

## Class teaches and preserves traditional Haida hat weaving

By BECCA CLARK  
Sentinel reporter

The WCA Cultural Center filled with the sweet aroma of cedar as students sat around tables, focused on their hats in progress in front of them. They dipped the strips of red and yellow cedar into bins of water and occasionally spritzed their weaving with water to keep it from drying and cracking.

Quiet chatter filled the room as they shared stories and advice.

Master weaver Holly Churchill, from Ketchikan, made her way around the room, offering helpful tips and reminding students not to get distracted by their conversation.

Churchill has taught eight classes like this one held in Wrangell in late March in various locations over the past year. The class was 40 hours, about the amount of time it takes to weave one hat, and 11 students walked away with finished or nearly finished hats after spending the week together.

Traditional weaving, and teaching it to others, is in Churchill's blood.

In the 1960s, knowledge of Haida weaving was in serious decline. Her grandmother, Selina Peratrovich, was one of few who still had that knowledge.

At the urging of her father, Churchill said, her mother Delores Churchill fi-

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## Medical loan closet will need new home after property sale

By MARK C. ROBINSON  
Sentinel reporter

The community's medical equipment loan closet that has been in a number of locations over the years will likely have to look for a new home once more.

With the forthcoming sale of the former hospital next to Evergreen Elementary School later this month to Georgia-based real estate developer Wayne Johnson, the Wrangell Community Loan Closet will have to move its reserve of medical equipment to a new location.

Don McConachie Sr., who runs the service, talked on April 4 with borough manager Mason Villarma. "He wasn't aware that we were in here, but now that he is, he's doing what he can to find a new place for us," he said. "I'm guessing we have maybe two months."

In addition to seeking assistance for a new place from the borough, McConachie and longtime volunteer Alice

Rooney are hoping for help in finding a new location from organizations like the Wrangell Cooperative Association and SEARHC. McConachie believes that Amber Al-Haddad, the borough's capital facilities director, could be another potential resource as she helped them find their current location.

The loan closet also serves other towns. On March 29, the volunteers collected some surplus medical equipment and sent it to Anchorage, where it will be disbursed to other communities up north. "We get a lot of extra equipment that in a smaller community you don't utilize," McConachie said.

Alaska Airlines donated its air freight services to fly the equipment to Anchorage.

In the past, the loan closet has also sent surplus to communities like Ketchikan and even overseas, Rooney said.

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## High school students across Alaska protest inadequate state funding

By ANNIE BERMAN,  
SEAN MAGUIRE, ALENA NAIDEN  
Anchorage Daily News

Hundreds of high schoolers across Alaska participated in an organized walkout April 4 in protest of the Legislature's recent failure to override Gov. Mike Dunleavy's veto of an education funding bill. The bill would have included a historic increase in state money for public education.

Outside Eagle River High School in the Anchorage School District, more than 100 students stood outside in the blustering snow for nearly a whole class period chanting "Fund our education!" and "Save our arts, save our sports!"

Similar protests — all organized by students with the Alaska Association of Student Government Executive Board — took place across the state, from Utqiagvik to Bethel to Sitka, Juneau and Ketchikan.

Wrangell schools were on spring break last week.

Had the governor not vetoed the

money, or if the Legislature had voted to override his veto, Wrangell schools would have received an estimated \$440,000 in additional state funding for the 2024-2025 school year, covering about two-thirds of the district's budget deficit.

Felix Myers, a senior at Sitka High School, said the recent veto of Senate Bill 140, which included the largest boost to public school funding in state history, prompted the walkout. The state's per-pupil funding formula has remained virtually unchanged since 2017.

Myers said the walkouts were organized by students, with no adult or teacher involvement.

"I realized the words and the things that students had been saying and communicating to legislators wasn't enough," Myers said April 4. "And I knew that at that point, there's not much we can try to do other than take some action. Because it seems like action might speak louder than words."

Continued on page 4

## History podcast tells not all was golden in 1874 gold rush

By BECCA CLARK  
Sentinel reporter

One hundred and fifty years ago, the Stikine beckoned people to its rugged landscape with the promise of wealth. This was the Cassiar gold rush of 1874, a huge moment in Wrangell history, according to Ronan Rooney, historian and creator of the podcast "Wrangell History Unlocked."

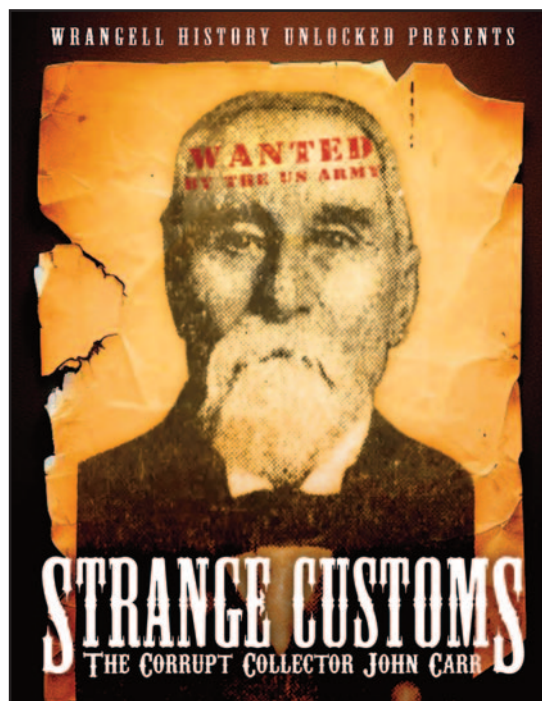
Rooney's newest series "Strange Customs" tells the story of the gold rush in Wrangell in three parts. The story, however, is not just about the search for gold on the Stikine. It involves a political corruption ring in Portland, Oregon; a nasty rivalry between a senator and a judge; and, most importantly, it follows John Carr, a fugitive from justice for murder and a professional in bribery and intimidation.

The year 1874 was a transformative time, Rooney said, people were flooding into Wrangell — at the time a sleepy town with an abandoned Army post. There was no U.S. law in Wrangell then except for one person — Carr, the U.S. Treasury's deputy collector of customs.

But Carr abused his position as the only U.S. law and illegally extorted money and alcohol from ships passing through on their way to Canada.

When Rooney decided to tell this history, he realized he needed to focus on this one corrupt character: Carr. Rooney has told multiple stories of Wrangell history on his podcast, of good characters and bad. But this piece of history in particular, he said, was challenging because he personally detested the main character from the start.

The gold rush created a  
Continued on page 3



ARTWORK COURTESY RONAN ROONEY

Ronan Rooney's newest history podcast, "Strange Customs," tells the story of the Cassiar gold rush of 1874 and a crooked U.S. customs collector.



## Senior Center Menu

Open for in-person dining. Must be fully vaccinated.

**Thursday, April 11**

Cheese sandwich, split pea soup, sunshine salad

**Friday, April 12**

Chicken cacciatore with noodles,

Brussels sprouts, tossed salad

**Monday, April 15**

Shelf-stable meal delivered on Friday, April 12

**Tuesday, April 16**

Creole pork steaks with pasta, cauliflower, sunshine salad

**Wednesday, April 17**

Salisbury steak, peas, peach salad,

mashed potatoes with gravy

**Thursday, April 18**

Senior Spring Picnic at Shoemaker Park.

Call to reserve van ride if you need one.

The menu will be roast beef sandwich,

corn chowder and creamy coleslaw

Call the senior center at 907-874-2066 24 hours in advance to reserve a seat at lunch or to request delivery.

The senior van is available to take seniors to medical appointments, errands such as collecting mail, getting prescriptions or other essential items.

## Ferry Schedule

### Northbound

**Wednesday, April 10**

Hubbard, 12:45 p.m.

**Friday, April 12**

Kennicott, 4:30 p.m.

**Friday, April 19**

Kennicott, 7 p.m.

**Friday, April 26**

Kennicott, 3:45 p.m.

### Southbound

**Monday, April 15**

Kennicott, 6 a.m.

**Monday, April 22**

Kennicott, 6:15 a.m.

**Monday, April 29**

Kennicott, 7:15 a.m.

**Wednesday, May 15**

Kennicott, 6:15 a.m.

Listings are scheduled departure times. Call the terminal at 907-874-2021 for information or 907-874-3711 for recorded information.

## Tides

### High Tides

### Low Tides

	AM		PM		AM		PM	
	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
April 10	02:21	19.7	03:03	17.1	08:38	-3.7	08:42	0.6
April 11	03:00	19.2	03:49	15.9	09:21	-3.1	09:21	1.9
April 12	03:39	18.1	04:36	14.4	10:06	-2.0	10:02	3.4
April 13	04:20	16.7	05:30	12.9	10:54	-0.5	10:48	4.8
April 14	05:08	15.1	06:38	11.7	11:50	1.0	11:46	6.1
April 15	06:10	13.5	08:05	11.3	...	...	12:59	2.3
April 16	07:38	12.5	09:25	11.8	01:08	6.9	02:22	3.0



## ALASKA AIRLINES CLUB 49 COMMUNITY EVENTS CALENDAR

**FEDERAL DISASTER RECOVERY CENTER** open 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. through Friday, April 12, at the Nolan Center for Wrangell residents affected by the Nov. 20 landslides. Residents can register for federal assistance, check the status of their application, learn about disaster assistance programs, meet with a federal Small Business Administration representative, and obtain additional information and resources about protecting themselves and their property from future disasters. Apply by calling Alaska Helpline at 866-342-1699 or visit [www.disasterassistance.gov](http://www.disasterassistance.gov).

**NOLAN CENTER THEATER** "Dune: Part Two," rated PG-13, at 6 p.m. Saturday, April 13, and at 4 p.m. Sunday, April 14. The action adventure drama runs 2 hours and 46 minutes; tickets are \$7 for adults, \$5 for children under age 12. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult. Next weekend: "Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire."

**CHILI COOK-OFF** 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, April 13, at the Nolan Center. Individual entries or businesses are welcome; prizes will be awarded. Sign up by April 10 by calling The Salvation Army, 907-874-3753, or stop in at the Nolan Center or KSTK. Admission: \$5 per person. This is a fundraiser for The Salvation Army food pantry.

**BRAVE** will meet at 2 p.m. Thursday, April 11, at the library. Open to everyone in person or online at <https://washington.zoom.us/j/93896331255>.

**RUMMAGE and BAKE SALE** 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, April 13, at the American Legion. No set prices, just make a donation. This is a fundraiser for students traveling to Washington, D.C., in the Close Up program.

**ANNUAL CHAMBER DINNER and AUCTION** 5 p.m. Saturday, April 13, at the Stikine Inn. Tickets are \$100. A night of community awards, silent auction, dessert auction and more. Call the chamber to reserve a seat, 907-874-3901.

**"BLUE TICKET"** 6:30 p.m. Monday, April 15, at the Nolan Center. Free. Video recording of a historical fiction play depicting a time in Juneau's history when men suspected of being gay were sent away on the ferry with one-way tickets. A discussion with the playwright will follow. Sponsored by St. Philip's Episcopal Church, Island of Faith Lutheran Church and Community Roots.

**"THE PRINCESS BRIDE"** 6 p.m. Tuesday, April 16, at the Nolan Center. Free. Presented by Island of Faith Lutheran Church as part of its retro-movie program. The concession stand will be open.

**WRANGELL COMMUNITY CLEANUP** 8 a.m. to noon, Saturday, April 20, starting at the Evergreen Elementary gym. Trash bags will be provided. Cash prizes for trash volunteers. Lunch will be served at noon.

**COMMUNITY MARKET** 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, April 27, at the Nolan Center. \$10 a table for vendors. Register with [jarnold@wrangell.com](mailto:jarnold@wrangell.com) or [awade@wrangell.com](mailto:awade@wrangell.com), or call 907-874-3770.

**STORY TIME AT THE LIBRARY**, 10 to 11 a.m. Fridays through April 26. Come enjoy the stories, crafts and snacks at the Irene Ingle Public Library. Call 907-874-3535.

**VIRTUES MATTER** activities for children, 2:35 to 4 p.m. Wednesdays at the elementary school music room. An interfaith effort hosted by the Baha'is of Wrangell and open to all. For more information and to register, call Kay Larson, 907-209-9117, or email [wrangell@akbnc.org](mailto:wrangell@akbnc.org).

**WRANGELL PARKS and RECREATION** is offering multiple activities to get your body moving. For more information on any of the activities and more visit [www.wrangellrec.com](http://www.wrangellrec.com) or call 907-874-2444.

- **OPEN GYM VOLLEYBALL** 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Mondays, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Fridays at the community center gym. Wear sporty clothes and gym shoes. For ages 14 and up. Drop-in rates apply.
- **OUTDOOR CHALLENGE** through April 28 is built to encourage consistent movement, with a goal of completing at least 30 minutes of exercise 5 to 7 days per week. This challenge is for people of all fitness levels. The participant who completes the most workouts will win a six-month pass to the Parks and Recreation facility; prizes donated by local businesses will be raffled off at the end of the challenge. For ages 14 and up. Registration required for this free activity.
- **TOT SWIM** 11:30 to 1 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturdays. For guardians and children 5 years old and under. Toys and "pool noodles" available.

## The Way We Were In the Sentinel 100, 75, 50 and 25 years ago.

**April 3, 1924**

The regular monthly meeting of the PTA will be held in the high school building Thursday evening, April 10, at 8 o'clock. A number of interesting questions will come before the meeting for discussion. Dr. O. H. Whaley will give an address on oral hygiene for children. The address will be followed by a declamation contest for grade school pupils. The contestants will be judged on delivery, poise, voice and selection. The declamations will be interspersed by songs by grade school girls who have been taught by Miss Hinselan.

**April 8, 1949**

The Wrangell town council at its meeting at City Hall last night asked the city clerk to draw up as soon as possible three ordinances for a special election. One will be to vote on whether or not to incorporate the harbor into the city limits; one on changing the date of municipal elections from October, set by the Legislature, back to April; and a third to vote on a 2 percent sales tax. The clerk was instructed to draw up the ordinances as soon as possible so that fishermen could vote before going out on the grounds.

**April 10, 1974**

The soaring cost of fuel will cause Wrangell's electric rates to rise more than 40 percent effective July 1, the city council was informed last week. City Manager Herb McNabb told council members at a work session that the municipality will have no choice but to pass on the boost in its fuel oil price to the consumer. On July 1, a city contract with Mobil Oil for diesel fuel will expire. Under the pact, the city has been buying fuel to run its diesel electrical generators at 13.5 cents a gallon. McNabb said that under the anticipated price increase, he will have to have

\$136,000 additional a year to pay for fuel to run the diesels. The boost will be reflected on utility bills sent out by the city in early August. Mayor Don House commented, "We've been extremely lucky to hold the rates as low as we have been by comparison to other towns that have diesel-powered electrical plants."

**April 8, 1999**

It's not exactly a facelift and you may not notice when its lines no longer sag, but the Tye power project will be undergoing major renovation this summer. Whitewater Engineering, in a joint venture

with Alaska Power and Telephone, is beginning the project of building new foundations for additional towers carrying the power lines from Woronkofski Island. These new intermediate towers will reduce the weight load on the line and keep them from sagging. Last year the northern section on the project, Petersburg to Woronkofski, was repaired by another company. The project will not affect power to Wrangell. Tye Lake, up Bradford Canal on the mainland, provides hydroelectric power to Wrangell and Petersburg.

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FREIGHT FOR LESS



# Church uses grant to bring free movies to Nolan Center

By MARK C. ROBINSON  
Sentinel reporter

The Island of Faith Lutheran Church will host a free monthly movie for their Faith and Film Ministry at the Nolan Center over the next two and a half years, thanks to a \$3,000 grant from the Alaska Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

"We're trying to do lots of genres, from 'Galaxy Quest' to 'Magnificent Seven' (the 1960 version)," said the church's pastor, Sue Bahleda.

The next movie will be "The Princess Bride" on Tuesday, April, 16 at 6 p.m. The concession stand will be open.

Movies that have already been shown as part of their project include "Jesus Christ Superstar" and "The Wizard of Oz." Other movies to be featured will include, in no particular order, the 1954 version of "Sabrina," "The Hunt for Red October," "Matilda," "Rio Bravo" and "Secondhand Lions."

Bahleda and her church have been considering for some time the specific needs of the community. "That's the essence of ministry: defining a need and filling that need," she said. "And we are richly blessed in this community that many faith congregations address many needs. There's the food pantry. There's youth activities and studies ... so we really spent some time discussing what this community needed."

She noted that there have lately been fewer movies for the town. "We thought maybe that could be the need that needs filling in our community," she said. "Some way of the community having fun on an evening, and we decided to fill it."

While the movies are meant to be family-friendly, they won't all necessarily be kid-oriented, but rather a variety of films that will appeal to a lot of tastes. "We hope that sometimes it's a night out for mom and dad," Bahleda said.

Film choices that may be lesser known include "The Straight Story" with Richard

Farnsworth and Baz Luhrmann's 1992 Australian romantic comedy "Strictly Ballroom."

"We're being very intentional about not choosing necessarily really biblical or God-themed or heavily religious movies, because we feel like most of our daily life as people of faith is lived in daily interactions," Bahleda said.

**"We're being very intentional about not choosing necessarily really biblical or God-themed or heavily religious movies, because we feel like most of our daily life as people of faith is lived in daily interactions."**

— PASTOR SUE BAHLEDA  
ISLAND OF FAITH CHURCH

She added that regular movies feature a lot of the same challenges and adherence to values that most people have in their normal, daily lives such as the highs and lows of various kinds of relationships, the consequences of dishonesty, how to repair broken trust, and daring to have adventures. "Probably those movies that we're drawn to are those movies that create a family."

Bahleda stressed that part of what a community needs is consistency, and having the grant enables them to be consistent with this monthly movie for the next two and a half years. "This is something we're going to do for the community, whether four people show up, whether

50 people show up, that we're going to do it every month, and it's free," she said.

She added that there would be no requests for donations during the films. "Just come, sit with other people, introduce yourself. ... Just come and have fun. And that's a real gift for the community."

The goal is to offer a movie viewing every third Tuesday at 6 p.m., so as not to interfere with the Nolan Center's weekend events, unless there's a conflict with the center's schedule.

"Tuesday was a night when there were the fewest conflicting activities," Bahleda said. "We also chose the third Tuesday be-

cause we know (the borough) assembly meets on second and fourth Tuesdays. We did a lot of intricate planning so that we could serve as many people as could come."

Bahleda said people who come for the movie will also be invited to take part in a discussion afterward.



PHOTO BY MARK C. ROBINSON / WRANGELL SENTINEL

Don McConachie Sr. stands at the storage unit used for the community medical equipment loan closet. The volunteers need to find a new home for the hospital beds, walkers, crutches, wheelchairs and other equipment after the borough sells the former hospital property where the storage unit is located.

## Loan closet

Continued from page 1

Backed by the Hospice of Wrangell, the loan closet offers medical equipment like wheelchairs, walkers, braces, hospital beds and more, all available free of charge for anyone who needs them on a short-term basis. McConachie estimates that they would need about 500 square feet to store what they currently have.

The closet is currently located in a storage unit on the grounds of the former hospital, but it has previously been at the airport, the site of what is now Bishop Rowe Apartments,

as well as a garage of the Presbyterian Church. "It's been around for at least 50 years," Rooney said.

"It's a very convenient necessity," McConachie said. "We provide a pretty good service to this community."

Rooney said wheelchairs have also been popular for seniors who visit Wrangell during Fourth of July celebrations.

For more information or anyone needing to borrow equipment from the loan closet, call McConachie at 907-305-0063 or Kathy Watkins at 907-795-0969.

## Cassiar gold rush

Continued from page 1

reason for people like Carr to travel to Wrangell. In 1874, steamships began arriving full of people, Rooney said. It was the year that the chaos of the gold rush began under U.S. watch.

Gold had been found in the Dease Lake region of the Cassiar, with Wrangell serving as the starting point for prospectors who traveled up the Stikine River in search of gold in British Columbia.

This series, Rooney said, explains how the United States attempted, succeeded and failed at managing the gold rush in Alaska. It was a time, Rooney noted, that the region needed people with integrity who could be trusted. Instead, Carr, one of the most crooked characters, arrived and took control in Wrangell.

Rooney first learned about Carr from reading one of Patricia A. Neal's books on Wrangell history. Carr was only mentioned in passing, he said, so he decided to pursue the story.

A former Wrangell resident now living in Oregon, Rooney started his history podcasts in

2020 and has produced more than a dozen over the years.

To find out the details of what happened with Carr and the gold rush, Rooney looked at old articles from the Daily Colonist, a Canadian newspaper. He also looked at letters between government officials, which were made public in the years after the events. Work that other Alaska historians have published was also helpful, Rooney found.

The Cassiar gold rush of 1874 was preceded by an economic panic in 1873, as most gold rushes were, Rooney explained. The same thing happened a generation later with the Klondike gold rush of the 1890s that followed an economic panic that occurred in 1893. Klondike prospectors used the Stikine as an alternate route to travel through British Columbia to the gold fields in Canada's Yukon Territory.

The people who came to the Stikine in 1874 in search of gold had no other options, Rooney explained. The only ones who profited off the rush were those who sold goods to miners or rented property to them, he said. Ultimately, Rooney said he

wants to cover all of the 1870s in Wrangell history on his award-winning podcast, which he had started in 2020 with an episode on the 1869 bombardment of Wrangell by U.S. Army soldiers. The Army destroyed several homes in the Native village after killing two Tlingit brothers — all because of an alleged incident at a Christmas party.

The Cassiar gold rush podcast series, he said, was needed to explain the next piece of the Wrangell story — why the Army was back in Wrangell in the 1870s.

The next part of the history series, Rooney said, includes the distillation of alcohol in Alaska, as imports had been banned.

Shady, untrustworthy characters like Carr in Wrangell are not limited to the Cassiar gold rush, Rooney said — Wrangell's checkered past is full of them. History can remind us to be ever vigilant when looking into authority figures' pasts. The past tells us a lot about the present and the future, he said.

To listen to Rooney's podcast, visit [www.wrangellhistoryunlocked.com](http://www.wrangellhistoryunlocked.com).

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

# Alaska high schoolers are right to speak up

By LARRY PERSILY  
Publisher

Who better to talk about education in Alaska than students. They could continue leaving it to school administrators, elected officials, their parents and teachers to speak for them, but that would be the easy way out. It's also been unsuccessful.

Looking to break that losing streak with the governor and state legislators unwilling to adequately fund education, hundreds of high schoolers around the state last week showed they are frustrated at the outcome.

From Ketchikan, Sitka, Juneau, in Anchorage, Eagle River, Homer, Bethel and Utqiagvik, students staged brief — and orderly — walkouts April 4 to demonstrate in support of more state funding for public schools.

They demonstrated against Gov. Mike Dunleavy's veto of a comprehensive education bill which would have increased the state funding formula for K-12 education. The formula has not changed since many of the students were in elementary school. And now, nearing adulthood, they see the results of underfunded schools.

Their voices were not only for the governor to hear — though he was not in Juneau to listen when the students walked into the Capitol and climbed the stairs to his floor. The students had followed the news and knew that the Legislature had fallen short by one vote of overriding Dunleavy's veto of the education bill, so they turned their signs and voices on lawmakers, too.

They marched, waved handmade signs and talked about how inadequate funding is leading to larger class sizes, and how it jeopardizes cultural programs, arts, sports and other student activities. They cited the risk of losing teachers and programs to budget cuts in their school districts. And they talked about the future of education in a state that does not seem to care enough.

"We're tired of feeling like our voices don't matter, and we feel the need to show up and send a message ... we do care about our future of education for students that come after us, and we believe in a better future," Sitka High School senior Felix Myers told reporters.

The Alaska Association of Student Government Executive Board organized the protests, showing that even with the state short-funding education for years, the students still have learned how to think for themselves.

And while he wasn't in his office to hear the students, Dunleavy didn't ignore their pleas — he just dismissed them. "Money alone will not improve Alaska's educational outcomes," the governor said in a statement, downplaying the students' push for an increase in state funding.

In his statement, he stuck with his pitch for more charter schools and more state-funded options for parents to choose their children's education, his standard speech during the ongoing education funding debate. It says something when students want to learn and the governor seems unwilling to learn any new lines.

I doubt the student protests last week will make much of a difference. Opponents of a permanent increase in the state funding formula will dismiss it as a staged event, detached from the economic reality of a tight state budget. They will talk about how they support education, mimicking the governor that money is not the only answer.

Lacking enough votes to confront and override the governor on a permanent increase in the funding formula, I expect legislators will appropriate a one-year increase in state funding for K-12 education, just like they did last year, and then hope that the governor does not veto half the money like he did last year.

Maybe Dunleavy will learn something from the students instead of teaching them a lesson that he is in charge.

EDITORIAL

# Past mistakes teach us how to treat people better

Society can learn from its mistakes. The more we know, the more likely we will get it right the next time.

Learning about what society did wrong in the past is part of making for a better future.

There are a couple such lessons in the Sentinel this month, one of which will be aired publicly in town next week.

"Blue Ticket," a video of a 2019 Juneau play, will show at 6:30 p.m. Monday, April 15, at the Nolan Center. It tells the story of Juneau police secretly removing gay men from the community, kicking them out with a one-way ferry ticket.

The purge came at a time of nationwide persecution of gays in the 1950s and early 1960s, particularly among federal employees, known as the Lavender Scare. Self-appointed vigilantes and government officials suspected gays were communist sympathizers — no proof was required. Unfounded and discriminatory suspicions were enough to cost people their jobs.

"Blue Ticket" depicts how it happened in Juneau and who was caught up in the banishment. It is an opportunity for people in Wrangell to learn more about the political times 60 years ago; to think about why it was wrong; and to remind ourselves that politics can drive people to violate the rights of others.

Thank you to St. Philip's Episcopal Church, the Island of Faith Lutheran Church and Community Roots, a Wrangell support group, for bringing the video to town. The event is free; a discussion with the playwright will follow the video.

Going back further in time, Alaska went through an equally disturbing period when about 5,500 people with mental illness or developmental disabilities were shipped to an asylum in Oregon. Their tickets were not one-way, but many never came home, dying far away from their families and friends.

They are known as the Lost Alaskans.

Between 1904 and the early 1960s, the territory of Alaska, and later the young state, lacked a facility to care for the people and lacked the compassion to understand, so the answer was to send them away.

Now, like the "Blue Ticket" play and video, the story of those Lost Alaskans is coming to life through research. Volunteers in Fairbanks and Portland have been working the past 15 years to identify the people sent to the Oregon hospital. Some were buried in unmarked pauper graves in Oregon, but a few have been returned to Alaska for proper burials.

A new database went online in February to help people find if family members were among those sent to Morningside Hospital. The research is essential to reuniting families separated by ignorance over mental health. An Associated Press report in this week's Sentinel tells the story.

Discrimination and mistreatment of gays and people with mental illness have lessened since the 1960s but still exists. Learning from the past can help us do better.

— Wrangell Sentinel

# Student protests

Continued from page 1

Eagle River senior Caitlin Corbett, 17, said she was worried most about the future impacts of flat funding, and said she has already noticed an uptick in class sizes since her freshman year.

"I know our class sizes have gotten dramatically bigger already," said Corbett, who added that her largest classes have 40 students in them. "That's ridiculous, kids can't learn in that environment," she said.

In Anchorage, about 125 students participated in a protest outside Bettye Davis East Anchorage High School. The group filled the corners and medians at the intersection of Northern Lights Boulevard and Bragaw Street, some holding signs and others chanting before they orderly filed back into the high school

just before noon.

East High senior Dorothy Armstrong, 17, said she found out about the protest a day earlier while scrolling through Instagram.

"I wanted to be a part of this because I have younger siblings, and our education system is failing us. Some of my favorite teachers left last year because of the way our district and government is treating our teachers, and they are the most important workers out there," she said.

In Utqiagvik, about 20 Barrow High School students also walked out of class to show their support for more education funding.

Despite the single-digit temperature, the students gathered at around 11 a.m. holding posters with slogans such as "Fund the future" and "Our education matters," said

Magdelina Stringer, a Barrow High School student.

In Juneau, around 100 students from Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé marched up the hill to the state Capitol, chanting "Raise the BSA" and "Fund our future." A number of legislators who support an increase in state funding joined to support them.

The students flooded the Capitol, walking up the central staircase to each floor chanting loudly. They rallied outside the governor's office and gathered quietly during a House Finance Committee hearing on an unrelated subject.

Dunleavy has said he vetoed the legislation because it didn't include some of his priorities, including provisions aimed at encouraging more charter schools.

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WRANGELL SENTINEL



# Long-time Air Force facilities manager hired for schools job

BY MARK C. ROBINSON  
Sentinel reporter

Kevin McCallister is the new facilities and maintenance director for the school district. He arrived with his family on March 25 and started work April 1.

Outgoing maintenance director Josh Blatchley will stay on until the end of April to help with training his replacement.

While McCallister is just getting started, he hasn't "really dug into the meat and potatoes of everything yet." He's already been made aware of some of the larger projects coming over the next few years, such as the replacement of the middle school's 30-year-old roof, as well as smaller projects including energy-saving solutions like switching over to LED lighting.

Based on what he's learned

thus far, he said, "the schools, overall, are in fairly decent shape."

"My last job was fairly large," he said. "I was entrusted with the maintenance of an entire Air Force base." McCallister worked for a property management company that supplies housing for Air Force bases across the country. At Eielson Air Force Base near Fairbanks, he served as the maintenance manager for the privatized housing department, overseeing upkeep of 910 homes and 474 mechanical rooms.

He has worked in facility and maintenance management for more than five years. He had also worked in construction for more than 20 years, and a plumber for 13 years.

It was the size and location of

Wrangell that drew him and his wife to the town when the opportunity arose, as they felt that a smaller, more family-oriented community nestled amid the ocean and mountains would be better suited for their four children, ages 1, 3, 5 and 6. "My wife, she wanted to come back to the ocean pretty bad."

Originally from Bethlehem, Georgia, which is 30 miles outside of Athens, McCallister had always dreamed of moving to Alaska from a very young age. "It was a childhood dream," he said. "I was about 7 years old. I told my dad that I was going to move to Alaska and he told me to let me know when I do because he was going to go with me."

For now, he just wants to learn about the school system and staff, as well as the town itself, and learn to be efficient in his new job. "I should keep pretty busy," he said.



PHOTO BY MARK C. ROBINSON / WRANGELL SENTINEL

Kevin McCallister has moved from Fairbanks to take the job as facilities and maintenance director for Wrangell schools.

## Chamber still working on plans for a salmon derby

BY SENTINEL STAFF

The chamber of commerce would like to put on the community's 69th king salmon derby this year but hasn't figured out the details, as it takes into consideration the state's efforts to limit fishing in the area to help preserve and rebuild returns to the Stikine River system.

"We'd love to have one," chamber executive director Tommy Wells said of a king derby. The chamber is working on plans and hopes to have details soon, he said.

Catch numbers in the past two king derbies confirm the weak runs and sportfishing restrictions.

District 8 in front of Wrangell and the Stikine River is closed again this year to king salmon sportfishing through July 14, the same as in recent years. District 6, west of Etoilin and Zarembo islands, and most of District 7, east and south of Wrangell, are closed to kings until June 14.

Just 15 salmon were caught and entered last year in Wrangell's 68th King Salmon Derby, which ran over two weekends in late June. The top two entrants weighed 42.5 and 30 pounds.

The 2022 derby was the first since 2017, with four years of cancellations due to low king salmon runs. Just 57 fish were weighed in for the 2022 derby.

Other Southeast communities have canceled or scaled back their salmon derbies in recent years to help in efforts to rebuild stocks by reducing fishing pressure on the salmon.

## Alaskans invited to make ornaments for Capitol's Tongass Christmas tree

BY SENTINEL STAFF

The U.S. Forest Service is calling on Alaskans to create handmade ornaments to decorate the U.S. Capitol Christmas tree and the smaller companion trees that will represent Alaska in Washington, D.C.

The trees will come from the Tongass National Forest; it's only the second time ever that an Alaska tree has been chosen to serve as the U.S. Capitol Christmas tree.

The tree will require 3,500 large ornaments made from lightweight, durable materials that should be colorful, reflective, weatherproofed for outdoor display and 12 inches in height and width, the agency said.

An additional 6,500 ornaments using similar materials are needed for the companion trees that will be in federal buildings throughout the Washington area, with 6,000 of them measuring four to six inches, as well as an additional 500 measuring eight to 10 inches.

Participants are encouraged to use natural, recyclable or repurposed materials as much as pos-

sible, the agency said in its announcement April 1.

"Sharp edges or materials that would pose a danger of cutting someone or damaging the wires for lighting the tree should be avoided," the Forest Service announcement said. "Ornaments must not include commercial logos, political affiliations, or be divisive or offensive in any way."

Ornaments may be submitted by individuals or groups, and should represent Alaska, its people, places, traditions and natural wilderness, as well as ornaments that celebrate Forest Service icons Woodsy Owl and Smokey Bear on his 80th birthday.

All ornaments must be submitted to the Forest Service no later than Sept. 15, and can be dropped off at any Forest Service office or mailed to 2024 Capitol Christmas Tree Ornaments, 161 E. 1st Ave., Door 8, Anchorage, AK 99501. Once submitted, ornaments cannot be returned.

For more information, contact Annette Heckart with the Forest Service at [annette.heckart@usda.gov](mailto:annette.heckart@usda.gov) or visit [www.uscapitolchristmastree.com](http://www.uscapitolchristmastree.com).

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## King salmon sportfishing restrictions same as recent years

BY LARRY PERSILY  
Sentinel writer

Commercial trollers had a productive winter catching kings along the outside waters of Southeast, but area

runs are still weak and sportfishing restrictions around Wrangell this summer are similar to recent years.

District 8 in front of the Stikine River and the waters closest to town will be closed to king fishing through July 14. "The retention of king salmon is prohibited, any king salmon caught must be released immediately," according to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

District 6 and most of District 7, encompassing the Back Channel, the waters west of Wrangell Island and around Etoilin and Zarembo islands, will be closed to sportfishing for kings through June 14. District 10 north of Petersburg also is closed to June 14.

For areas open to taking kings, Alaska residents are

limited to a possession limit of two kings, at least 28 inches in length, according to a March 28 announcement by the Department of Fish and Game.

The non-resident bag and possession limit is one king, with a separate annual harvest limit.

This year's restrictions are similar to recent years, except for one difference, said Jeff Rice, area sportfish biologist for the Petersburg-Wrangell area. That difference is a closure of fresh water fishing for kings at the Blind Slough hatchery terminal harvest area.

The commercial fishery, managed separately from sportfishing, had a good winter harvest in Southeast. Trollers landed 43,151 kings mid-October through March, almost three times the number

of the previous winter, according to the state's catch report as of March 29.

The previous year's winter troll king harvest was 16,551, about equal to the five-year average of 15,706, but down from the 10-year average of 22,537, according to Fish and Game records.

About 80% of this past winter's troll catch came from District 13, which stretches along the outside waters in the northern half of Southeast, offshore Sitka.

The winter troll catch is a positive sign for ocean survival rates, Rice said.

Though the kings were plentiful this winter, they were smaller. The state reports the average troll-caught king weighed 9.8 pounds, down from the five-year average of 10.9 pounds and 10-year average of 11 pounds.

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# Researchers uncover fate of thousands of Alaskans sent during half a century to Oregon mental hospital

By MARK THIESSEN  
Associated Press

Lucy Pitka McCormick's relatives cooked salmon, moose, beaver and muskrat over an earthen firepit on the banks of the Chena River, just outside Fairbanks, as they honored her life. They whipped whitefish, blueberries and lard into a traditional Alaska Native dessert, and dolloped servings onto a paper plate, setting it in the flames to feed her spirit.

The family prayed as McCormick's great-grandson built a small plywood coffin that was filled with gifts and necessities for the next world, such as her granddaughter's artwork and a hairbrush.

The weeklong Koyukon Athabascan burial ceremony last September was traditional in all ways but one: McCormick died in 1931. Her remains were only recently identified and returned to family.

McCormick was one of about 5,500 Alaskans between 1904 and the 1960s who were committed to a hospital in Portland, after being deemed by a jury "really and truly insane," a criminal offense.

There were no facilities to treat those with mental illness or developmental disabilities in what was then the Alaska territory, so they were sent — often by dog sled, sleigh or stagecoach — to a waiting ship in Valdez. The 2,500-mile journey ended at Morningside Hospital.

Many never left, and their families never learned their fate.

They are known as the Lost Alaskans.

For more than 15 years, volunteers in Fairbanks and in Portland have been working to identify the people who were committed to the hospital. Many were buried in Portland cemeteries, some in unmarked pauper graves. A few, like McCormick, have been returned to Alaska for proper burials.

"It was pretty powerful that we had Lucy back," said her grandson, Wally Carlo. "You could feel the energy when she came back to Alaska, like she had to wait 90-some years for this."

A new database went online in February to help families see if their long-lost auntie or great-grandfather were among those sent to Morningside. The website, which builds on an earlier blog, is a clearinghouse for research performed by the volunteers.

Finding information has been laborious. Most records at the private hospital were lost in a 1968 fire, and territorial offi-

cialists didn't document those who were committed.

The volunteers became history detectives in an investigation that has spanned more than 15 years. Among them: former Alaska health commissioner Karen Perdue; two retired state judges, Niesje Steinkruger and the late Meg Green; and two other Fairbanks residents, Ellen Ganley and Robin Renfroe, aided by Eric Cordingley, a cemetery volunteer in Portland.

They combed through dusty Department of Interior records at the National Archives, the Alaska and Oregon state archives, and old Alaska court records for any tidbit: the results of commitment trials, cemetery files, death certificates, old newspaper stories and U.S. marshals reimbursement records for the costs of escorting patients.

Ganley and Perdue started the search at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland, in 2008. Armed with laptops and a scanner, they gave themselves a week to find any reference to Perdue's uncle, Gilford Kriska, who had disappeared from the village of Nulato, on the Yukon River in western Alaska, when he was a boy.

They found a wealth of information about others in Morningside's payment requests for housing Alaskans. Finally, they saw her uncle's name on a patient trust account, showing the federal government owed him a few cents.

That entry provided his patient number, which they used to uncover more about Kriska, including that it was village nuns who had him committed.

Kriska eventually returned to Fairbanks, where Perdue said she met him once in the 1970s.

"He was mildly what we would call developmentally disabled today," she said. He could read and write but had few life skills.

Perdue said that while she was health commissioner, from 1994 to 2001, many people approached her with similar stories of long-missing relatives. That pain had been passed down in the families for decades — "intergenerational trauma," Perdue said.

There are several thousand names in the new database, with more names and details being added. Users might be able to find when and why a patient was committed, when they left or died, a burial location, and a death certificate.



PHOTO BY WALLY CARLO VIA AP.

In this Sept. 29, 2023, photo, Brian Cruger holds the cross made for the grave of his great-grandmother, Lucy Pitka McCormick. With him is McCormick's granddaughter, Kathleen Carlo, during a reburial ceremony in the Alaska Interior community of Rampart.

The hospital was founded in the late 19th century by Dr. Henry Waldo Coe, initially in his home and later on a farm in Portland. It operated under several names before it was called Morningside.

In 1904, it received a government contract to care for mentally ill Alaskans, a contract that lasted until after Alaska gained statehood in 1959 and began to build its own mental health facilities.

A variety of Alaskans wound up there: miners, housewives, Alaska Natives, a co-founder of Juneau, a banker from Fairbanks. Causes included postpartum depression, cabin fever, epilepsy, addiction and syphilis. The youngest patient was 6 weeks old; the oldest was 96.

Parents sometimes would frighten their children into behaving by mentioning the hospital. "Inside, outside, Morningside," became a common phrase denoting people could stay in Alaska, move away or be committed.

It was likely letters written by the patients were never sent, and they never received mail meant for them, according to evidence found by retired judge Steinkruger.

Morningside's treatment of its residents

came under public scrutiny by the 1950s. Congressional hearings and public outrage eventually helped force its closure in 1968. A shuttered mall off interstate now sits on its former grounds.

From Portland, Cordingley documented burial sites at several cemeteries and obtained 1,200 Oregon death certificates.

"I'm just glad that I happened to be here when they needed someone to help," said Cordingley, who has volunteered at his neighborhood cemetery for about 15 years, helping to clean headstones and decipher obscure burial records.

In 2012, he began creating his own databases to help families find lost loved ones. He built three virtual cemeteries at [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com), including photos of death certificates, burial sites and in some cases the patients. One virtual site is dedicated to Alaska Natives who died at Morningside, a second to other patients and a third for Alaska children who died at another Oregon institution, Baby Louise Haven.

Cordingley found Lucy McCormick's grave marker in Portland, informed the family — they were stunned — and later watched as she was disinterred.

McCormick's aunt, Fairbanks furrier Helen Callahan, claimed she was "insane," and McCormick was admitted to Morningside April 5, 1930, after a jury confirmed Callahan's diagnosis, records show.

In January 1931, doctors performed a hysterectomy. McCormick died within weeks from a post-surgery infection.

Wally Carlo said his father and uncles never talked about McCormick, and he never knew what happened to her. After Cordingley found her grave, the family decided to bring her home, Carlo said.

On a beautiful fall day, relatives launched four boats on the Yukon River to take her to her birthplace in the village of Rampart. They were escorted by eagles and swans, "like a salute to Grandma Lucy," he said. She was laid to rest on a hill overlooking the village of 29 people and the river.

"Don't ever give up hope and try to get them back to where they belong," he said. "Their spirits don't rest until they're found and brought back home."



PHOTO BY ROGER BRUNNER VIA AP

This Feb. 2, 2011, photo shows Niesje Steinkruger at the Alaska state archives in Juneau displaying a book of old court records that included sanity hearings. Steinkruger and other volunteers have spent years digging through old records to identify about 5,500 Alaskans who were committed to a mental hospital in Oregon before Alaska gained statehood.



# Wrangell high schoolers travel to Sitka for annual music festival

By MARK C. ROBINSON  
Sentinel reporter

Fourteen Wrangell High School students will participate in the annual three-day Southeast Regional Music Festival this week at Sitka High School. The event will feature morning and evening performances that will be livestreamed on the Sitka Fine Arts Camp YouTube channel and via links on the Music Fest website.

Music teacher Tasha Morse, who will accompany her students, described the April 11-13 event as a showcase. High school music groups from across the region, including orchestral, jazz and choir, will perform in various concerts, along with solo and ensemble performances.

Students will also attend afternoon classes as “a way to get feedback from professional musicians,” Morse said.

“Anyone that has something

interesting to say or teach about music is given the opportunity to teach something they know about,” she said in an email on April 5.

The festival rotates between different schools in the region.

“Since our choir that is traveling consists of only three students this year, we are combining with the Thunder Mountain, Juneau-Douglas and Craig choirs to make one choir together,” Morse said.

After a dinner break, students will perform in an evening concert.

“Music Fest is really hard to explain to those that have not experienced it,” she added. “You experience music. You listen to what others are doing, you spark your own ideas, you listen to professors of music tell you something you can do to make your group better.”

Morse emphasized the focus is not on competition. “It is

music for music’s sake.”

She added that the only thing that comes close to a competition during the festival is when students try to earn a “command performance” at the evening concert. Such performances are selected by adjudicators from the solo and ensemble concerts.

“Last year was Wrangell’s first command performance in about 20 years, when Ander Edens took to the stage to sing ‘The Green Eyed Dragon’ by Charles Wolseley. We only have one group performing in the solo/ensemble space, so we will have to see what that brings.”

More information is available at the Music Fest website: <https://sites.google.com/view/music-fest-24-sitka/home>. The livestreamed concerts will be on the Sitka Fine Arts Camp YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/@facstreaming3991>.

# Alaska is among states suing to block student loan debt relief

By COLLIN BINKLEY AND  
JOHN HANNA  
Associated Press

A group of Republican-led states, including Alaska, is suing the Biden administration to block a new student loan repayment plan that provides a faster path to cancellation and lower monthly payments for millions of borrowers.

In a federal lawsuit filed March 28, 11 states led by Kansas argue that President Joe Biden overstepped his authority in creating the SAVE Plan, which was made available to borrowers last year and has already canceled loans for more than 150,000.

It argues that the new plan is no different from Biden’s first attempt at student loan cancellation, which the Supreme Court rejected last year. “Last time defendants tried this the Supreme Court said that this action was illegal. Nothing since then has changed,” according to the lawsuit.

The U.S. Education Department declined to comment on the lawsuit but noted that Congress in 1993 gave the department the authority to define the terms of income-driven repayment plans.

“The Biden-Harris administration won’t stop fighting to provide support and relief to borrowers across the country — no matter how many times Republican elected officials try to stop us,” the department said in a statement.

Biden announced the SAVE repayment plan in 2022, alongside a separate plan to cancel up to \$20,000 in debt for more than 40 million Americans. The Supreme Court blocked the cancellation plan after Republican states sued, but the court didn’t examine SAVE, which was still being hashed out.

The Biden administration says more than 7.7 million borrowers have enrolled in the SAVE plan, including more than 5 million who have had their monthly payments reduced to \$100 or less because they have lower yearly incomes.

The latest lawsuit was filed in federal court by Kansas Attorney General Kris Kobach, who requested that any trial be held in his state. The lawsuit asks a judge to halt the plan immediately. Along with Kansas, the suit is backed by Alabama, Alaska, Idaho, Iowa, Louisiana, Montana, Nebraska, South Carolina, Texas and Utah.

“The law simply does not allow President Biden to do what he wants to do,” Kobach said during a news conference at the Kansas Statehouse.

Biden’s new repayment plan is a modified version of other income-based repayment plans that the Education Department has offered since the 1990s. The earliest versions were created by Congress to help struggling borrowers, capping payments at a portion of their income and canceling any remaining debt after 20 or 25 years.

The new plan offers more generous terms than ever, offering to reduce monthly payments for more borrowers and canceling loans in as little as 10 years. Unlike other plans, it prevents interest from snowballing as long as borrowers make their monthly payments.

The plan’s provisions are being phased in this year, and the quicker path to cancellation was originally scheduled to take effect later this summer. But the Biden administration accelerated that benefit and started canceling loans for some borrowers in February.

Biden said it was meant “to give more borrowers breathing room so they can get out from under the burden of student loan debt.”

Instead of creating a new plan from scratch, the Education Department amended existing plans through federal regulation. Supporters saw it as a legal maneuver that put the plan on firmer ground, anticipating a challenge from Republicans.

But in the new lawsuit, Kobach argues that Biden needed to go through Congress to make such significant changes.

# Haines pays social media influencers to inspire tourism

By LEX TREINEN

Chilkat Valley News, Haines

“Let me take you to one of my favorite places in Alaska that you’ve probably never heard of,” Danielle Marie Lister says in a recent Instagram video.

Lister wears black bibs, a purple down jacket and thick white boots as she skips along the Haines Highway below a snow-covered mountain along with soft guitar music.

The one-minute video includes shots of bald eagles on the Chilkat River, the slow waves of Portage Cove, and steam rising from a hot tub outside a yurt pressed against the Takshanuk Mountains.

“I always love the contrast of the small quiet town and its epic landscape,” Lister tells her 198,000 followers. “There’s something poetic about it. We are so lucky to have Haines as our Alaska neighbors and look forward to coming back in the summer.”

Lister’s enthusiasm for Haines may be real, but it’s also part of her job. Lister was recently hired by the Haines tourism office to produce photos and videos to promote Haines at a cost of about \$3,000, according to tourism director Reba Hylton.

Yes, the borough hired a social media influencer.

“It’s a huge and relatively inexpensive and effective way to meet our target audience,” said Hylton.

Social media influencers have become prominent ways brands promote their products over the past decade or more as more users have flocked to platforms like Facebook, TikTok and Instagram. The market for influencers was valued at \$16.5 billion in 2022, according to a report from Allied Market Research.

Since taking over as tourism director last spring, Hylton has paid three influencers to come to Haines — spending about \$7,000 out of a \$154,000 budget. Hylton said Lister’s audience fit in well with the tourism office’s goals of attracting more wintertime travelers, as well as targeting Yukoners.

Lister brought snowmachines, her partner (a professional photographer) and two friends to Haines with her. The visitor center paid for her accommodations as well as payments in exchange for at least three stories. Aside from being able to share the content over social media, the tourism office also gets rights to 50 photos and more than 10 videos that will help with future marketing campaigns.

Jillian Simpson, director of the Alaska Travel Industry Association, said Hylton’s strategy seems promising.

“It’s definitely standard and considered even best

practice to use influencer marketing as part of its overall marketing strategy,” said Simpson. “Particularly it’s really helpful when it comes to travel.”

Despite that, few individual communities appear to be actively reaching out to influencers. The Alaska Travel Industry Association has used influencers since 2017, including six last year. This year, it hired an influencer for the upcoming Arctic Winter Games in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. The association helps coordinate trips to regions around the state.

Hylton said she’s OK with Haines being a pioneer in the market, especially considering its unique Southeast status on the road system. She said there’s fierce competition to attract independent travelers, and influencers are one way to get a leg up.

“I feel like we’re leading the charge on this,” said Hylton. “I do feel confident we’re headed in the right direction.”

Still, Simpson and Hylton acknowledged it’s hard to measure the exact impact of influencers. Hylton said posts from Lister and the two others she’s hired have had a wide reach based on engagement data, but it’s unclear how many of those have transferred to actual increased visits.

“That’s the golden question out there that nobody can answer,” Hylton said.

Hylton said her office receives dozens of solicitations from influencers looking for freebies from the borough, but very few are worth pursuing. “I won’t hire just anyone. I need to make sure it’s the right demographic for our audience.”

Still, some are skeptical of the idea. “I have no data for this but I can only think that politically and socially, individuals reach a specific narrow group, even if it’s millions of people, and I would like to see us work more to get more families,” said Carol Tuynman, a member of the Haines Tourism Advisory Board.

Aside from Lister, Hylton has also hired Christine Kesteloo, a cruise ship traveler. Under the handle DutchWorld\_Americangirl, Kesteloo has 887,000 followers on TikTok.

Hylton said Kesteloo’s audience was ideal for targeting cruise ship passengers who stop over in Skagway and are considering a day trip to Haines. Hylton said she’s known Kesteloo for years and got a “bargain deal” of about \$1,000. Kesteloo jet-boated up the Chilkat River and saw bears along the Chilkoot.

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# Fishermen, communities in limbo as state-backed seafood company teeters

BY NATHANIEL HERZ  
Northern Journal

The fishing fleet in the Southwest Alaska town of King Cove would have been harvesting Pacific cod this winter.

But they didn't: Skippers had nowhere to sell their catch. The enormous plant that usually buys and processes their fish never opened for the winter season.

The company that runs the plant, Peter Pan Seafoods, is facing six-figure legal claims from fishermen who say they haven't been paid for catches they delivered months ago. King Cove's city administrator says the company is behind on its utility bills. And now, residents fear the plant may stay closed through the summer salmon season, which would leave the village with just half of the revenue that normally funds its yearly budget.

"We should be fishing right now," said Ken Mack, a longtime King Cove fisherman. "Ain't much to do besides trying to get money that they didn't pay last year."

The plant closure in King Cove is just one impact of the ongoing turmoil at Peter Pan, a major Alaska seafood processor. The upheaval comes amid continuing low global fish prices that have stressed all levels of the industry.

Peter Pan owns plants in King Cove; in the remote Alaska Peninsula outpost of Port Moller; in the Bristol Bay hub town of Dillingham; and in the Prince William Sound city of Valdez. In interviews last month, commu-

nity leaders, industry players and Peter Pan fishermen said they're in limbo as they wait to find out if the company will survive, fold or somehow restructure its business.

"We are all sort of on pins and needles," said Gary Hennigh, King Cove's city administrator. "The greatest frustration is just: Tell us straight what's happening. Don't keep leading us on."

Neither Peter Pan part-owner Rodger May nor officials from McKinley Alaska, an Anchorage-based finance firm that manages an investment in the company, have said much publicly about the fate of their business.

In response to emailed questions that included references to Peter Pan fishermen's claims, Rob Gillam, McKinley Alaska's president, did not respond directly to assertions about unpaid bills but said in a prepared statement that it's a "very challenging time in the Alaska seafood industry and at Peter Pan Seafoods."

An oversupply of fish, high interest rates and skepticism from lenders "have collided to seriously impact the industry and the communities and fisherman who rely on it," Gillam said.

"We are actively working with Peter Pan's ownership and management teams to navigate the situation," he added. "We remain hopeful a positive outcome can be found."

May didn't respond to a request for comment.

The stakes are substantial not just for fishermen and the communities that host Peter Pan's

plants. The state of Alaska also holds a significant financial interest in the company.

The money that McKinley invested in Peter Pan comes from the Na'-Nuk Investment Fund, which is managed by the finance firm. Of the \$117 million raised for Na'-Nuk by mid-2022, \$100 million was from the Alaska Permanent Fund Corp., according to a fact sheet published by McKinley.

The exact amount of Na'-Nuk's investment in Peter Pan has not been disclosed.

For four decades starting in the late 1970s, Peter Pan was under Japanese ownership.

Fishermen and local leaders complained that owner Maruha Nichiro, a global seafood firm, was underinvesting in Peter Pan during a period when there was competition from other fish buyers. But the company managed to keep its plants open.

After buying Peter Pan in 2020, its new owners — May, the Na'-Nuk fund and a California investment firm called Renewable Resources Group — promised to revitalize and grow the business. After the acquisition, to recruit fishermen who were selling to other processors, they offered to pay high prices for salmon.

"You've got to put more pounds through the plants, put more fish through the plants. When you do, you get more efficient, the costs come down, that benefits everybody," Gillam Bristol Bay public radio station KDLG in 2021. "It means you pay fishermen a little bit more. It means you can provide more benefits to the people who work there. It means you can lower the cost against which you can sell your product into the market."

Initially, the new company, like the rest of Alaska's seafood industry, benefited from huge salmon runs and strong prices in the global markets.

But after the 2022 season, demand started eroding and fish prices fell dramatically.

Spiking interest rates increased the cost of borrowing money — a crucial tool for seafood processors that must spend huge sums flying workers to remote plants, buying canning and freezing supplies and subsidizing fishermen's pre-season expenses, all before a single salmon is caught. And the high value of the U.S. dollar made the industry's products more expensive for foreign buyers.

Those trends have destabilized Alaska's fishing industry at all levels.

Salmon fishermen staged public demonstrations last summer to protest lower prices they were offered for their catch. Other processing companies have announced plant closures. And Trident Seafoods, one of the industry's biggest players, is selling off four of its 11 Alaska plants as part of what it describes as a "strategic restructuring."

Trouble at Peter Pan has been brewing since last year.

More than a dozen liens — legal claims of unpaid debts — have been filed against the company since mid-2023 by fishermen, a transportation business and other vendors.

Some have been lifted, but

others remain. Those include a claim filed last month by a King Cove fisherman who said he's still waiting for \$175,000 that Peter Pan owes him for 2 million pounds of salmon and 130,000 pounds of Dungeness crab delivered between June and October.

In January, the company said it wouldn't open its King Cove plant to buy fish during the winter season — a last-minute announcement that shocked the village's fleet and left many of them without a market for their catch. There are now 20 boats docked in the community that would otherwise have been fishing, Warren Wilson, King Cove's mayor, said March 29.

"Everything was lined up to happen. The last day, they cut it off — it was the worst thing in the world," Wilson said. "We lost a year because of this stuff. Our fleet is suffering."

Fishermen and community leaders are now waiting to find out if Peter Pan will open the King Cove plant for the summer salmon season. Doubts have also spread among the few dozen fishermen that deliver salmon to Peter Pan's remote plant in Port Moller, 100 miles northeast of King Cove on the Bering Sea side of the Alaska Peninsula.

Peter Pan has held meetings with its fishing fleet in recent weeks where executives said they still plan to open their plants this summer, according to fishermen. But now, "rumors abound" about possible closures, said Hennigh, King Cove's city administrator.

The seafood industry publication Intrafish has reported that Peter Pan brought in a financial firm "to explore refinancing or joint venture options." Another publication, Undercurrent News, reported March 29 that the company has approached other Alaska processors "about buying or even leasing its plants."

The company, in its current form, faces multiple obstacles to successfully operating its King Cove and Port Moller plants this summer, according to fishermen and community leaders.

One problem is a possible

shortage of tenders — the transport boats that pick up salmon from fishermen at sea and deliver them to shore for processing.

"The tenders that were hanging around, thinking that they would be working for Peter Pan, I think have seen the handwriting on the wall that that's not going to happen," said Hennigh, the King Cove administrator. "So, they're trying to get tendering jobs with other plants."

Others say that few fishermen will take the risk of selling their catch to Peter Pan when it faces so many liens.

"Do you want to get paid? Nobody's fishing for Peter Pan unless you're crazy," said Bo Oglesbee, who sold his salmon to the company's Port Moller plant for years but this summer will deliver his fish to tenders working for another processor, Silver Bay Seafoods.

Mack said his family's summer salmon harvest will likely be sold to Trident and Silver Bay plants in the communities of Sand Point and False Pass.

"We won't give Peter Pan no salmon because they ain't giving us no help," Mack said.

Even if Peter Pan is restructured or sold, fears persist about what could happen to the company's Southwest Alaska plants given what some experts describe as excess processing capacity in the region.

A continued closure of Peter Pan's King Cove plant would have serious impacts in the community, said Hennigh.

The local government could see its yearly fish tax revenue drop by more than \$1 million, with additional six-figure losses in sales tax receipts from fishing boats buying fuel in other places.

"But the reality of our environment, our accessibility — if it ain't meant to be fishing, we just don't have any alternatives," he said. "There's no magic answer here."

*This article was originally published in the Northern Journal, a newsletter from Alaska journalist Nathaniel Herz.*

## Lease of seafood plants doesn't help solve King Cove's problem

BY NATHANIEL HERZ  
Northern Journal

A troubled, state-backed seafood processing company, Peter Pan Seafoods, has announced that it's pursuing a deal to sell its plants to another business. But the news still leaves a key asset, the massive plant in the Alaska Peninsula village of King Cove, in limbo for the summer salmon season.

Peter Pan also announced April 4 that it would lease two of its plants, in the Bristol Bay hub town of Dillingham and the remote Alaska Peninsula outpost of Port Moller, to Silver Bay Seafoods to operate for the summer.

The fate of all of Peter Pan's plants had been cast into doubt in recent weeks amid unpaid financial claims against the company and news that some of its fishermen and support vessels were defecting to other processing businesses.

Residents of King Cove, where the Peter Pan plant is responsible for roughly half of the local government's general fund revenue, were especially concerned, given that the company had already shuttered the facility during the winter fishing season.

The Alaska Permanent Fund, through an in-state investment manager, holds an undisclosed stake in Peter Pan Seafoods.

A three-page statement, issued jointly by Peter Pan and Silver Bay, announced the summer leasing plans only for the Dillingham and Port Moller plants — not for the King Cove plant — along with a previously reported sale to Silver Bay of Peter Pan's plant in Valdez.

The statement also said that a "larger restructuring, still being finalized," would see Silver Bay buy Peter Pan's "processing facilities and support sites" once the salmon season ends.

While the King Cove plant remains owned by Peter Pan, a company spokeswoman, Jennifer Thompson, referred questions about the plans for the facility's summer salmon operations to Silver Bay.

A Silver Bay spokeswoman, Abby Fredrick, said her company does not plan to operate the King Cove plant this summer.

Alaska's fishing industry has been buffeted by flagging demand and low prices for multiple species of fish in the past year, including for staples like salmon and pollock.

Silver Bay, founded in 2007, has been a growing player in the seafood processing business, and adding Peter Pan's last three plants to its current portfolio of six would amount to a major expansion.

*This article was originally published in the Northern Journal, a newsletter from Alaska journalist Nathaniel Herz.*



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# State ferry system victim of aging vessels, lack of funding

By IRIS SAMUELS

Anchorage Daily News

The state ferry Tustumena is preparing for its 60th birthday party this summer.

Over the years, the vessel has become a familiar and important part of life in communities between Homer and Dutch Harbor. But after years in rough waters, the cost of keeping the Tustumena running is ballooning.

"This ship is a floating museum piece," said John Mayer, who has captained the ship for years.

The Tustumena exemplifies the storms that the Alaska Marine Highway System has weathered.

In March, Seward shipyard workers and ferry crew members worked — as they do every year — to keep the ferry seaworthy, despite its age. In the bridge, navigational equipment had been covered in white sheets while windows were replaced with new ones; in the passenger lounge, chairs were removed to allow water that had seeped under the flooring to be cleared; on the car deck, sparks flew as metal pieces were replaced and welded.

Mayer is driven by the communities' appreciation for the ferry he captains.

"In the city of Kodiak, I swear to God, I walk down the street and people are like, 'Thank you for your service!' or honking their horn," said Mayer, who lives in Homer.

Replacing the Tustumena with a new ferry symbolizes for many the importance of federal funding in bringing hope of a sustained transportation network to coastal Alaska.

Talk of replacing the Tustumena has been driven by years of expensive repairs, prolonged overhaul periods and the impacts of extreme weather. Mayer said it costs between \$1 million and \$2 million per year to keep the Tustumena running. "And it's things that need to get done. It's not superfluous stuff," he said.

But with insufficient money and planning to carry out the replacement, years went by without a new ferry.

"It's a never-ending battle because this is an older ship. A lot of times we experience what's called discovery work, where we'll come into the shipyard knowing what needs to be done, and then in the process of doing

that, we'll encounter something else," Mayer said.

That happened in February, when workers encountered more corrosion than they expected. The ferry is still on track to leave the Seward shipyard for service in May, but "when you hit 60 years, you're 30 years past your prime," said Alaska Marine Highway System Director Craig Tornga.

The federal infrastructure bill signed in 2021 is poised to provide the necessary funding to pay for a new ferry to serve Southwest Alaska, with more than \$161 million promised so far — as long as the state can provide its own, smaller share of the funds. The state approved spending \$21 million of its own money several years ago.

The replacement vessel is expected to cost around \$350 million. Sam Dapcevich, a marine highway spokesperson, said the state has so far secured nearly \$243 million, counting around \$60 million in expected federal formula funds. That leaves more than \$107 million needed to fund the project. The state is hoping most — if not all — of the balance can be covered through a federal grant.

As of March, amid months of delays, the Tustumena replacement vessel has yet to go out to bid. The design was changed to include batteries, reflecting a federal requirement for reduced emissions. A bid attempt in 2022 yielded no takers.

Last summer, Tornga said he wanted to select a shipyard by the end of the year. In December, Tornga said he wanted to put out a request for proposals in January. Delays have piled on as Tornga held meetings with several shipyard officials to ensure that unlike in 2022, shipyards would, in fact, bid on the project.

Federal transportation officials must review the state's plans before the replacement can go out to bid, leading to further delays.

Tornga has said that construction of the new ferry could begin this summer, but he estimates that even if all goes as planned, the new vessel won't be complete until 2027.

Alaska U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, who pushed for ferry funding to be included in the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, said she's discouraged by the slow progress Alaska officials have made on the



PHOTO BY MARC LESTER / ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS

John Mayer, captain of the Tustumena, is overseeing maintenance of the vessel while it is dry-docked in Seward.

Tustumena's replacement.

"It's one of the things that I probably worked hardest on and one of the things that I'm most proud that we were able to include in the infrastructure bill, but also one of the things that perhaps I'm most frustrated about," Murkowski said in an interview.

The funding holds promise for increasing ridership by addressing years of deferred maintenance and ship construction, but it is still up to Gov. Mike Dunleavy's administration and state transportation officials to determine when and how that money will be used.

Murkowski has been critical of the state's decisions. Repairs and investments left unmade resulted in decreased reliability, ridership and revenue.

"I've used the term 'death spiral,' and I know the governor doesn't like that, but he needs to look at what we have seen over the years," she said.

Murkowski sent Dunleavy a letter earlier this year urging his administration include a state match in the coming year's budget to ensure federal funding for the Tustumena replacement is secured. That issue is still unresolved.

Tornga said he approaches the operations of the Tustumena from the position "that we've got to keep this working for the next four or five years," until the replacement vessel is complete.

"Unfortunately, it means that you're spending more on your maintenance on a vessel than you

really want to, but that's what you have to do to keep it going," he said.

Work on the Tustumena replacement is just one of several projects that the marine highway is undertaking. Federal funding has also been allotted to cover design costs for new mainliners — which could eventually replace the Columbia and the Matanuska. Design work for those vessels is slated to begin after the Tustumena replacement is underway, Tornga has said.

But the completion of those projects is scheduled to be done over the next several years, and their impact will not be immediate. Meanwhile, service is diminished.

"Nobody takes the ferry now for fun. If they're moving, they take the ferry. If they are trying to get an RV to Bellingham, they take the ferry. Nobody just goes away anymore, because it just doesn't work," said Charlotte Glover, owner of a Ketchikan bookstore.

"The more reliable we get, we'll see that come back, because the demand is there. Unfortunately, we're not reliable yet," said Tornga. "When you defer a year, it costs you, and unfortunately we've had some deferred maintenance."

Every community served by the ferry has seen a decline in service in the past decade. Even under the best of circumstances, a return to the ferry service remembered by longtime residents of Alaska's coastal communities — given the state's current budget constraints — is impossible, state transportation officials say.

Communities have found workarounds to the ferries that were once their bedrock, including using a barge service to move vehicles and spending more money on airline tickets. But if Alaskans can't rely on the ferry to make medical appointments, to attend sporting and music events, to repair their vehicles or to get from one community to another to celebrate a relative's wedding or funeral — what, and who, is the ferry system for?

"I'm not saying that we need to go back to the way it was when I was a kid, but I know the potential," said Murkowski. As a child, she lived in Wrangell, where the family home was on the water. She recalls seeing the ferry on a near-daily basis and traveling by ferry to see her cousins and grandparents in

Ketchikan. As part of a family with five children, she said flying would have been unaffordable.

"Our families relied on the ferry system for everything from moving around to medical appointments to just getting out of town to go visit your grandma," she said.

Officials with the state Department of Transportation are working on a marine highway 20-year service plan, which is set to be complete at the end of the year.

Even amid federal investments in the ferry system, that feeling is likely to remain in the coming years.

"There will be some tough times this next five years, particularly as we have the aging fleet and begin seeing new assets brought on," said Robert Venables, head of the Southeast Conference, a regional development group.

"I am really worried about the Dunleavy administration," said Glover, the Ketchikan bookstore owner, adding that overseeing the ferry system "takes someone who has a commitment to the project and can see the big picture."

After a \$30 million cut to ferry funding in Dunleavy's first year in office in 2019, marine highway spending has gradually ticked upward, with federal funding making up an ever-larger portion of the operating budget.

Federal funding made up around 24% of the ferries' operating budget in 2023. In the current year, it is projected to make up around 36%. In 2025, state officials are banking on federal funding accounting for almost half of operating costs, according to figures provided by the state transportation department.

When Jon Erickson first arrived in Yakutat a decade ago, the 600-person community was served by two ferries per week — one going north to Whittier, and the other going south to Juneau. First, the ferries stopped coming in the winter. Then, the ferry service declined to two voyages in each direction per month.

Then, service was again cut in half. Last year, Yakutat received no ferries at all.

"How do you get a contractor who wants to come to Yakutat when it costs \$7,000 to bring a vehicle here by barge?" Erickson wondered.

"Not having the ferry — it's really caused a discouragement within town."



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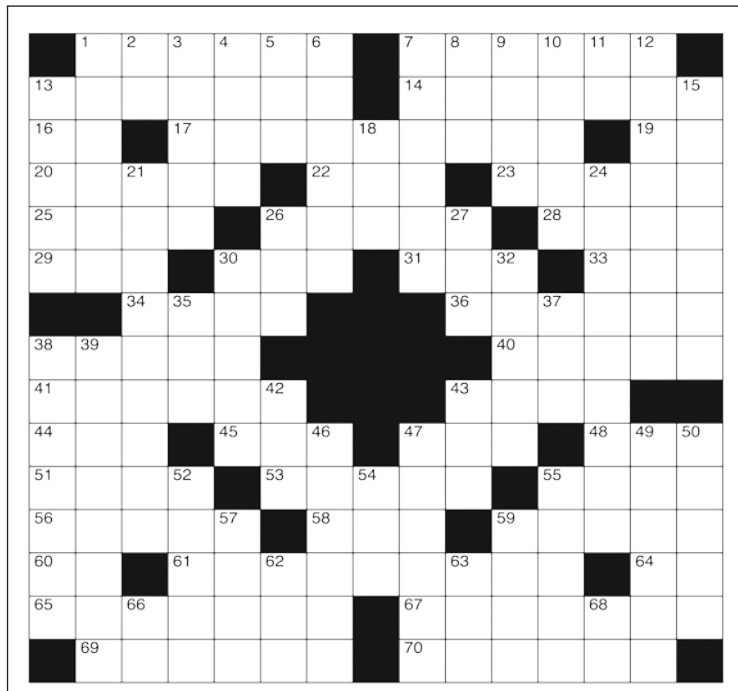


# Police report

- Monday, April 1**  
Agency assist: Ambulance.  
Traffic stop: Verbal warning for no taillights and expired registration.
- Tuesday, April 2**  
Dog complaint: Chasing cars.  
Summons service.
- Wednesday, April 3**  
Agency assist: Ambulance.  
Dog at large: Returned to owner.
- Thursday, April 4**  
Suspicious person: Intoxicated.  
Dog complaint.  
Theft.  
Agency assist: Hoonah Police Department.
- Friday, April 5**  
Dog complaint.  
Parking violation.  
Agency assist: Ambulance.  
Traffic stop.  
Bar check.
- Saturday, April 6**  
Agency assist: Emergency medical technicians.  
Traffic stop: Warning for faulty equipment.
- Sunday, April 7**  
Traffic hazard.  
Agency assist: Ambulance.

# Crossword

Answers on page 12



**CLUES ACROSS**

- 1. Island nation
- 7. Platforms
- 13. Project plan
- 14. French fishing port
- 16. South Dakota
- 17. Oakland's baseball team
- 19. Military policeman
- 20. Ornamental stone
- 22. Garland
- 23. Process that produces ammonia
- 25. Mousses
- 26. Music notation "dal \_"
- 28. Fail to win
- 29. Peyton's little brother
- 30. Not near
- 31. Some cars still need it
- 33. Lizard genus
- 34. An idiot (Brit.)
- 36. Postponed
- 38. African country
- 40. Gazes unpleasantly
- 41. In a way, traveled
- 43. Ukraine's capital
- 44. Appropriate
- 45. Dash
- 47. Twitch
- 48. Swiss river
- 51. Data file with computer animations
- 53. City in S. Korea
- 55. Particular region
- 56. They have eyes and noses
- 58. Tear
- 59. Large Madagascan lemur
- 60. Not out
- 61. Ornamental saddle covering
- 64. A driver's license is one
- 65. Latin term for charity
- 67. Rechristens
- 69. Objects from an earlier time
- 70. Hindu male religious teachers

**CLUES DOWN**

- 1. Used as a weapon
- 2. Yukon Territory
- 3. Makes a map of
- 4. An established ceremony prescribed by a religion
- 5. Unnilhexium
- 6. Merchant
- 7. Playing the field
- 8. Folk singer DiFranco
- 9. Something to scratch
- 10. Mexican agave
- 11. Equal to one quintillion bytes
- 12. Session
- 13. North American people
- 15. Ranches
- 18. Electroencephalograph
- 21. A type of compound
- 24. Avenue
- 26. High schoolers' test
- 27. A type of meal
- 30. Gradually disappeared
- 32. Ancient Frankish law code
- 35. Popular pickup truck
- 37. Buzzing insect
- 38. Deal illegally
- 39. Lying in the same plane
- 42. Obstruct
- 43. Related
- 46. Challenge aggressively
- 47. Nocturnal hoofed animals
- 49. Bird's nests
- 50. Forays
- 52. \_ B. de Mille, filmmaker
- 54. Title of respect
- 55. One-time name of Vietnam
- 57. Self-immolation by fire ritual
- 59. Private school in New York
- 62. Political action committee
- 63. A way to fashion
- 66. Email reply
- 68. 'The Great Lake State'

# OBITUARIES

## Former resident David Michael Saunders Sr. dies at 66

David Michael "Mike" Saunders Sr. was born to Lee and Marie Saunders in Stockton, California, on July 7, 1957. He passed peacefully on Oct. 9, 2023, in Olympia, Washington.

The family appreciates the heartfelt condolences and will hold a service at a later date.

In 1967, Mike and his two older siblings, Cathy and Terry, and their parents relocated from Stockton to Wrangell to fulfill his father's dream of living in the land of opportunity, "where one could fish and hunt until one's cup runneth over," the family wrote.

While living in Alaska, Mike's preferred occupation was to work as a deckhand on commercial fishing boats. Some of these positions were acquired due to his reputation as a great cook.

Mike spent most of his life in Wrangell, but later became a wanderer, curious about the beauty of places he hadn't seen. He made friends from any walk of life, never judging anyone and trusting everyone. "As he traveled across different states, he would enthusiastically re-



David Michael "Mike" Saunders

count the sights and experiences he encountered, painting vivid pictures of his journeys to those who listened," his family wrote.

Having been raised in California and Alaska, where he formed deep connections with the sea, he often expressed a longing for the sights and smells of fishing boats and the ocean, accompanied by his need for

warm sunshine. He discovered his sanctuary and place of contentment in Maui, Hawaii, where the warm sun and gentle waves offered solace.

Despite occasionally lacking a permanent residence, he found joy in the simplicity of life, often resting in his hammock with the sun on his face and his toes buried in the sand, his family wrote.

"We'll miss his smiling face. He believed in heaven and angels, and we are certain that he is now at peace and content in their presence with the sun in his face and his butt in the sand," the family wrote.

Mike is survived by his children Kristen Johnson, David Michael Saunders Jr. and Ryan Lee Saunders, and bonus daughter Kimberly Lewis-Olds; grandchildren Kylah Giller, Kameron Johnson, Callie Johnson, Galen Johnson, David Michael Saunders III, Ryan Lee Saunders Jr. and Raelynn Saunders; siblings Cathy Kaer and Terry Saunders; and an abundance of nieces, nephews and cousins.

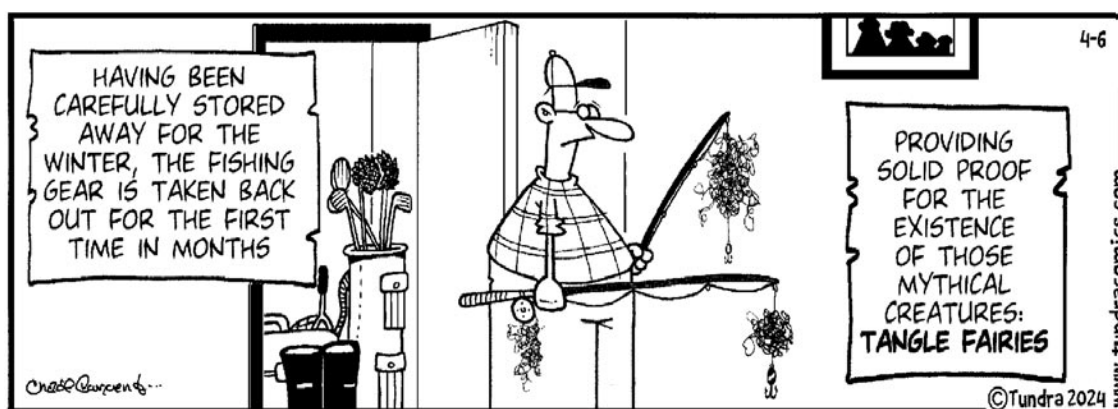
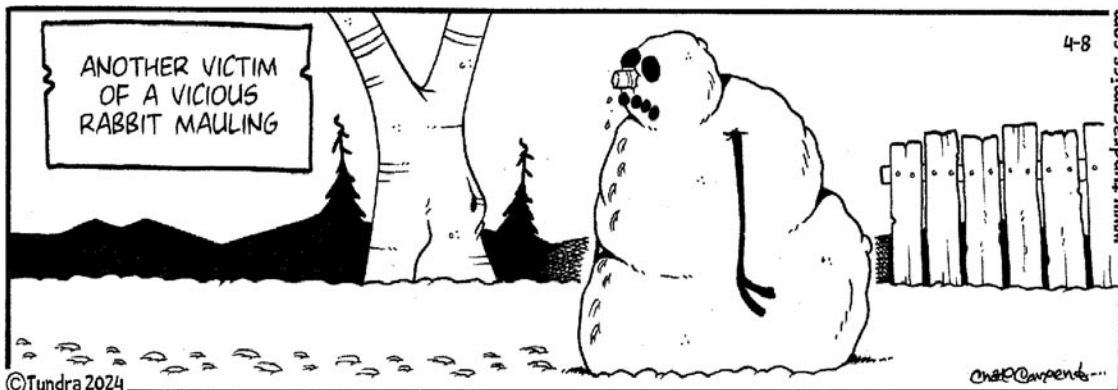
## Ritter's River

by Marc Lutz



## Tundra

by Chad Carpenter





# Project works to compile glossary of Indigenous environmental terms

BY YERETH ROSEN  
Alaska Beacon

In the language of the Gwich'in people of northeastern Alaska, the word for month known in English as July is Łuk choo zhrii, meaning "the month of king salmon," said Rochelle Adams, an Indigenous advocate who grew up in Beaver and Fort Yukon.

With Yukon River king salmon runs diminished to the point where harvests of the species were not even allowed, that name now poses a dilemma, Adams said.

"If we can't fish in the month of king salmon, what are we living in?" Adams said at a conference in mid-March.

"How we navigate the world is in our languages. Do we have to change the name of our month?"

To help explain the changes caused by a warming climate that people are seeing on the land and in the water, Adams and language scholar and educator Annauk Olin are embarking on a project to compile a glossary of Indigenous environmental terms.

The work is being done through the Alaska Public Interest Research Group (AKPIRG) Language Access program, which Adams directs.

The two described their project at the Alaska Just Tran-

sition Summit organized by Native and environmental groups and held last month in Juneau.

"The terms our ancestors used are sometimes no longer applicable to what we're seeing, and that is — wow," said Olin, who is from Shishmaref, an Inupiat community just north of the Bering Strait on the Chukchi Sea coast.

"How are young people going to understand the environment of yesterday and tomorrow and today?" she said. One answer, she said, is a close examination of traditional language.

Adams and Olin already have plenty of experience with

language and cultural instruction and documentation. They, with some AKPIRG colleagues, in 2022 produced a set of protocols to guide use of translations.

Other Language Access program projects included translations of information about COVID-19 and about the 2020 U.S. Census. Olin, among other projects, has helped guide the Northwest Arctic Borough School District's language-immersion instruction.

Adams is one of the creative forces behind the PBS Kids series "Molly of Denali," serving as a cultural adviser for the Indigenous-focused show, and she has been part of the Doyon

Foundation's language revitalization committee and is also an artist known for her salmon-skin works.

At the summit session in March, Adams and Olin described ways that Indigenous languages are valuable in practical life. That's shown, Olin said, in the myriad Inupiaq words describing in precise detail the different forms that sea ice can take, including the warnings that those words sometimes hold.

She read an Inupiaq passage that is an example and translated it into English: "In the spring on the landfast ice and pack ice, when they begin to thaw, melt holes form. The melt holes are dangerous, as people may get wet when they step near the holes."

The words themselves are pieces of scientific evidence.

One Inupiaq word — pikaluyik — refers to old sea ice that is so compacted over time that it is blue, like glacier ice, according to a dictionary published in 1970. Such ice is scarcer than it used to be. Sea ice that was over four years old comprised about a third of the peak winter Arctic ice pack in the 1980s but is now down to under 5% of the total.

Western scientists have already adopted at least one Indigenous word as a term to describe an effect of climate change. The Yup'ik word usteq, which translates to "surface caves in," is now used when referring to a catastrophic form of land collapse in which "frozen ground disintegrates under the compounding influences of thawing permafrost, flooding, and erosion," according to the Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys.

But in the past, the value of Indigenous languages was dismissed by the non-Native world.

Some at the conference said they regretted not learning their Indigenous languages when they were young and are now trying to correct that lapse. Some said they worry about languages fading as elders die.

To help reverse the losses, Adams and Olin have abundant material with which to compile an environmental glossary.

As with the Gwich'in word for July, there are numerous words in different languages that describe conditions at certain times of the year — which could be changing. In the Ahtna language, for example, the term hwdlii na'aaye' used for the month of April translates to "crusted snow month," according to a dictionary published in 1990 by the University of Alaska Fairbanks' Alaska Native Language Center.

Inupiat terms for May refer to that as the time of year when river ice breaks or when river waters start to flow, according to the 1970 dictionary.

*The Alaska Beacon is an independent, donor-funded news organization. Alaskabeacon.com.*

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Teaching Certificate preferred. At least one year demonstrated successful educational counseling experience preferred. Responsibilities include: maintain competency in areas of certification and assignment; provide for counseling opportunities and a planned sequence of career guidance activities for students; provide information and recommendations for education and career placement, and to make health, psychological and legal referrals; share in the facilitation of district-wide testing program to include statewide assessments and MAP testing, assessments and surveys including administration, information, interpretation, staff training and evaluation of results; strive for harmonious and cooperative relationships with staff, students, parents and community; encourage educational

participation; maintain a positive image and develop contacts in the community. Anticipated start date is Aug. 19, 2024. For more information and a detailed job description, please contact the District Office at 907-874-2347.

### HELP WANTED

Now hiring in Petersburg: Executive Director for Working Against Violence for Everyone (WAVE). Are you passionate about creating safer communities and ending violence? WAVE is seeking a dynamic Executive Director to lead our mission-driven organization. Responsibilities include strategic planning, fundraising, staff management and community engagement. Ideal candidates will have a proven track record in nonprofit leadership, advocacy and a commitment to social justice. Join us in making a difference. Closes April 19. Apply at [www.petersburgwave.org/careers](http://www.petersburgwave.org/careers)

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- Customer Service: Duties include counter sales, freight handling, customer deliveries, stocking and inventory. Full-time position, will require working Saturdays. Valid Alaska driver's license, must be able to lift 50 lbs., forklift experience a plus, starting pay is DOE. Position starting in April.

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### CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL NOTICE INVITING BIDS CITY PARK PAVILION REPLACEMENT, DESIGN-BUILD

Notice is hereby given that the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, will receive sealed bids for the **CITY PARK PAVILION REPLACEMENT, DESIGN-BUILD** project. Work consists of all activities necessary to design and construct the City Park Pavilion Replacement Project reflected in the contract documents. The work generally includes mobilization, concrete foundation, timber-frame construction, roofing, fireplace and other improvements. The Owner's Estimate for all work is approximately \$115,000 to \$125,000.

Sealed bids will be received by the City and Borough of Wrangell, Post Office Box 531, Wrangell, Alaska 99929, or located at the Borough Clerk's Office, 205 Brueger Street, Wrangell, Alaska 99929, until 2 p.m. prevailing time on April 12, 2024, and publicly opened and read at that time.

The Contract Documents are available in electronic format and can be downloaded from the City and Borough of Wrangell website ([www.wrangell.com](http://www.wrangell.com)) under the Bids and RFP's section. Downloading Contract Documents from the City and Borough of Wrangell's website requires registration with the Borough Clerk to be placed on the Plan Holders List and to ensure receipt of subsequent Addenda. Failure to register may adversely affect your proposal. It is the Offeror's responsibility to ensure that they have received all Addenda affecting this Solicitation. To be registered, contact the Borough Clerk at 907-874-2381 or at [clerk@wrangell.com](mailto:clerk@wrangell.com)

The owner reserves the right to reject any or all Bids, to waive any informality in a Bid, or to make award as it best serves the interests of the owner.

Mason Villarma, Interim Borough Manager  
City and Borough of Wrangell

**Publish March 27, April 3 and 10, 2024**

### CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL NOTICE INVITING BIDS

Notice is hereby given that the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska will receive sealed bids for the construction of the **WRANGELL AIRPORT AIRFIELD LIGHTING BACK-UP POWER CONNECTION** project. The WORK generally includes mobilization, electrical service equipment, underground electrical systems, cabling, wiring, panelboard and other improvements necessary to provide for a backup power generator connection.

Sealed bids will be received by the City and Borough of Wrangell, Post Office Box 531, Wrangell, Alaska 99929, or located at the Borough Clerk's Office, 205 Brueger Street, Wrangell, Alaska 99929, until 2 p.m. prevailing time on May 1, 2024 and publicly opened and read at that time.

The Contract Documents are available in electronic format and can be downloaded from the City and Borough of Wrangell website ([www.wrangell.com](http://www.wrangell.com)) under the Bids and RFP's section.

The OWNER reserves the right to reject any or all Bids, to waive any informality in a Bid, or to make award as it best serves the interests of the OWNER.

Mason Villarma, Borough Manager  
City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska

**Publish April 3, 10 and 17, 2024**





Kelli Hughes (left) gives Esther Reese advice on her hat at a class on March 30. Hughes is one of Holly Churchill's three apprentices through the University of Alaska Southeast.



PHOTOS BY BECCA CLARK / WRANGELL SENTINEL

Kelli Hughes weaves a headband in class March 30. Headbands are sewn into the inside of cedar hats to ensure a snug fit on the wearer's head.

# Hat weaving

Continued from page 1

anally agreed to learn to weave from Peratrovich. The three women taught weaving to hundreds of people and traveled around the world to learn from other cultures, thus helping to revive the dying traditional art.

In 1982, Churchill said that there was only one woven hat at Celebration, which was made by her grandmother. But in recent years, dozens of hats have been seen at Celebration, the dance and culture festival sponsored by Sealaska Heritage Institute and held every other year in Juneau.

In addition to the classes Churchill teaches around Alaska and other parts of the world, she has three apprentices learning from her. The two-year apprenticeship is through the University of Alaska Southeast in collaboration with the Sitka Tribe of Alaska and supported by a grant from Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. The apprentices accompany Churchill to her classes and will eventually teach classes of their own.

They are traveling to Kake after Wrangell, apprentice Kelli Hughes' hometown, where they will teach high school students to weave hats for their upcoming graduation.

Churchill won't be able to teach forever, she noted, highlighting the importance of pass-

ing her knowledge on to apprentices like Hughes. Her mother, Delores, is 95 now and taught weaving until she was 90. She still teaches language classes on Zoom, Churchill said.

The classes that Churchill leads, however, do not just teach methods of weaving. For many of the students, practicing weaving gives them a much deeper experience.

Jessica Whitaker, a student in Churchill's Wrangell class in March, wove a hat to wear at her upcoming graduation from the University of Alaska, where she will receive her bachelor's degree in business administration. She said the hat symbolizes all the hard work she has put in to earn her degree.

Whitaker also said the weaving class has been a healing experience for her. She struggles with anxiety, and typically classes like this would be stressful for her. But after one day in the class, she found the environment to be a safe space, she said.

Sharing a cultural practice with others made her feel loved, supported and connected to her heritage. Cultural activities like this provide a form of healing outside of Western medicine, Whitaker said.

Only positive energy goes into the weaving, students Sandy Churchill and Trisa Rooney explained. If they get frustrated, they take breaks and



Trisa Rooney weaves an intricate pattern into a cedar hat for her daughter March 30. The weight atop the hat helps it hold its shape as it's worked on. The wooden mold Rooney used was custom made by her husband.

get something to eat to ensure that none of that frustration goes into the weaving.

Rooney was working on weaving a very intricate pattern into a hat for her daughter. She said that when she weaves, she often thinks of the people she is weaving for. As she wove this hat, Rooney said she thought of the hopes, dreams and wishes she has for her daughter.

Next to Rooney, Sandy Churchill worked on a hat for her son. It was larger than the other hats and had a wider brim. "I wanted it to be a bit more masculine," she said.

"They say if it's in your genes you'll remember it," Sandy Churchill said. "I thought that was malarkey." But the weaving came to her naturally, even after a 16-year hiatus. She took a weaving class with Delores Churchill 20 years ago, she said, noting how special it was to learn from both Delores and Holly Churchill. Some other students in the class had a similar experience.

She named her work "Fisherman Hat." It's a traditional worker hat she said, but she wanted it to be custom for her son who loves to fish. An important part of the process is to name the hat, Holly Churchill said. Each hat needs its own name because each has its own spirit.

The 40-hour class is only part of the process, Holly Churchill explained. Preparing the materials for weaving is two thirds of the process.

Learning to gather the raw materials herself has made her even more appreciative of the weaving, Sandy Churchill said, describing how to strip the bark off the cedar trees when the sap runs in the springtime. She explained how she is much more careful and respectful with the cedar now that she has collected it herself.

Sandy Churchill's favorite part of the class was connecting with the other students. "I work better on a team," she said. Though each student worked on their own unique hat, they com-

mitted to doing it together for the week.

As the students put the finishing touches on their hats March 29, they spent time looking at each other's work and remarked just how beautifully each hat had turned out. Some students wiped away happy tears as they put their hats atop their heads and posed for photos.

Churchill's grandmother was once asked why she taught Haida weaving to so many different cultures, specifically white people. When people sit around a table together and weave and learn from each other, Peratrovich responded, they find that they have more similarities than differences.

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PUZZLE SOLUTION

### NOTICE TO CREDITORS

In the matter of the estate of Timothy Douglas Heller, Notice to Creditors is hereby given that the undersigned has been appointed personal representative of the above-named estate. All persons having claims against the said deceased are required to present their claims within four months after the date of first publication of this notice or said claims will forever be barred. Claims must be filed with the court (Case No. 1WR-24-00005PR) or be presented to:  
 Alisa Bowman, Personal Representative  
 c/o McQuillan & Hohman Law, LLC  
 821 N Street, Suite 101  
 Anchorage, AK 99501

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