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WRANGELL SENTINEL

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Nolan Center turned 20 years old — now it's time to party

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

The Nolan Center isn't old enough to drink but that will not stop its supporters from raising a champagne toast to celebrate the building's 20th birthday.

The party is set for 6 to 8 p.m. Monday, Oct. 14.

"It's really a cultural hub for our community," Nolan Center Director Jeanie Arnold said of the multi-purpose waterfront building that houses the Wrangell Museum and also

serves as a movie theater, stages community theater productions, provides space for conferences and is home for multiple community events and dinners every year.

Admission to the birthday party is free, though the Friends

of the Museum will be there to accept new members into the nonprofit support organization.

Partygoers are asked to bring a sweet or savory dish, Arnold said. The Friends of the Museum will supply the champagne, and beer and wine also will be available for people at least a year older than the building.

A highlight of the evening will be a presentation by underwater archeologist Jenya Anichenko, who will talk about ongoing research into the 1908 wreck of the salmon packer ship Star of Bengal, which went down near Coronation Island on the outside waters west of

Prince of Wales Island.

Anichenko, who lives mostly in Anchorage and Sitka but who researches shipwrecks around the world, is working with Wrangell's Gig Decker and a nonprofit called UCHART, Underwater Cultural Heritage Archaeological Research Team.

"Our goal is to find underwater shipwrecks," Decker said.

Anichenko's presentation at the birthday event "will give people an idea of what's the story and what they are finding," Arnold said.

The nonprofit is not interested in finding riches, Decker said, but rather finding the

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PHOTO BY SAM PAUSMAN / WRANGELL SENTINEL

Headed toward the water, Rocky moved past dozens of people standing in line to watch the event.

Harbor seal pup rescued in June makes her healthy return to sea

By SAM PAUSMAN
Sentinel senior reporter

At 3:44 p.m. on Oct. 3 Rocky dipped her flippers back into the shoreline by Petroglyph Beach. She waded out into the stone-laden shallows, turned back to the crowd as if to say goodbye to the Wrangell residents who saved her life four months ago, and then swam out to sea.

Rocky had been in the care of marine biologists at the Alaska SeaLife Center in Seward since June. On June 20, Wrangell resident Dan Trail found her wedged between two rocks on Petroglyph Beach. She was just a week old.

At the time, she was dehydrated, malnourished and trembling. By the time of her release,

Rocky's vitals had vastly improved and she passed all three tests required by the SeaLife Center for release: She had not received medical treatment for two weeks, she could catch fish independently and she weighed over 20 kilograms (44 pounds). Rocky weighed in at 55 pounds on the day of her release.

"She's a very plump lady," Savannah Costner said. Costner, an animal care specialist at SeaLife, led the event last Thursday.

Rocky didn't just grow in weight while in rehab; she grew a new name. Costner said the SeaLife Center's naming theme this year is "peppers." In following that theme, the center's staff renamed Rocky after a rather hot pepper.

"We have

Continued on page 5

Survey shows Southeast businesses concerned about missing workforce

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

The number of jobs in Southeast Alaska continued its post-pandemic recovery last year. Yet, employers remain worried about filling job vacancies amid declining — and aging — population numbers.

"While jobs continue to grow in 2024, so do concerns about the lack of a sufficient workforce in the region," according to the annual Southeast Alaska by the Numbers report.

"Compared to 2010, when the population was nearly identically sized, the region now has 1,700 more jobs and 5,600 fewer workforce-aged residents," said the report, prepared by researcher Meilani Schijvens, of Juneau-based Rain Coast Data.

Schijvens, who has assembled the report since 2010, presented at Southeast Conference last month in Ketchikan.

Ranking the region's challenges to economic development, Southeast business leaders "continue to identify housing as the top obstacle ... with 61% of business leaders saying it is critically important to focus on housing over the next five years," according to the report's survey conducted this past spring.

"The housing shortage is deterring young families and workers from relocating to, or remaining in, the region."

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Voters re-elect Gilbert as mayor; approve bond issue for Public Safety Building repairs

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

Voters approved a \$3 million bond issue for repairs to the water-damaged Public Safety Building by a 3-1 margin on Oct. 1.

Residents re-elected Patty Gilbert as mayor over challenger David Powell; re-elected incumbent school board member Angela Allen and elected newcomer Dan Powers over incumbent board member Britanni Robbins; and re-elected Chris Bunes to the port commission along with newcomer Eric Yancey over challengers Antonio Silva and Tony Guggenbickler.

In a close 36-ballot margin, voters rejected a proposition to amend the municipal charter. The proposed change would have allowed the assembly in a later public ordinance to estab-

lish a compensation plan to pay the mayor and assembly members for their work.

The final tally in the Oct. 1 election totaled 544 ballots, as counted by the canvas board on Oct. 3 and certified by the borough assembly that evening.

The turnout was more than double last year's exceedingly low count of 218 ballots, and more than 10% ahead of the average Wrangell municipal election turnout of 2019 through 2022.

Gilbert defeated Powell 352-187 to win a second two-year term as mayor.

Gilbert said "sidewalks and roads" will be her top priority for a second term, though she acknowledged that finding the money to pay for improvements will be a challenge.

Assembly Members Jim DeBord (443 votes) and Bob Dal-

rymple (394) were unopposed in their quest for three-year terms.

Allen, at 388, was the top vote-getter in the race for two, three-year terms on the school board. With 378 votes, Powers also won a seat. Robbins lost her re-election bid with 204 votes.

Yancey, with 371 votes, won a three-year term on the port commission, with Bunes coming in second at 275 and winning re-election to another three-year term on the commission.

Silva, at 217 votes, and Guggenbickler, at 134, lost their bids for the port commission.

The charter amendment compensation vote failed 249-285.

"I wanted it to pass because I thought maybe it would entice more people to run for of-

fice," particularly younger people and new candidates, Gilbert said two days after the election. "For that reason, I wished it had passed."

She has no plans to bring up the issue for a second try at winning voter approval. "I'm not really unhappy" about the charter amendment failing, she said.

The Public Safety Building bond issue was approved 402-135.

The borough has asked for a \$2.4 million federal grant to combine with the \$3 million it will borrow to repair the worst of the problems at the building. The project will include new exterior siding, windows and doors; structural repairs to walls weakened by water damage and rot; a new roof which will include building over the flat roof sections; and installing

exterior gutters to protect the structure.

Wrangell is waiting on Congress to adopt a federal budget for next year that includes the \$2.4 million in Public Safety Building repair funds, requested by U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski. But Congress is not expected to adopt a budget until late December, at the earliest, or maybe not until next year, depending on the results of the Nov. 5 national election and which party is waiting to take control.

Regardless of whether, or when, it receives the federal aid, the borough will work next year on engineering design, then seek competitive bids for the building repairs, with construction anticipated in 2026, according to Amber Al-Haddad, the borough's capital projects director.

Senior Center Menu

Open for in-person dining.

Thursday, Oct. 10

Chicken adobo, oriental vegetables, honey orange salad, rice

Friday, Oct. 11

Beef stew with vegetables, spicy fruit cup, roll

Monday, Oct. 14

No meal service on Mondays.

Tuesday, Oct. 15

Chinese fruited pork, green beans, Waldorf salad, rice

Wednesday, Oct. 16

Fiesta pork chops, cauliflower, fruit slaw, sweet potatoes

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

Sunday, Oct. 13

Kennicott, 6 p.m.

Sunday, Oct. 20

Kennicott, 1:30 p.m.

Sunday, Oct. 27

Kennicott, 6 p.m.

Sunday, Nov. 3

Kennicott, 9:45 p.m.

Southbound

Wednesday, Oct. 16

Kennicott, 5:45 a.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 23

Kennicott, 7:30 a.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 30

Kennicott, 5:45 a.m.

Wednesday, Nov. 6

Kennicott, 8:30 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
Oct. 9	05:30	11.2	04:54	13.7	10:48	5.8	11:57	2.2
Oct. 10	06:52	10.6	06:06	12.8	11:54	6.7
Oct. 11	08:34	11.0	07:55	12.7	01:14	2.5	01:27	6.9
Oct. 12	09:45	12.3	09:26	13.5	02:38	2.2	03:05	5.9
Oct. 13	10:36	14.0	10:32	14.9	03:50	1.3	04:19	4.0
Oct. 14	11:18	15.8	11:28	16.3	04:47	0.2	05:16	1.7
Oct. 15	11:58	17.5	05:35	-0.6	06:03	-0.6



ALASKA AIRLINES CLUB 49 COMMUNITY EVENTS CALENDAR

FALL STORYTIME for children 10 to 11 a.m. Fridays at the Irene Ingle Public Library. Stories, crafts and snacks. This week's theme is pumpkin pals.

HAUNTED HOUSE 7 to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Oct. 11-12, at the community center. All proceeds will go to The Salvation Army's youth program. If you can help as a scare actor or help with setup, contact Damon Roher at 907-305-0844.

TECH SAVVY SENIORS 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, Oct. 12, at the Irene Ingle Public Library. High school student government volunteers will help senior citizens with tech issues on phones, computers, email, social media, etc.

ADVENTURERS CLUB 2 to 3:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 12 and 26, at the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Come learn about the Bible, pick up valuable skills and earn badges. Register and learn more at <https://bit.ly/3TBw0fi>. A \$10 fee covers the school year.

COMMUNITY CHORALE REHEARSALS 5:15 to 6:45 p.m., Monday, Oct. 14, at the high school music room for the Christmas concert. Use the back entrance. All singers are welcome. Contact Bonnie at 907-796-9632 or bonniede@aptalaska.net for more information.

NOLAN CENTER ANNIVERSARY 6 p.m., Monday, Oct. 14. Celebrate the James and Elsie Nolan Center turning 20 at the Nolan Center.

"BEETLEJUICE" 6 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 15, at the Nolan Center. The 1988 dark comedy fantasy movie is free; presented by Island of Faith Lutheran Church as part of its retro-movie program. The concession stand will be open.

NOLAN CENTER THEATER no weekend movies until November.

WELLNESS FAIR 7 a.m. to noon Saturday, Oct. 19, at the Nolan Center. Blood-test packages \$150; pay at time of service, flu shot clinic, health and wellness education booths, teddy bear clinic. Register at: searhc.org/wellness-fair-registration.

WRANGELL KIDS CLUB 2:30 to 5 p.m. Mondays at the community center for open gym, board games and coloring; 2:30 to 5 p.m. Wednesdays at the Irene Ingle Public Library for STEM activities and crafts; 2:30 to 5 p.m. Fridays at the Nolan Center for a movie in the theater. For ages 7 to 13 years old. Runs through Dec. 16. Free.

PRE-K ART 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. every Monday for ages 0-5 at The Salvation Army. Experience the arts each week with a special activity prepared by Capt. Belle. Call for more information at 907-874-3753.

SKATER TOTS 1 to 2:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays at the TouchPoint Ministries rink on Bennett Street. For ages 0-10 years old. Scooters, flat boards, skates for novice beginning skaters. Separate play area, toys and tumbling mats for infants. Parents/guardians must stay to supervise. Free.

ROLL ON THE ROCK roller skating 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Saturdays at the TouchPoint Ministries rink on Bennett Street. Children 9 and under must be accompanied by an adult. Skaters must complete a registration form. \$5 per person.

TEEN GAME NIGHT 6 to 8 p.m. every Thursday at The Salvation Army. All are welcome. Call for more information at 907-874-3753.

AA MEETINGS: North Star Group meets from 7 to 8 p.m. Tuesdays and Fridays, St. Philip's Episcopal Church.

WRANGELL PARKS and RECREATION is offering multiple activities to get your body moving. For more information on any of the activities visit www.wrangellrec.com or call 907-874-2444.

- **ALASKA DAY FUN RUN** starts at 8 a.m. Oct. 19 at Muskeg Meadows, hosted by Parks and Recreation. \$10 fee; pay at the event. All ages welcome. 1-mile dash, 5K run/walk, 10K, half-marathon at various start times. Check the link for routes and times at wrangellrec.com.
- **INDOOR SOCCER CAMP**, Tuesdays and Thursdays beginning Oct. 22. Sessions are 4 to 5 p.m. for kids in grades K-2 and 5 to 6 p.m. for kids in grades 3-5. \$40 registration fee. Coaches are needed to teach the fundamentals of soccer.

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

Oct. 9, 1924

A survey just made of the enrollment in the Wrangell schools compared with the enrollment a year ago shows an increase of 10 students. These figures are based upon the enrollment in grades first through 12th and do not include children of kindergarten age. The present enrollment in the schools is 153, and for the past year on the same date it was 143. The greatest increase has been in Mrs. Bronson's room, where the registration has more than doubled over the enrollment at this date a year ago. Her

present enrollment is 23 compared with 11 for the same time last fall.

Oct. 7, 1949

In a fairly heavy run of balloting, Peter C. McCormack won the race for mayor in Tuesday's election. His margin was a scant three votes, with the final count showing 157 for McCormack and 154 for Fred Hanford. There were 314 ballots cast in the election. Due to the closeness of the mayoralty count, the canvassing board recounted several times to ensure the accuracy. McCormack replaces

George Gunderson as mayor. New councilmen elected were Harry Coulter and George Smith, for three-year terms; and Dr. E. J. Wheeler and Vern Smith for two-year terms.

Oct. 9, 1974

A plan to allow senior citizens free ferry travel between Alaska ports during winter months will go into effect Nov. 1, according to Gov. Bill Egan. Egan said persons 65 years and older will be able to board ferries on a space-available basis at any Alaska port and travel to any other Alaska port. The free travel for

senior citizens will be available from Nov. 1 each year through the month of April, the governor said. Egan called it "a logical extension of the services provided to Alaskans by our Alaska Marine Highway. Making travel available to senior citizens on a space-available basis during winter months will permit those Alaskans living on fixed retirement incomes to visit friends at a savings."

Oct. 7, 1999

Alaska is experiencing an upsurge in numbers of elderly citizens, with a projected 600%

increase from 1980 to 2015. It is one of eight states which can expect to double its number of residents 85 years of age and older in the next 15 years. Wrangell does not remain isolated from these statistics. The number of choices and opportunities for senior citizens in Wrangell is growing but, as yet, does not equal the range of services and living arrangements available in many other places. Nevertheless, a scale of care beginning with independent living and moving on to long-term care exists for a variety of needs.

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WEEKLY FARE SALES



FREIGHT FOR LESS

Southeast communities talk trash, looking to save money

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

It doesn't matter the value of what people toss in the trash, it's all expensive to ship out of town to a landfill.

The borough sends out about 60 to 65 40-foot-long containers filled with trash every year, at a cost budgeted for this year at \$360,000. That's up from \$239,000 just three years ago.

Wrangell is not alone in paying increasingly higher costs for hauling and dumping trash at an approved landfill in eastern Washington state. The trash travels by barge and then rail to the landfill. Petersburg has been hit with similar price increases, and both the city and the borough in Ketchikan have raised solid waste service fees for residences and businesses.

Wrangell's trash hauling contract with Arizona-headquartered Republic Services expires next year. The borough has the option of a one-year renewal with the national trash hauling firm, timed to coincide with the expiration of similar contracts in Petersburg and Ketchikan, said borough Public Works Director Tom Weter.

The effort to match the contract expiration dates was on purpose, so that Southeast communities might be able to negotiate together for better rates, Weter said.

The cost of getting rid of garbage was on the agenda for the annual meeting of the Southeast Conference last month in Ketchikan.

"The last 15 years, I've been able to talk trash pretty well," Aaron Marohl, assistant Public Works director in Petersburg, said in his presentation at the conference.

"Waste disposal costs have increased dramatically over the past few years," he said, highlighting Wrangell and Petersburg as two costly examples.

The Southeast Alaska Solid Waste Authority is looking for answers, Marohl said. He explained that earlier this year it received a \$500,000 grant from the federally funded Denali Commission to study whether "there are more economical and environmentally friendly solid waste disposal alternatives."

Options might include diverting more of the trash into composting operations and recycling, reducing the volume that goes into a landfill, he said.

There are about 30 active — and permitted — solid waste collection sites around Southeast, said Zach Gianotti, with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation. About half of the garbage is shipped out of state and half is buried in Southeast, with the largest landfill in Juneau. Ketchikan also buries some of its waste.

Developing a new landfill to meet environmental standards could cost at least \$20 million, Weter said.

The Southeast Alaska Solid Waste Authority started up in 2009 with Wrangell one of its four founding members and has since grown to include nine communities. Weter is vice chair of the board.

Wrangell birthday calendar stages a comeback; listings due Saturday

By SAM PAUSMAN

Sentinel senior reporter

The Wrangell birthday calendar is reborn for 2025.

After a one-year hiatus the chamber of commerce — under new leadership from executive director Tracey Martin — is bringing back the printed birthday calendar, which had been a community tradition since the 1950s until it was dropped for 2024.

It costs just \$1 to reserve a date on the calendar. Anyone can reserve a listing for a birthday, anniversary or to memorialize someone's passing.

Families do not need to pay more than \$15 for listings, meaning that if a family wants to reserve 20 or 30 spots on the

calendar, they will not be expected to pay more than the \$15 maximum.

All proceeds will go the chamber of commerce's scholarship fund, which will be awarded to a graduating high school senior to help sponsor their postsecondary education. Interested seniors will have to fill out an application which includes a personal essay and other relatively standard pieces. The chamber will release more information about the application in the months to come.

Nell Churchill was born in Wrangell and moved back in 2021. She said she remembers the calendar growing up and wanted to help resurrect it. She collaborated with Martin and

the chamber to bring it back.

The calendar will be printed and available for purchase in December, according to Churchill. Notably, the calendar is where KSTK and the Wrangell Sentinel gets the information for their birthday announcements.

The chamber announced the calendar's return with a short deadline for listings of 4 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 12. Orders can be paid with check, and completed forms can be dropped off at the Nolan Center, Angerman's, City Market or Ottesen's Ace Hardware. The chamber office is in the Stikine Inn.

The chamber will staff a table at Ace Hardware between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Oct. 12 for people to fill out forms ahead of the 4 p.m. deadline. The table is the only option to purchase listings in the calendar for people who want to pay with cash.

In addition to selling dates for the calendar, the chamber is also selling advertising space. The ads, like the calendar dates, will support the scholarship program. Businesses can purchase a single ad for \$100 or a double-size ad for \$200. According to the announcement, the chamber will not create the ads, so businesses must submit "a logo, business card or pre-made ad" along with the required payment.

Even after missing a year, it's clear by the online outpour of positivity that the birthday calendar has been missed.

"Thank you, Wrangell chamber and Nell Churchill, for bringing this back!" one Facebook commentor wrote.

Another said she was "proud and happy" to see the calendar return. "I've really missed it," she added.

Johnson's Building Supply Help wanted!

Customer Service full-time position
Valid Alaska driver's license required.
Must be able to lift 50 lbs. Pay DOE.
Stop by Johnson's for an application.



Birth Announcement

Vincent Jacob Bahleda was born on Aug. 31, 2024, in Anchorage. He weighed 7 pounds, 3.3 ounces and was 20.28 inches long at birth. His parents are Michael and Sara Bahleda; his brother is Sebastian Bahleda. Paternal grandparents are Bill and Sue Bahleda, of Wrangell. Maternal grandparents are Greg and Lorinda Lassich, of Portland, Oregon.



Join Us at the Wellness Fair

Let's unite for the collective well-being of Wrangell.

Wellness Fair Offerings:

- Blood Test Packages*
\$150 - payable by cash, check or card at the time of service.
- Flu Shot Clinic
- Health & Wellness Educational Booths
- Teddy Bear Clinic
Bring your teddy bear in for an annual check-up!

Saturday, Oct. 19, 2024
7 a.m. – noon
The Nolan Center
296 Campbell Drive

Enter to win!

Complete our "Passport to Wellness" for a chance to win a Diamondback Overdrive 27.5" Hardtail Mountain Bike (adult prize) or a kids' bicycle (youth prize)!

*Pre-registration is highly recommended. To pre-register for a blood test, call 907.874.7000 or scan the QR code below. Walk-in blood tests start at 10 a.m.



Pre-register here.
searchc.org/wellness-fair-registration

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Newspapers and Southeast towns share a problem

BY LARRY PERSILY
Publisher

Southeast Alaska communities and their local newspapers share a common problem: Not enough people, and the ones who are here are getting older.

For the communities, an aging and declining population means not enough people to fill jobs. It means falling further behind in providing services that attract and retain new residents, making the situation worse.

For newspapers, it means a declining population of readers as aging residents who grew up with their local paper die out. Younger generations are so unconcerned about the necessity of newspapers that they don't even know that newsprint long ago had another use after the reader had finished the pages — wrapping up fish. They think their phone and social media tells them everything they need to know.

They can't wrap a fish in a smartphone, but they can use it to download a YouTube video on storing fish.

Yet social media doesn't give people the unbiased facts about local government decisions, school test scores, state and municipal budgets, candidates for elected office, the honors won by their neighbors, the accomplishments of students — and what their communities are doing to stem the population decline.

Southeast Alaska's population has dropped by 3,000 people in the past decade but its loss of working-age residents has been even steeper — a decline of 5,600 people between 2010 and 2023. There are fewer residents, a lot fewer working-age residents, and yet the work still needs to get done. The numbers add up to a debilitating shortage of people to fill job vacancies.

Part of the problem is that the region continues to increase its count of the state's oldest residents, growing the 60-plus bracket from 17% of the population in 2010 to 27% last year,

while dropping more than 2,000 school-age kids in population.

Those statistics from the annual Southeast Alaska by the Numbers report tell the same story newspaper owners are seeing. The area is hollowing out in the middle, falling further behind in new working-age residents and families. Southeast is missing out on the employees and business owners of the next generation, while newspapers are losing readers and much needed revenue.

It's critical that communities and newspapers find solutions. Neither are getting any younger or economically healthier.

Towns could survive without a local paper, though they would lose a lot of what holds their community together. And newspapers could survive for a while in smaller towns, they would just get smaller themselves and provide less news. But both stand a better chance of reversing the spiraling decline, or at least stopping it, if they adapt.

For communities, that means accepting that new residents may not want the exact same life as long-time residents. They might move to Southeast for the outdoors and small-town safety, a slower pace than shopping malls and traffic, but they look hard at the schools and their course offerings, child care services, transportation, community activities for people their own age, and, of course, housing.

For newspapers, that means accepting that social media, while a competitor for people's time, serves a purpose. It means using social media to build interest in what the paper is doing. It means providing readers with more than just news from City Hall and the state capital. It means clinging less tightly to how newspapers used to be and instead figuring out how they need to be if they are to survive.

Neither communities nor newspapers can live with only 60-plus residents and readers. Both need to attract a new audience.

Nolan Center birthday

Continued from page 1

truth about accidents and sharing historical items with museums.

The Star of Bengal had 138 men on board when it went down in a storm; 111 died, mostly Chinese, Japanese and Filipino cannery workers returning home after the salmon season had ended. Most of the crew got off the boat and were rescued, Decker said.

The UCHART team, including Anichenko, plans to dive on the wreck in March. "We want to try finding if there is any evidence that the Asians were locked in the holds when the ship went down," Decker said.

Another piece of the story the group hopes to find is the strongbox that held everyone on board's valuables. Such a piece of history would be a significant addition to the Wrangell Museum, he said.

In addition to salmon packing and steamships, the museum tells the area's history starting with the Tlingit culture and continuing through British, Russian and U.S. control, along with logging, mining and fishing history.

The Nolan Center opened its doors to the public on July 1, 2004. But celebrating the 20th birthday on that day would have been "right smack in the middle" of summer tourists, Arnold explained. So they decided to delay the party until after the last cruise ship.

It was a busy tourist season at the museum. The total number of guests on organized tours (4,000) and walk-ins (1,581) surpassed last year, Arnold said.

In particular, the gift shop recorded a substantial increase in sales this summer, almost \$78,000, up from \$57,000 last year. The numbers most likely

will be much higher next year when Wrangell is on the itinerary for as many as 45,000 cruise ship passengers — more than double this summer's count.

In addition to an open house at the museum the evening of the birthday party, the gift shop also will be open, Arnold said.

Much of the community facility's construction cost was covered by the James and Elsie Nolan Trust; the Nolans owned Wrangell Drug for decades. James was a member of the territorial and state legislatures, serving as state Senate president from 1955-1957. James Nolan's life was as varied as the building named in the couple's honor: Wrangell city council member, fisherman, U.S. deputy marshal, head of the Wrangell chamber of commerce.

The trust continues to help fund operations at the center.

EDITORIAL

Nolan Center is of historical importance to Wrangell

The Nolan Center is so much more than a museum, though it certainly excels in its historical role.

It's the center of activity in town.

It's a meeting place, a conference center, movie theater, visitor information center. It's something for everyone, all under one roof.

And it's 20 years old. Actually, 20 years and 3 months old, but Nolan Center staff figured they couldn't very well manage a big community birthday party for residents in the middle of the visitor season, so the celebration was moved to 6 p.m. Monday, Oct. 14.

A birthday cake couldn't hold enough candles to light up the importance of the multi-purpose facility to Wrangell. Besides, no flames around all those historical items. But that shouldn't deter anyone from coming to the center to share in the party.

The downtown waterfront building opened its doors to the public on July 1, 2004. It's named for the late James and Elsie Nolan, who owned Wrangell Drug for decades. James was a member of the territorial and state Legislature, and served a term as state Senate president from 1955-1957. James Nolan lived in Alaska 71 years and his life was as varied as the building named in the couple's honor: Wrangell city council member, fisherman, U.S. deputy marshal, head of the Wrangell chamber of commerce.

The bulk of funding to build the center came from the Nolan family trust and the Rasmuson Foundation, established by the Alaska banking family who helped build the state at the same time James Nolan was doing his part.

Today, the center "is really the cultural hub for our community," said Jeanie Arnold, director of the operation.

But at its core is the museum, telling the story of Wrangell's past from the Tlingit heritage through hundreds of years to mining, timber and fishing. Its collection of cultural artifacts, memorabilia, hands-on displays and photographs provides a fitting background for its 20th birthday party.

Besides for bringing foods for the potluck event and participating in the champagne toast on Monday, residents — and any visitors in town — are encouraged to walk through the museum and tour the gift shop. The evening will be "a bit of a membership drive" for the Friends of the Museum, Arnold said. The nonprofit helps with activities and fundraising at the center.

In a variation of birthday invitations that say, "no gifts, please," partygoers can buy a Friends of the Museum membership as their gift toward the next 20 years.

- Wrangell Sentinel

Additional construction funding came from the Rasmuson Foundation, established by the Alaska banking family who helped build the state at the same time as James Nolan, and from the federal government and multiple Wrangell residents committed to seeing a museum

in town.

Before the Nolan Center, the museum was in temporary housing below the old high school gym. The museum started in the 1960s at the old school building, built in 1906 in front of where the Irene Ingle Public Library now stands.

Policy for Letters to the Editor

- Letters should be typed or clearly written and no longer than 400 words.
- All letters must be signed by the writer and include a phone number and any affiliation with a group which pertains to the letter.

The Sentinel reserves the right to edit any submissions.

The deadline for submissions is Friday at noon for Wednesday publication.

Letters are run on a space-available basis.

WRANGELL SENTINEL

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Rocky

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named her Reaper after the Carolina reaper pepper because of her very spicy attitude. She is one of our spiciest seals that we've had this year," Costner said.

While SeaLife officials were unable to locate a local seal population near Rocky's release point, Costner said harbor seals tend to be solitary creatures anyway, though they do enjoy each other's companionship as a survival mechanism. Though Rocky was released on her own, Maddie Welch, a marine mammal specialist at SeaLife, said she expects Rocky to be OK.

"We feel really good about her chances. She was down and out when we got her, and even then she was so spicy. This is the best-case scenario for her," Welch said.

After arriving in town on the afternoon southbound jet from Anchorage, the pup was immediately taken to Petroglyph Beach where a crowd of over 100 people awaited her. Officials laid down a rope on the sand, creating a V-shaped makeshift runway for the harbor seal to crawl from her animal carrier to the waters off the north end of Wrangell Island.

The receding tide teased the scent of salt-baked plough mud, while forgiving skies above provided a pertinent pause in the day's light drizzle. Amidst sea-pounded stones, sun-dried driftwood and a rainbow of Xtratuf boots, Rocky found her freedom in the form of chilly Southeast waters.



PHOTO BY SAM PAUSMAN / WRANGELL SENTINEL

Rocky flew into Wrangell in an animal kennel on Oct. 3 and was quickly hustled from the airport to the beach for her release.

Costner spoke to the crowd and thanked everyone for joining in the celebration of the pup's release. She informed the crowd that this was the most people Rocky had ever seen, so it was important to remain quiet until the seal had reentered the sea. Costner and the rest of the SeaLife team brought with them some portable barriers to put down in case Rocky veered off path or headed toward the crowd.

"She will bite you," Costner said earnestly.

Wrangell residents watched as the seal slumped out of her carrier after a brief pause of hesitation. Onlookers recorded

the moment with phones, GoPros and even with tripod-mounted cameras. Children elbowed each other out of the way to get as close to the roped-off area as possible, while others opted to watch the event from the observation platform above. One attendee even admitted to taking the afternoon off work to make sure she saw Rocky's release.

In conjunction with the event, Costner and Welch visited fifth-grade classrooms to talk with students about Rocky's rehabilitation process.

"We're so happy the community was able to get so involved in this," Costner said.



After being away for four months to get healthy at the SeaLife Center in Seward, Rocky hits the water at Petroglyph Beach on Oct. 3.

PHOTO BY SAM PAUSMAN / WRANGELL SENTINEL

Economics report

Continued from page 1

Half of businesses that responded to the survey said "finding better ways to attract and retain workforce-aged residents to the region is critically important." In Wrangell, about 60% said "the need to attract young professionals over the next five years is critical."

The population loss was consistent throughout Southeast from 2022 to 2023, with Wrangell, the Ketchikan and Haines boroughs, Hoonah and Skagway all dropping by 2% to 3%.

Wrangell has been in a steady population decline the past 20 years, with state projections putting the count at just under 1,400 by 2050, down from about 2,000 this year.

People who live in Wrangell are, on average, older than in the rest of the state. The community's average age is almost 12 years older than the statewide number. The aging population is a Southeast-wide issue.

"Southeast continues to have the state's oldest residents. Since 2010 — a year with a similar resident count to 2023 — the region lost more than 2,000 kids, while the 60-plus population grew by more than 7,000 older residents, from 17% of the overall population to 27%," according to the Rain Coast Data report.

Across Southeast since 2010, "those of prime working age, aged 19 to 59, shrank by more than 5,600 residents. While many work well into their senior years, this demographic shift has resulted in a declining regional workforce."

The total Southeast population has dropped by more than 3,000 in the past decade.

A component of the workforce shortage for the region is outmigration — more people leaving the state than moving in. "In 2023, nearly 800 more people moved away from Southeast Alaska than those who moved here, and deaths slightly outnumbered births. The majority of those who moved away left Alaska entirely."

Statewide, Alaska has had 12 straight years of negative net migration. "This is not normal for us. It hasn't happened before," Dan Robinson, a research chief at the state Labor Department, said at an Anchorage forum last month. The longest prior streak was four years, he said.

Even with the challenges, Alaska Native organizations, tourism businesses, nonprofits and health care providers were the most positive about the economy moving into 2024, the annual Southeast report said.

"Communities with the most positive outlooks include Hoonah, Skagway and Ketchikan," all heavily dependent on large cruise ship numbers. Business owners in Wrangell and Petersburg reported the most negative outlooks.

The largest category of job growth was in the tourism industry, adding more than 2,000 jobs from the spring 2022 survey to July 2024. Cruise ship passenger numbers set a record high in Southeast at almost 1.7 million last year.


Airline traffic was up, as were passenger loads on the state ferries, though ferry ridership in 2023 was less than half of the 2013 number.

And while tourism overall was up, 2023 was an economically down year for Southeast fisheries.

The value of last year's catch totaled \$508 million, down substantially from the 2022 harvest valued at \$766 million, as prices crashed last summer amid an oversupplied market. The number of jobs in the seafood industry held steady in 2023, at about 3,600 fishers and processing plant workers, putting it third behind government jobs and the tourism industry.


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Juneau voters reject proposal to ban large ships on Saturdays

By MARK SABBATINI
Juneau Empire

Juneau voters have rejected the Ship-Free Saturday proposition, with 3,751 votes in favor of the initiative and 5,788 against as of Oct. 4, with several hundred more ballots still to count.

The Oct. 1 ballot proposition, the first of its kind in Alaska, attracted international media coverage. It would have banned cruise ships with accommodations for 250 or more passengers on Saturdays and also banned them on the Fourth of July.

Opponents of the measure, led by the cruise industry and tourism businesses, waged an expensive campaign, with \$750,000 in total expenditures reported as of a week before election day. Supporters of the measure, meanwhile, reported raising \$380.

"People are going to vote with what is going to impact them, and their families and their neighbors in the most positive way," said Portland Sarantopoulos, campaign manager for the opposition group Protect Juneau's Future.

In 2023, close to 1.7 million passengers came by cruise ship to Juneau — more than double of 21 years ago. The industry accounted for \$375 million in direct spending, creating 3,850 direct and indirect jobs and providing over \$40 million in municipal revenue, according to a report prepared by an economic consulting firm for the City and Borough of Juneau.

In addition to emphasizing the economic im-

pacts of cruise tourism in Juneau, opponents of the ballot measure reminded voters of voluntary agreements the industry has reached with the city, such as a five-ship-per-day limit starting this year and a daily passenger limit starting in 2026.

"It's clear that Juneau voters are really trying to give the current plans to manage tourism and manage the growth of tourism a chance," Sarantopoulos said.

But Karla Hart, one of the lead advocates behind the petition drive that put the question on the ballot, said the lopsided money fight clearly influenced the results.

"I think that there was an extremely fear-based campaign — if you vote 'yes' you're going to destroy the community, you're going to put people out of work, you're going to have to pay more on your property taxes, you're going to give up public services," she said. "But there's no real knowledge that that is what would happen, or how it would play out. But they had the money to create that narrative."

Hart said both the money spent by opponents as well as the widespread attention the ballot proposition received shows the concerns raised by Ship-Free Saturday supporters still need to be taken seriously.

"Hopefully this will lead to the city leadership taking steps to understand better the community issues, to acknowledge those issues and to address them."

No injuries reported from Ketchikan slide

ALASKA NEWS REPORTS

No injuries were reported from a landslide in Ketchikan on Sunday night, Oct. 6. Officials reported the slide occurred at about 8 p.m. on a section of Revilla Road near Ward Cove, north of downtown.

The landslide began hundreds of feet up the mountain north of the road and brought tons of mud and trees crashing across a stretch of the road past the Ward Lake exit, according to borough officials.

Slide debris blocked all lanes of Revilla Road near the slide area, cutting off a half-dozen vehicles.

There were eight people in the vehicles, according to reports from officials. By Monday morning, officials said several people had walked out over the debris field and a family of four remained in their vehicle, according to the borough.

All six vehicles had been moved to a nearby paintball field, waiting for the road to reopen, officials said.

The Alaska State Department of Transportation on Monday morning was waiting for a Juneau-based geologist to arrive and assess the slide before debris removal could begin to reopen the road, according to the Daily News reporting.

Crews from the North Tongass Fire Department as well as medics responded Sunday evening and communicated with the stranded people by phone to ensure they were OK, officials said.

Ketchikan was hit with heavy rains and strong, gusty winds on Sunday, forcing the diversion of an evening Alaska Airlines flight.

The small slide occurred about six weeks after a major landslide tore a scar near the center of the city, killing one person and injuring three others. Several homes were damaged.

The Third Avenue Bypass, which was blocked by the Aug. 25 landslide, reopened to vehicle and pedestrian traffic on Oct. 1, the Ketchikan Daily News reported. The slide flowed across Third Avenue above town as it moved down the hillside.

Crews of contractors operating excavators and dump trucks removed tons of mud, trees and other debris from the bypass, which did not sustain major damages from the slide.

No injuries in Haines building fire that burned out 4 businesses, 4 apartments

By RASHAH MCCHESENEY
Chilkat Valley News

A fire Saturday night destroyed a building in Haines that housed four businesses and four apartments.

No one reported any injuries.

Flames poured out of the second floor and above the roof as firefighters tried to control the blaze, which eventually took down the wood-frame building.

The Haines' Quick Shop, Outfitter Liquor, Outfitter Sporting Goods, Mike's Bikes & Boards and the apartments occupied the two-story building across the street from the waterfront.

The trouble started just before 9:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 5, while Dan Mahoney was working at the front counter of the convenience store when a man living in an apartment above the shops came downstairs to alert him about a fire.

Mahoney said he called 911 and then his boss, Mike Ward.

"I was out sleeping," said Ward as he paced up and down the sidewalk, watching his businesses burn late Saturday. "I hauled ass."

This isn't the first time the building has caught fire. Ward said it also burned in 1994, but that fire was relatively small and he was only closed for a few hours at that time.

Ward said he has insurance.

"I have good insurance. I've got business interruption insurance; if I shut down I'll get money," he said. "I've never had to use it. But it looks like I'm going to have to this time."

But even with insurance, Ward said some things are hard to replace. "On the drive to town, I was thinking about my inventory file," he said. "I don't

keep a backup off-site."

That could make it tricky to account for everything for his insurance claim. "I've got a million dollars in inventory there," he said. "I wasn't ready for this. I feel like I'm losing part of my life here."

Haines police officer Michael Fullerton was off duty but called in to help out with the fire. He spent his time reminding onlookers to keep back far enough from the flames to avoid potential injury. In addition to the toxic smoke billowing from the building, there was a very real potential for an explosion given the fire's proximity to a several-hundred-gallon

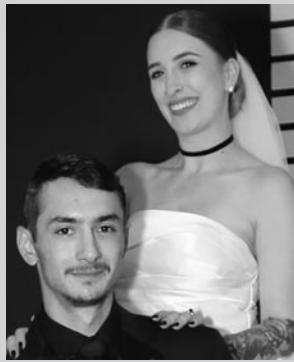
diesel tank and the volume of ammunition inside the sports shop.

Fullerton said he was told that all tenants had been accounted for and were being helped by The Salvation Army.

"Local resources have already been secured for the evening as far as putting people who are displaced in hotels," Fullerton said.

Fullerton said investigators would be digging into what happened to start the fire. "We'll be investigating this fire until we're satisfied that this is a normal fire," he said. "Until we're certain of that."

Wedding Announcement



Trevor Grant and Nicole Hammer were married on Sept. 13 at the Wrangell Harbor Light Assembly of God Church.

Trevor is the son of Amber Armstrong, of Wrangell. Nicole is the daughter of Clay and Holly Hammer, of Wrangell, Heidi Hansen, of Port Angeles, Washington, and Jeff Carlin, of Ketchikan. A reception followed at the Sourdough Lodge.

The couple will continue to make Wrangell their home.

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State reports record number of drug overdose deaths last year

By YERETH ROSEN
Alaska Beacon

Alaska had a record number of drug-overdose deaths in 2023, with a total that was 44.5% higher than in 2022, the state Department of Health said in a report issued last week.

The 2023 drug-overdose toll was 357, a number determined through the department's data on deaths and diseases, the report said.

The Alaska statistics buck a national trend of declining overdose deaths that was reported earlier this year by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Of the few states with increases in overdose deaths from 2022 to 2023, Alaska had the biggest increase by far, according to the CDC.

Opioids, especially the powerful synthetic opioid fentanyl, were involved in most of the Alaska deaths, according to the new state report.

About 80% of last year's deaths were caused by opioids, and more than two-thirds were caused by fentanyl, according to the report. A majority of the deaths, about 60%, were from a combination of drugs, the report said.

The vast majority of the Alaska overdose deaths, 88.6%, were accidental. Suicides accounted for 6.6% of the deaths, while 4.8% were in a different and undefined category.

Victims tended to be male, aged 25 to 54, and living in the state's urban core.

Nearly two-thirds of the fatal overdoses in 2023 were in Anchorage, the state's largest city, which is home to about four out of every 10 Alaskans.

The Anchorage area saw, by far, the highest rate of overdose deaths of any region in the state, with nearly 80 deaths per 100,000 people. The second-highest rate was in Southeast, at 40.1.

Men die from overdoses at a higher rate than women, accounting for 63% of fatal overdoses.

Similarly, Alaska Natives and American Indians constituted 33% of drug overdose deaths last year, though they make up less than 20% of the state's overall population.

By age, the most overdose deaths in 2023 were among Alaskans 35 to 44 years old. The age group from 25 to 34 years old had the second highest total, at 75.

Alaska's soaring overdose death numbers have prompted a series of state government policies and programs that complement a national educational campaign.

One state response is a new requirement that schools stock response kits containing the overdose-reversal drug naloxone. That was the result of a measure the Legislature passed earlier this year that was signed into law by Gov. Mike Dunleavy on Aug. 30.

The Department of Health has also started public-awareness campaign aimed at ensuring that all Alaskans are able to spot and properly respond to overdose cases by administering reversal medicine. The campaign has a primary message: "Save a life. Carry naloxone."

There are also nonprofit organizations started by family members of overdose victims that seek to educate the public about opioids and steer drug abusers to treatment.

In a statement released by the Department of Health, Alaska's chief medical officer said reducing overdoses will require cooperation among many parties.

"The burden of overdose fatalities will not be solved by one agency, organization, or department," Dr. Robert Lawrence said in the statement. "Our response is weaving together the work done by so many, along five cords of intervention: interdiction, prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery. Only with strong collaboration will we be able to pull people to freedom and turn the tide on this epidemic."

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

Still no answers for fish kill downstream of gold mine 40 miles north of Juneau

By MAX GRAHAM
Northern Journal

On the morning of Aug. 9, state biologists discovered dozens of dead fish in a creek near the Kensington gold mine in northern Southeast Alaska.

Scientists from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game say their observations — and the fact that the die-off occurred downstream of a wastewater treatment plant at the large mine — suggest that the event stemmed from a water quality problem. Mine workers also used an unapproved explosive at Kensington a day before the dead fish were found, according to federal officials.

But nearly two months later, state regulators at the Department of Environmental Conservation said it still hasn't determined what killed the fish, including Dolly Varden char, a small freshwater species called slimy sculpin, and one pink salmon.

DEC, which regulates mining wastewater and investigates chemical spills, is still waiting for water quality data from the mine's operator, according to Gene McCabe, the director of the agency's water division.

"Of course, everybody involved has hunches," McCabe said. "They have thoughts. They have likely causes. But none of that is substantiated yet."

Coeur, the multinational company that operates Kensington Mine about 40 miles north of downtown Juneau, is "still awaiting results from multiple independent laboratories with varying timelines," company spokesperson Rochelle Lindley said in an email last week.

Tribal governments and other observers in the area of the mine said they have received little information from state regulators.

A few days after the incident, the U.S. Forest Service, which manages the land around Kens-

ington, notified leaders of the region's largest tribal government, the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska. The agency also, a few days later, provided the tribal organization with some preliminary information, according to Jill Weitz, Tlingit and Haida's director of government affairs.

While Weitz said she appreciated the federal notification, she has been frustrated by what she described as a lack of communication from state agencies.

It's the second time this year that tribal officials have raised concerns about their access to information after an incident in the vicinity of Kensington.

In March, Tlingit and Haida's president, Richard Peterson, urged state and federal regulators to improve communication after the tribe was not notified — for a month — about a January tailings spill at the mine, which appears to be unrelated to the August fish kill.

"The lack of timely communication and transparency in such matters undermines our ability to effectively respond and protect our tribal citizens and ancestral lands," Peterson wrote.

The idea that the state hasn't kept local tribes apprised is "problematic," said Juneau State Sen. Jesse Kiehl, though he added that state agencies have provided information to his office. He also applauded Coeur for being the first to notify him and for being responsive to questions.

The biologists from the Department of Fish and Game discovered the dead fish during a routine salmon survey in Sherman Creek, which flows into the Inside Passage between Juneau and the towns of Haines and Skagway to the north.

Coeur discharges treated mine water directly into Sherman Creek, at a point above where the fish appear to have died. Other Dolly Varden were found alive above the mine's

discharge, the biologists wrote in a Sept. 6 report.

Of the dead fish the scientists collected, there was "no obvious body composition or cloudiness in the eyes, suggesting recent death," wrote one of them, Erika King. They also saw hemorrhaging on multiple Dolly Varden.

Immediately, King wrote, the biologists notified a Coeur official and asked the company to take water samples. The official reported no unusual operations at the water treatment plant, and company staff collected more dead fish samples.

The circumstances — multiple species of fish dead below the treatment plant outfall and none dead above — "strongly suggest water quality or toxic issues delivered by the treatment plant effluent," according to a state pathologist, Ted Meyers, whose findings are appended to King's report. Meyers ruled out infection as the cause of death.

The department's lab work did not involve water quality or fish tissue testing for toxic chemicals, according to Department of Fish and Game spokesman Joe Felkl.

Whatever killed the fish appeared to be a short, isolated episode, Coeur and state biologists said.

In August, Lindley, from Coeur, told Northern Journal that the company immediately notified regulators when the fish were discovered, coordinated with agencies to send samples to third-party labs for testing and was continuing to monitor the stream.

McCabe, from the state Department of Environmental Conservation, said it's standard practice across the state for mining companies to collect and self-report water quality data. Their monitoring and testing plans must be approved by state regulators, he added.

Coeur did not respond to follow-up questions last week about an unapproved explosive that was reportedly used underground at Kensington on Aug. 8, the day before the biologists' discovery. The explosive was noted in an August email from the Forest Service to tribal officials.

A Forest Service spokesperson this week referred requests for information to Coeur.

McCabe said the agency did not have enough information to say whether use of the explosive could be tied to the dead fish.

"At this point, without any water quality data, it's pure speculation," McCabe said. "We want to avoid speculating about any potential link or cause until we have some data to evaluate."

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Cross country falls short of state championship hopes

By SAM PAUSMAN

Sentinel senior reporter

The Wrangell boys cross-country team finished third in the state championship meet while the girls finished eighth on Saturday, Oct. 5, at Bartlett High School in Anchorage.

For the boys, Daniel Harrison was Wrangell's highest finisher. The senior finished just outside the top 10 with a time 18:41.0. Junior Ian Nelson and sophomore Jackson Carney crossed the finish line one after the other in 14th and 15th.

Jackson Powers finished in 31st of the 85 runners with a time of 20:00.04. Everett Meissner finished just six seconds behind his teammate in 32nd. Freshman Lucas Stearns finished in 45th with a time of 20:47.3 in his state championship debut.

Unfortunately for the boys, junior standout Boomchain Loucks did not complete the race after a bout with illness prevented him from crossing

the finish line. Loucks — a runner Villarma has touted as one of the fastest in the state — has been Wrangell's fastest finisher all season.

Without Loucks' normal podium finish to anchor the team, the Wrangell boys fell to third place. Petersburg claimed the state title and the silver medal went to Glenallen, which finished just three points off the champions.

Wrangell's third-place finish denied them the state three-peat they had their eyes set on since the season's opening race in Juneau. However, the boys team is returning a lot of their talent for the 2025 season. Loucks and Nelson will be seniors. Carney and Meissner will be juniors, and Stearns will also return for his sophomore season.

"We're only losing one senior," Villarma said. "Even though this is a tough one to swallow, this team has a lot to look forward to."

After the race, Villarma en-



PHOTO BY LOREN HOLMES / ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS

Wrangell's Boomchain Loucks (right) led at the 1-kilometer mark of the 5K state championship cross-country run but illness forced him out of the race.

couraged his team.

"They were pretty upset,"

he said. "But I told them, 'You're still the best team across Division III. Take a load off. These things are unpredictable'"

Like the boys team, the girls were also without their fastest runner after Kalee Herman's injury in the Southeast championships prevented her from qualifying for the state meet. Despite the loss of Herman, the girls still managed an eighth-place finish in the team standings, beating Tikigaq, Sand Point and Unalaska. Petersburg won the girls state title, with Nenana and Unalakleet completing the state championship podium.

For Wrangell, Bella Ritchie was the team's fastest runner, finishing 37th of 80 runners with a time a 26:18.5. Freshmen Kourtney Barnes and

Kailyn McCutcheon finished back-to-back in 54th and 55th.

All three girls, in addition to Herman, will return to the trails next season. Villarma hopes next year will continue to build off the team's young core whose main priority was simply to gain experience this season.

"We're going to have a really good girls team next year," Villarma said. "The incoming freshman class is really strong, and it will be great to have Alana Harrison back from New Zealand too."

"(Assistant coach Laura Davies) and I are so proud of this season. The kids worked really hard. They did all the little things right all year. Sometimes things just don't go our way," he said.

Wrangell's Daniel Harrison (right) runs just ahead of Daniel Dock of the Southwest Alaska community of Kipnuk in the state championship cross-country race last Saturday in Anchorage.



PHOTO BY LOREN HOLMES / ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS

Volleyball season gets underway with split results in Juneau

By SAM PAUSMAN

Sentinel senior reporter

The Wrangell girls volleyball team attended its first tournament of the season over the weekend in what head coach Brian Herman called a "hit and miss" series of six matches against five opponents.

Hosted by Juneau-Douglas High School, the Juneau Invitational Volleyball Extravaganza gave Wrangell a rare peek outside the Southeast conference during pool play on Friday, Oct. 4, and the subsequent seeded tournament on Saturday, Oct. 5.

The wolves opened their season with a 1-1 split against Metlakatla, before Mount Edgumbe "handed them their hats" in a 0-2 defeat, according to Herman. They rebounded in a 2-0 sweep versus Ketchikan before dropping two tight sets against Anchorage's West High in the final match of pool play.

Based on the first day's results, teams are then divided into a "gold" bracket and a "silver bracket" for the Saturday tournament. Notably, the

Wolves were the only team in their conference to qualify for the gold bracket. All the other qualifiers were larger schools that compete in the 3A and 4A conferences.

The Saturday tournament was double elimination. After losing in a tiebreak set 11-15 against Anchorage's Mountain City Christian Academy, Wrangell bowed out of the tournament in a tight loss against West Anchorage. The Wolves were up 20-16 in back-to-back first-to-25 sets against their much larger opponent.

"We just couldn't finish," Herman said.

Despite boarding the southbound jet Sunday with a losing record, Herman is focusing on the context of the losses. Not only did the competition against 3A and 4A schools provide good exposure for Wrangell — who will play all other tournaments against fellow 2A-level programs — but it helped Herman and assistant coach Shelley Powers precisely identify the team's weaknesses.

"We've got a plan for the

next two or three weeks," Herman said. "We know exactly what we need to work out."

Wrangell's best performance of the weekend came in their sole win of the tournament against Ketchikan. In their third match of the day, the Wolves swept their southern neighbors 25-15 and 25-17 on Friday.

"We weren't really playing well for the first two matches of the season, but we picked it up and played really well against Ketchikan," Herman said.

Ketchikan is the only out-of-conference opponent Wrangell will face again this season. The first rematch is scheduled for Wednesday, Oct. 9, in Ketchikan, with the Kayhi team coming to Wrangell on Oct. 24 to provide the Wolves with a senior night and rare home match.

Due to the cross-conference nature of last weekend's tournament, there is no way of directly measuring Wrangell against their in-conference opponents. However, the 3A and 4A schools that Wrangell lined up against have been in-season

since August, and many had already played more than 15 matches.

"All in all, we were competitive with those 3A and 4A schools," Herman said. "We're just scratching the surface at this point. All the other 2A schools were down in the 'silver' bracket. We were head and shoulders above all the other teams from Southeast."

Wrangell will compete in an in-conference tournament in

Metlakatla on Friday and Saturday, Oct. 11-12. However, on their way to the tournament, the team will stay over at Ketchikan High School where they will play Kayhi in an impromptu midweek contest on Wednesday, Oct. 9.

Outside of the home and away matches against Ketchikan, Wrangell will only play in-conference opponents for the remainder of the season.

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Wrangell wrestlers return to the mat with title hopes in mind

By SAM PAUSMAN

Sentinel senior reporter

Third-year head coach Jack Carney feels good about his team, and he's got his eyes fixed on a handful of state titles.

"We're in a high point," he said.

Carney expects 22 wrestlers for the 2024 season: eight girls and 14 boys. There will be just three seniors on the roster, including returning standout captain Della Churchill. A two-time region champion, Churchill was voted Outstanding Female Wrestler of the tournament at the Southeast championships last year. This year, her coach hopes she can vie for a state title.

In fact, he hopes a lot of his athletes can.

Kourtney Barnes enters the high school wrestling world with an impressive resume, and Carney believes she could be the first wrestler in Wrangell history to win the state title in all four of her high school years. Barnes is coming off of two middle school state titles, and Carney is thrilled for her to join the high school ranks.



PHOTO BY SAM PAUSMAN / WRANGELL SENTINEL

High school wrestlers lined up to practice their moves last Friday in anticipation of the season opener Oct. 18 in Hoonah. Head coach Jack Carney expects 22 wrestlers this season.

"Even though she's a freshman, she actually trained with the high school team last year," he said. "I hope she wins it all this year."

In addition to impressive newcomers, the team is also returning five wrestlers who placed at state last season — a feat that impresses Carney.

State championship qualification is rather straightforward. There are 10 weight classes for girls and 14 for boys. The top two regional finishers from

each weight class compete for the state title.

"The kids that go to state championships are the 16 best kids in the state. So, if you place in the top six of that tournament that says a lot," he explained.

In addition to Churchill, junior Ben Houser and sophomores Jackson Carney and Haley Cook round out returners who also finished in the top five at last year's state championships.

One change for this year is the addition of a new assistant coach. Lorne Cook, Carney's longtime assistant at the middle school level, will join the high school ranks for the current season.

Though their head coach is hopeful for multiple individual titles this year, he hopes this year's team can accomplish something no other Wrangell

wrestling team has ever done: win a team state title.

"We're hoping for a team title. We have to compete against some schools with over 400 kids, but we're still in the running. We want a region title as a team; we want a state title as a team; we want multiple state and region titles," he said.

Carney, also the high school history teacher, joked that going up against comparatively enormous schools like Mount Edgecumbe can feel like you're going up against the Russian military in World War II.

"It's overwhelming," he laughed.

While Carney would relish a team championship — something he said is more probable for the boys team — he hopes his wrestlers can show improvement every day.

"But the main thing is we just want everybody to get bet-

ter. We want everybody to love wrestling," he said. "We want people to be healthy and just loving life. If they're loving life — guess what — they're going to start winning."

The Wolves will face their first official competition at a two-day meet in Hoonah starting on Oct. 18. The next weekend, they will be in Juneau before heading to the Mountain City Christian Academy Tournament in Anchorage on Nov. 1-2.

They will be in Ketchikan the following weekend before the sole home event of the year Nov. 15-16. The team will wrestle in Sitka the next weekend before ending the regular season Dec. 6-7 in Petersburg.

This year, Haines plays host to the Southeast championships Dec. 13-14. State championships will be held in Anchorage on Dec. 20-21.

Average life expectancy in Alaska still below pre-pandemic numbers

By YERETH ROSEN

Alaska Beacon

Alaska had the biggest decline in average life expectancy of all U.S. states in 2021, a year when health outcomes were heavily influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a recent national report.

Alaska's life expectancy in 2021 was 74.5 years, down from the average of 76.6 years in 2020, according to the report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Overall, U.S. life expectancy declined by 0.6 years in that time, mostly because of the COVID-19 pandemic and increases in drug overdose deaths and other unintentional injuries, the CDC report said. Alaska was among 39 states with declines in life expectancy from 2020 to 2021, the report said.

The CDC estimates life expectancy around the nation based on data from the National Center for Health Statistics.

The state-by-state report did not specify why Alaska's drop in life expectancy was so big in 2021. But the timing of COVID-19 deaths in the state was different from that in the rest of the nation.

Those deaths peaked in Alaska in late 2021, later than the peak that hit the United States as a whole, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. Nationally, much of the death toll

Continued on page 10

MatSu will display Ten Commandments in lobby outside the assembly chambers

By AMY BUSHATZ

Mat-Su Sentinel

The Ten Commandments and six other historical documents will be placed on permanent display in a lobby outside the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly chambers in Palmer, according to a resolution unanimously approved by the assembly on Oct. 1.

The display will "honor historical documents" that have influenced U.S. and state law, the resolution states.

It will include the Ten Commandments, a summary of the Code of Hammurabi (a Babylonian legal text composed during 1755-1750 B.C.), the Magna Carta (written in 1215 to establish the principle that the English king and his government were not above the law), the Mayflower Compact (the first governing document of the new colony in 1620), the Declaration of Independence, the preamble to the U.S. Constitution and the preamble to the Alaska Constitution.

The display will be installed in the lobby of the borough administration building.

Assembly Member Ron Bernier, whose district includes Talkeetna, sponsored the resolution. Its approval was greeted by cheers from a handful of audience members.

"Unless you know your history, you don't have anything to be proud of," Bernier said during the meeting. "That's what's wrong with this culture today. They don't know where they came from."

The resolution also directs borough staff to study the feasibility of installing similar displays at borough-operated public libraries in Talkeetna, Trapper Creek, Willow, Big Lake and Sutton.

Bernier was inspired by a Louisiana law passed this summer that requires the Ten Com-

mandments to be displayed in public school classrooms, he said in an interview last month.

Bernier initially intended to propose a resolution calling for the display of only the Ten Commandments but said a borough attorney advised him that doing so could open the borough to legal action. Placing a display of multiple texts that includes the Ten Commandments would likely not bring such a challenge, he said.

"There's no prohibition of displays that use the Ten Commandments as you would any other historical document," he said during the meeting. "It's when you make it by itself where it's a religious thing, that's where it crosses the line."

The Louisiana law is the subject of an ongoing lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union of Louisiana, which contends the requirement violates the First Amendment rights of students and staff.

Officials with the ACLU of Alaska said they are monitoring the Mat-Su resolution but have no legal action planned.

The borough is prohibited from funding any part of the display, according to an amendment approved at the Oct. 1 assembly meeting. Instead, borough staff will cover the costs through a fundraiser, officials said after the meeting.

The display's exact location and installation date have yet to be determined, borough officials said Oct. 2. The lobby currently features a large taxidermied brown bear, a box for depositing worn U.S. flags, and portraits of borough assembly members and the mayor.

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Life expectancy

Continued from page 9

occurred in 2020, though there were other waves of high death tolls starting in 2021, according to the university's data.

Since 2021, Alaska life expectancies have ticked up, though through 2023 the average remained lower than that in pre-pandemic years, state statistics show.

In 2022, the average life expectancy in the state increased to 76.8 years, according to the Alaska Vital Statistics 2022 An-

nual Report released last October by the state Department of Health.

The 2023 annual report is still being prepared. Preliminary information shows that Alaskans' average life expectancy increased again last year, to 77.2 years, Richard Raines, a Department of Health research analyst, said by email. That was still below the 2019 average of 78.5 years.

State numbers can vary slightly from the CDC numbers because of different methodolo-

gies, Raines noted.

Another factor beyond COVID-19 might have helped drive Alaska's big drop in life expectancy in 2021, Raines said.

"While we can't say definitively why life expectancy estimates for Alaska dropped more than other states in 2021, it is worth noting that Alaska experiences comparatively high rates of accidental drug poisoning (overdose) death," he said by email.

The impact of COVID-19 less-

ened in Alaska after 2021, state statistics show. The disease was ranked fourth among causes of death in the state in 2022, according to the annual report, down from the No. 3 spot in 2021. The leading causes in both years were cancer and heart disease, while accidental deaths — which include those from car crashes and overdoses — were the third-highest in 2022.

While Alaska showed the biggest life-expectancy drop that year, it did not rank at the bottom

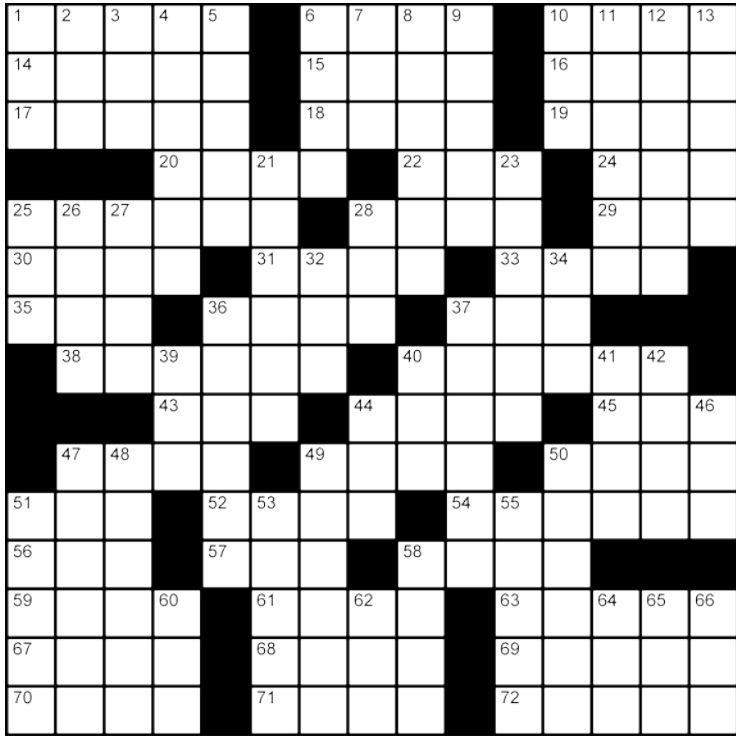
among states overall, according to the report. That distinction belonged to Mississippi, which had a life expectancy of 70.9 years in 2021, the report said. Hawaii had the highest life expectancy in 2021, at 79.9 years, the report said.

Alaska that year ranked 39th among all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

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Crossword

Answers on page 12



CLUES ACROSS

- 1 Grouches
- 6 Female supporters
- 10 Flat-topped hill
- 14 Misbehave
- 15 Arizona city on the Colorado
- 16 In addition
- 17 Latin American dance
- 18 Side
- 19 --- Christian Andersen
- 20 Sharp flavor
- 22 Note hastily
- 24 34th President
- 25 Moonshot program
- 28 Sound of a lion
- 29 Louse egg
- 30 Washed out
- 31 Watch --- step!
- 33 Not odd
- 35 Free
- 36 Settlement
- 37 Nudge repeatedly
- 38 Aloof
- 40 Conductive elements
- 43 Hoppy brew
- 44 Conforms
- 45 Blockhead
- 47 Pirate's plunder
- 49 Mischievous
- 50 Solitary
- 51 "L" operator
- 52 Unpleasant to look at
- 54 Conjured up
- 56 Attila, e.g.
- 57 Aught
- 58 Political top dog (Abbr.)
- 59 Brief swim
- 61 It's worth ---!
- 63 Start playing tennis
- 67 Skin
- 68 Film genre
- 69 Flowing and ebbing
- 70 Roman wear
- 71 Large and scholarly book
- 72 Heap

CLUES DOWN

- 1 Coverts rotary motion into linear motion
- 2 Appliance and electronics maker
- 3 Bill dispenser
- 4 Hollow gas globule
- 5 Mar
- 6 Unit of computer memory
- 7 Regret
- 8 Key with three sharps
- 9 Pacific country
- 10 Speed measure
- 11 Seinfeld cohort --- Benes
- 12 Clicked
- 13 Valuable possession
- 21 Prius maker
- 23 Choice morsels
- 25 Interest charge
- 26 Two identical things
- 27 Shoppe adjective
- 28 Manage
- 32 Be in debt
- 34 Old kind of computer monitor
- 36 Fighter ace
- 37 Lower
- 39 "Rosemary's Baby" actress --- Farrow
- 40 Provides input for an amp.
- 41 Observe
- 42 Levelheaded
- 44 Cook in hot oil
- 46 Central bank
- 47 Artist's workshop
- 48 Diminishing
- 49 Extremely
- 50 Snap
- 51 Map
- 53 Enormous
- 55 Kevlar garments
- 58 Funeral woodpile
- 60 Electronic helper just for you
- 62 Border
- 64 Old food label letters
- 65 Carpet cleaner (Abbr.)
- 66 Moose

Police report

Monday, Sept. 30

Paper service: Domestic violence order.

Tuesday, Oct. 1

Agency assist: State probation office.

Wednesday, Oct. 2

Motor vehicle accident.
Dog bite.

Thursday, Oct. 3

Dog at large.
Motor vehicle accident.
Report of suspicion of driving under the influence.
Report of suspicion of driving under the influence.

Friday, Oct. 4

Traffic stop.

School disturbance.

Agency assist: Hoonah Police Department.
Illegally passing school bus: Citation issued.
Agency assist: Ambulance.
Suspicious incident.
Suspicious vehicle.

Saturday, Oct. 5

Suspicious circumstances.
Citizen assist.
Agency assist: Hospital.
Dog at large.
Traffic stop: Citation issued for speeding.

Sunday, Oct. 6

Traffic stop.

During this reporting period, there were three subpoenas served and four agency assists for ambulance calls.

Ritter's River

by Marc Lutz



Tundra

by Chad Carpenter



Lawsuit claims fishery managers have failed to protect Alaska's coral gardens

By YERETH ROSEN
Alaska Beacon

Until about 20 years ago, little was known about the abundance of colorful cold-water corals that line sections of the seafloor around Alaska.

Now an environmental group has gone to court to try to compel better protections for those once-secret gardens.

The lawsuit, filed by Oceana in U.S. District Court in Anchorage, accused federal fishery managers of neglecting to safeguard Gulf of Alaska corals — and the sponges that are often found with them — from damages wreaked by bottom trawling.

Bottom trawling is a practice that harvests fish with nets pulled across the seafloor.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service "ignored important obligations" to protect the Gulf of Alaska's seafloor, under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, the lawsuit said.

Corals and sponges are important marine habitat features, supporting fish populations and other sea life. Already vulnera-

ble to the warming conditions caused by climate change and acidification caused by the ocean's absorption of atmospheric carbon, corals and sponges are further imperiled by fishing gear that scrapes the seafloor, the lawsuit said.

"If not destroyed by trawling, some corals and sponges can live for hundreds or thousands of years. They provide complex habitat for fish and other species, including commercially important species like rockfish, crab and prawns," the lawsuit said. "Damage to long-lived, slow-growing and sedentary species, like cold-water corals and sponges, can be irreversible."

At issue in the lawsuit is the way managers identify and protect what is known as "essential fish habitat."

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council, which sets policies that are carried out by the National Marine Fisheries Service, does periodic reviews to determine which areas should be considered essential fish habitat and what special protections should apply there. In December, the council passed a series of updates for habitat important to a variety of fish species; those changes got NMFS approval in



PHOTO COURTESY THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

A large primnoid coral loaded with brittle stars, a marine relative of sea stars. The underwater image was captured on the Dickins Seamount during a 2004 research cruise in the Gulf of Alaska. A new lawsuit claims fishery managers have failed to adequately protect Gulf of Alaska corals and sponges.

July.

But a key omission from those updates are any new protections for coral gardens or sponge habitat in the Gulf of Alaska, Oceana argues in its August lawsuit.

That leaves the swath of Gulf water that stretches from Yakutat to the Islands of the Four Mountains in the Aleutians as "the largest remaining area between San Diego and the Arctic that is largely open to bottom trawling," said Ben Enticknap, Oceana's Pacific campaign director and senior scientist.

More knowledge is being gained about Alaska's corals and sponges and their role in the ecosystem, Enticknap said. "That type of information is really critical and should be incorporated into the council's process for consideration," he said.

At the June 2023 North Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting, Oceana submitted a

proposal that would close about 90% of the Gulf to bottom trawling. The council did not take any action on that proposal, Enticknap said.

In the past, the council was a pioneer in cold-water coral protection, Enticknap said.

In 2005, the council closed a large marine area around the Aleutians to bottom trawling to protect the coral gardens that had been newly discovered there. Enticknap, then with the Alaska Marine Conservation Council, provided information that helped bring about what he considers to be a landmark policy change.

The 2005 rule did close some sections of the gulf to bottom trawling for the purpose of coral protections. But Oceana contends that much more area should be off-limits to bottom trawling.

A spokesperson for NMFS declined to comment on the lawsuit, citing the agency's policy

concerning pending litigation.

The agency itself is the prime source of new knowledge about Alaska's corals and sponges.

NOAA scientists have been working for several years to identify and map Alaska's corals, including those on the floor of the Gulf of Alaska.

Underwater surveys, including those conducted last summer by NMFS in collaboration with an array of international agencies and institutions, have used sophisticated technology to capture images of the corals, sponges and the sea creatures that live among them.

An important goal of the research, according to NMFS, is examining whether fishing, other human activities or climate change are harming the coral habitat and, if so, how that habitat should be protected.

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For more information and to request a copy of the RFP, please contact Kim Wickman at 907-874-4304 ext. 104, or email igapcoord.wca@gmail.com. A copy of the RFP can be picked up at 1002 Zimovia Hwy., Wrangell, AK 99929. Office hours: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. Please leave a message if we miss your phone call.

Deadline for proposals: 4 p.m. (AKST), Friday, Nov. 1, 2024.

Publish Oct. 9 and 16, 2024

Documentary tells of traumas in Canada's boarding schools for Indigenous children

By NATHANIEL HERZ
Northern Journal

A new documentary, "Sugarcane," recounts the searing, traumatic history of colonization and forced assimilation of British Columbia's Indigenous people through a network of what are known as Indian residential schools.

The film features former students and their descendants seeking truth, reconciliation and healing from the nation's legacy of those schools — institutions that the Canadian federal government now says carried out a "cultural genocide" through physical and sexual abuse.

After recent screenings in Sitka and Anchorage, advocates say the film's themes are as relevant and urgent just across the Canadian border in Alaska.

Churches and the federal government once operated a similar network of roughly two dozen such schools in Alaska starting in the 1870s, according to federal records.

Those institutions, advocates say, inflicted their own traumas that still cast a shadow over Alaskan survivors and their relatives — many of whom have not had the same chance to process the painful history in the way that's shown on screen in the new film.

"I could feel the tension in my body. I was shaking all night; I still feel it now, two days later," Ayyu Qassataq, a 44-year-old Yup'ik and Iñupiaq advocate, said after watching "Sugarcane" at its

packed screening last month at the Anchorage Museum. "I could feel the presence of that devastating and violent history — a history that is largely invisible in Alaska."

The Canadian federal government established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2008 in response to class-action lawsuits filed by survivors of the country's residential schools.

The commission ultimately concluded that the Canadian schools were a "systematic, government-sponsored attempt to destroy Aboriginal cultures and languages and to assimilate Aboriginal peoples so that they no longer existed as distinct peoples."

The two directors of "Sugarcane," who spoke onstage with Qassataq immediately after the Anchorage screening, said they want the movie to lead to deeper understanding among both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people of the systems that operated on both sides of the border.

That's especially the case in the U.S., they said, where the federal government hasn't as thoroughly accounted for the schools' history as in Canada.

In that country, the government has provided some \$7.5 billion in restitution for Indigenous people, according to the New York Times.

The Canadian federal government also is currently spending more than \$150 million to support

Continued on page 12

Boarding schools

Continued from page 11

tribes as they document, locate and commemorate missing children and unmarked burial sites at former residential schools. In 2008, the prime minister formally apologized for the school system.

“There is not a parallel process of truth and reconciliation happening in this country in as robust a way as there is in Canada,” co-director Julian Brave NoiseCat, who explores his family’s own traumatic history in “Sugarcane,” said in an interview just before the screening. He added: “It takes a lot of courage to have the conversation. And our hope is that this film inspires people across the country who are living in the legacy of this genocide to have those conversations.”

“Sugarcane,” described by the New York Times as “stunning” and a “must-see” film, tells the story of a single Canadian First Nation in British Columbia, and its efforts to excavate and account for the deep harms inflicted by the Catholic-run St. Joseph’s Mission boarding school.

NoiseCat’s grandmother was a student at the school, where she gave birth to NoiseCat’s father. Harrowing scenes feature survivors and former workers recounting how unwanted babies born to Indigenous students at the school were sometimes thrown into an incinerator.

The school was one of 139 now recognized to have operated in Canada, largely by churches with government funding. More than 150,000 Indigenous children were placed at the schools, where “the explicit intent was to separate” them from their families and culture, according to Canada’s National Centre for Truth and



PHOTO COURTESY EMILY KASSIE / SUGARCANE FILM

Investigator and residential school survivor Charlene Belleau (right) and archeologist Whitney Spearing search through newly released records to identify deaths and abuses of children at St. Joseph’s Mission residential school in British Columbia in a scene from the documentary “Sugarcane.”

Reconciliation.

Efforts to account for and reconstruct the history of residential schools in America have gained traction only in the past few years. U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, the first-ever Indigenous person to hold her position, launched a federal initiative in 2021 to recognize and document the schools’ legacy — and the legacy of her own agency, which helped carry out federal Indian policy.

That effort included a public listening session in Anchorage last year and the first-ever official list of federal Indian boarding schools across the U.S.

The Interior Department now says there were 417 institutions that operated in 37 states. There were 22 schools at 26 different sites in Alaska, where many were run by churches with federal support — and at least 31 Alaska students died while attending the schools, the Interior Department said.

At the Anchorage listening session, not every story told was traumatic: Some speakers said they looked back fondly at their time at Sitka’s Mt. Edgecumbe boarding school.

But others offered searing accounts of their own stays at other Alaska residential schools, and of the experiences of their parents.

There were beatings with brooms and belts that drew blood, students locked in dark rooms and closets. Dorms full of crying children, some of whom were separated from the older students who were trying to comfort them.

One group of children had their traditional clothes and foods — their parkas, dried caribou and salmon — burned in a furnace as they were being issued identifying numbers, forced to shower and have their heads shaved.

Some pre-teen girls were returned to their homes in the middle of the school year, pregnant after being raped by workers. Other children never returned home at all. One participant at the listening session said that more than a half-century later, her 86-year-old mother was still too scarred to recount her own experience.

“It took just one year to take my language, take our identity, take who we were away from us, everything,” Robin Sherry, who was sent from her home village of Minto, in Alaska’s Interior to a boarding school in Wrangell, said at last year’s hearing in Anchorage.

Another testifier, Theresa John, said: “Anything that identified us, who we are, what we eat, how we speak, how we live, how we think was being attacked, and it was destroyed.”

A final report issued by the Interior Department in July came with eight formal policy recommendations — including that a formal federal apology be issued; that the government share accounts of the schools; properly rebury children who died at them; pay for healing programs and Native language revitalization; and collaborate with other countries that ran residential schools.

Legislation to advance that work, introduced by Massachusetts Democratic U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren and co-sponsored by Alaska Republican U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, is pending in

Congress and was endorsed in a near-unanimous vote by the Alaska Legislature earlier this year.

The proposed bill from Warren would budget \$15 million a year for six years of continuing investigation and related work by a newly created congressional Truth and Healing Commission.

One organization with a legacy of mission work and operating residential schools has already issued formal apologies in three Alaska communities — Douglas, Kake and Kotzebue.

The Alaska Friends Conference, a group of Quakers, began their work in 2019 after a meeting with the First Alaskans Institute, a nonprofit policy and advocacy organization.

Qassataq, who worked for the institute at the time, asked the Quakers to look at their group’s own history in Alaska and its effect on Native people.

That request set off a years-long effort that revealed some difficult truths, said Jan Bronson, one of the Quakers who participated in the research.

Part of what drew Bronson to becoming a Quaker, she said, was the movement’s history working on the abolition of slavery and in support of women’s equality. She said she was “shocked” to learn about its participation in the residential schools system — especially in the Lower 48, but also in Alaska, where there was a Quaker-run school in Douglas, across Gastineau Channel from Juneau, from around 1888 to 1902.

At a Quaker run-school, one administrator was described as

using “the strap” — meaning physical punishment — and some children who spoke their Native languages had their mouths sponged out with harsh-tasting herbs, according to Bronson.

Quakers, she said, “were right in there, designing this sort of assimilation policy that the U.S. government put into place.”

That discovery left the Alaska Friends Conference with a “moral and spiritual imperative” to take action, said Cathy Walling of Fairbanks, another member of the group who participated in the research and subsequent apologies.

The Alaska group, in addition to issuing formal apologies at the invitation of affected communities, worked with Quaker branches in other states to contribute more than \$90,000 to a healing center in the village of Kake, where there was once a Quaker mission.

A tribal leader there said the contribution “by no means lets the Quakers off the hook,” though he called it “a good start to healing.”

But the Quakers were just one religious denomination involved in the assimilation of Alaska Natives. Walling said she’s not sure that members of other groups and churches involved in the state’s residential institutions have accounted for their histories in the same way.

“The people in those churches, how much do they know that history, or are just even aware of the boarding schools that their denominations ran?” Walling asked. “I’ll speak for myself and say, I did not know that Quakers ran a boarding school in Douglas, Alaska, before we stepped into this healing journey. And I’d venture a guess that there are many other, particularly white people, in these other denominations that may not know either: What were the boarding schools that their own denominations ran?”

Watching the new documentary, said Qassataq, is one way that people who work with Alaska Natives, or represent them in government, can better understand the history.

“Sugarcane” is not yet in wide release. But the filmmakers say it will be available for streaming on Disney+ later in the fall.

Nathaniel Herz publishes the Northern Journal, at northernjournal.com.

Tribes receive \$14 million from federal grant program for domestic violence work

By ALASKA BEACON

The U.S. Justice Department has announced more than \$86 million in grants for American Indian and Alaska Native communities to support survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking and sex trafficking.

Nearly \$14 million of those dollars were awarded to Alaska tribes and tribal organizations, including the village of Kake.

The news comes after Alaska lawmakers increased state funding to the state’s Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault to make up for a decrease in one if its federal funding sources and as advocates have stressed the need for even more financial support.

The grants come through the federal Violence Against Women Act, a law that funds the investigation and prosecution of violent crimes against women, which had its 30th anniversary last month. The law established the federal Office of Violence Against Women within the Justice Department; its Tribal Affairs Division will administer the grants.

Fourteen different tribes or tribal organizations in Alaska have been awarded grants so far and several of them received more than \$1 million. The Organized Village of Kake was awarded \$1.5 million to support Tribal jurisdiction over crimes committed in the community, including domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and sex trafficking.

Bristol Bay Native Association, Aleutian Pribilof Island Association and the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe each received roughly \$1.2 million to support the response to such crimes in the communities they serve.

The Yup’ik Women’s Coalition and the Healing Native Hearts Coalition each received more than \$400,000 in grants to continue their work in the Yukon-Kuskokwim and Interior regions.

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