



# Napaimute News

January, 2017

News from the Forest People



Sunset at Napaimute: boats on a log raft photo courtesy of Sydny Sherer

## Native Village of Napaimute

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(L-R): Devron, Marcie, Rachelle, Shelly, Audrey

## 2017 Napaimute Traditional Council:

*Delores Matter, Traditional Chief*

*Devron Hellings, President*

*Marcie Sherer, Vice President*

*Shelly Leary, Secretary*

*Rachelle Rohde, Member*

*Audrey Leary, Member*

## Administration & Key Staff:

*Mark Leary, Director of Development & Operations*

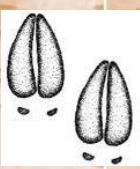
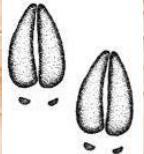
*Dan Gillikin, Environmental Director*

*Lisa Feyereisen, Executive Administrative Assistant*

*Marcie Sherer, Finance Director*

*Nickolai Savage, Timber Harvest Manager*

*Joe Kameroff, Jr., Brownsfield & Partners in Fisheries Coordinator/*





## *Director's Report:*

### Happy New Year!

2016 has been a good year for the Native Village of Napaimute. Through the hard work and dedication of both our Council and key employees such as Dan Gillikin, Lisa Feyereisen, Nickolai Savage, Tim Alexie, Marcie Sherer and many others, we have seen unprecedented growth and accomplished a lot of important work over the past twelve months. We continue to focus on having a positive impact on the People of the Middle Kuskokwim through the establishment of safe winter transportation routes, involvement with management of fish and game resources, and economic development projects.

But even with all of this activity going on we must always keep in mind that the story of this organization began long before many of us – decades ago when the Council raised its first funds for tribal operations through a bake sale at the Aniak Fair. The money they earned was used to purchase the most basic office supplies: pens, envelopes, paper, and stamps to be used for communicating with our tribal members. This was long before personal computers!

We still have those receipts hanging in a frame on the wall in the Council Office in Napaimute. Over the years from these humble, self-sufficient beginnings we have built a well-balanced organization with a reputation for “thinking outside the box” and never giving up. We will always find a way to reach our goals for the tribe, the community, and the region. This is one of the most important values taught to us by our Elders—to never give up—always find a way.

Through these core values we have been able to come far and our story continues to be built through the work of many good people and with the support of many organizations.

In 2016 we successfully managed 20 federal and state programs as well as a for-profit subsidiary that provided employment opportunities for dozens of our Middle Kuskokwim neighbors and a valued service to the People of the Lower River.

Along with this growth comes an increased responsibility to ensure that the financial integrity of the Native Village of Napaimute continues. It’s always been the nature of NVN to be financially responsible – our constant reminder is those framed receipts hanging in the office – these are just the next natural steps for our organization to take.

Our Council and Administration have put in much extra duty in 2016 to strengthen our finance department, update policies and procedures, and negotiate an Indirect Cost Rate that will serve to more uniformly guide us as we enter into this new level of operations. This work will lay the foundation for continued stable growth for those that will lead the Native Village of Napaimute into the future.

For those that will continue our story.

And speaking of the future, 2016 was especially rewarding through the positive growth of our tribe including the birth of my own two grandsons who were enrolled as soon as their official birth certificates were received from the State.

In early October we did lose one tribal member, but as we brought him up the River for his final rest in Napaimute I looked down at the new born tribal member sleeping there in the boat. One was ending his life in Napaimute. One was just starting his. This is the way it should be I thought to myself.

This is our story.

Through the pages of this newsletter I hope that we tell it well.

Thank you again to all of our 2016 employees and supporting organizations.

**Mark Leary**  
**Director of Development and Operations**





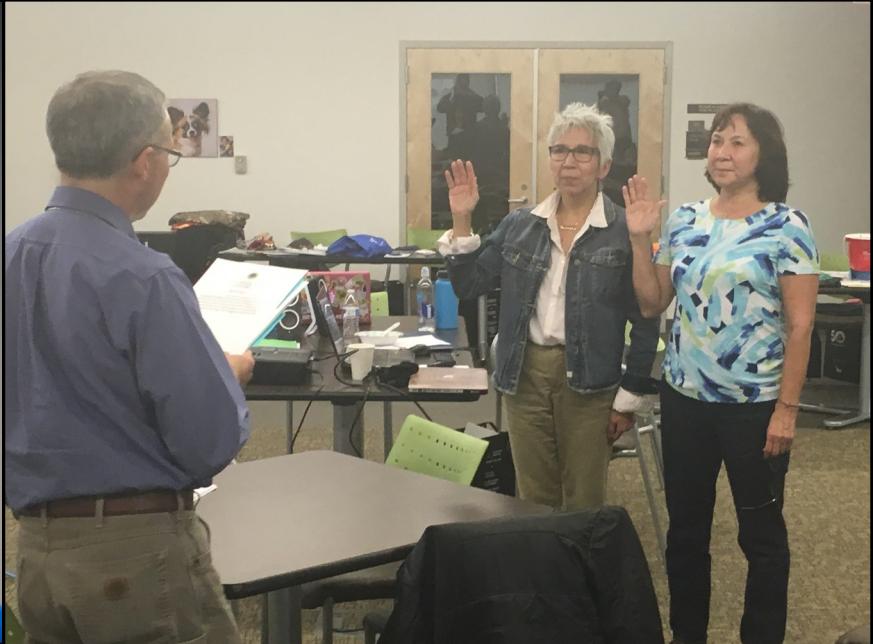
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## Marcie Sherer—20 Years of Service to the Tribe, the Community, & the Region



*A Historical Moment: April 17, 2007 NVN President Marcie Sherer signs the deed to 650 acres of land being transferred directly from The Kuskokwim Corporation to the Native Village of Napaimute.*





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Thank You Marcie!



## 2017 NVN Goals & Objectives:<sup>\*</sup>

### I. TRIBE

***Host Spirit Camp at Napaimute***

***Council Retreat @ Napaimute after June 12, 2017***

***Develop a business model for sustainable operations***

***Implement updated financial policies and internal control***

***Identify our exit strategy from AVCP***

### II. PERSONNEL

***Recruit and retain qualified employees***

***Finalize job descriptions and evaluation criteria***

***One hundred percent compliance with updated personnel policies***

***Design a hire, training, retention model that promotes development of a reliable local employment pool***

### III. VILLAGE

***Pursue improved transportation logistics to and from Napaimute (barge, ice road equipment)***

***Pursue family based employee housing***

***Complete Community Building maintenance and septic renovation***

***Rehabilitate dump road***

***Update IRR inventory***

***Title VI and develop priority***

### IV. REGIONAL

***Actively participate in statewide efforts to unify the tribes***

***Actively participate in regional fish and game management issues***

***Actively participate in the Donlin EIS process***

\*Established by the Napaimute Traditional Council at their Annual Strategic Planning Work Session, December 17, 2016 at the Cook Inlet Housing Authority Conference Room in Anchorage.

This important time provides direction for NVN Administration & Staff throughout the upcoming year.

It is also a valuable tool for measuring performance.

A BIG THANK YOU to the Napaimute Traditional Council for the long hours they donate to moving Napaimute forward and also to the Cook Inlet Housing Authority for their accommodations.



## NVN's New EPA Brownsfield Program:

We are excited to announce that the Native Village of Napaimute has initiated and began implementing an EPA: Brownfields State Tribal Response Program for the fiscal year 2016-2017. We have hired Joe Kameroff JR from Aniak, Alaska as the Coordinator for this program.

Joe has substantial experience in many areas including but not limited to: working on the north slope for 9 years as a welder, IRATA Assistant Radiographer, insulator, scaffold builder and employment at Donlin Gold Mine in the area of Camp Maintenance. Currently Joe is also the Fire Chief of Aniak Volunteer Fire Department, a City Council Member for the City of Aniak, and our seasonal Fisheries Coordinator. Of all of Joe's day to day activities, the ones he enjoys most are spending time with his son Jason and participating in activities associated with his subsistence lifestyle.

The Brownfields Program is new to Napaimute and is a cooperation agreement with the EPA for local brownfields sites and potential sites to be determined and hopefully taken care of in a corrective manner. The potential Brownfield's sites within the Village of Napaimute include: previous landfills, previous areas used for fuel storage, "old school site", numerous vacant lots in which a structural fire occurred, broken-down post office site, old dilapidated houses, and at least one derelict generator site. There are many documented environmentally "critical" sites along the Kuskokwim River and many additionally being inventoried and assessed by others; this program will address those undocumented sites directly impacting Napaimute and the Mid-Kuskokwim River. Additionally, particular investigation, documentation, inventorying, and assessments will occur over the entire Mid-Kuskokwim area (from Georgetown, Crooked Creek through Napaimute, to Aniak).

The initial phases of this programs includes many opportunities to build capacity in the areas of potentially historic contaminated sites, and potential future responses to environmental harmful actions. Napaimute has submitted an application to continue this program for the fiscal year 2017-2018.

We are very fortunate to have Joe on our staff and look forward to the development of this new program under his watch.

*...including Aniak Fire Chief!*



*Joe Kameroff, Jr: a man of many talents...*

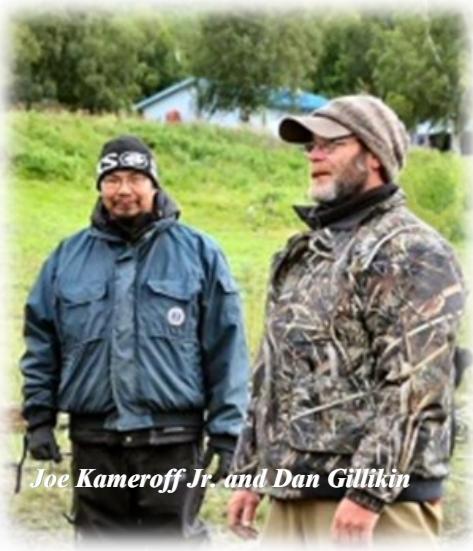


## *Environmental Director's Report:*

### Introduction

Hello again - to all the folks of the Kuskokwim Region and beyond, my name is Dan Gillikin and I started working for Napaimute in April of 2015 as the Environmental Director (ED). In what I like to consider my first full year as the ED it pleases me to share with you some of our accomplishment in 2016, and our plans for the future.

As a recap; I am by trade a Fisheries Biologist, having worked for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Kuskokwim Native Association. I, along with Sharon (my wife) have lived in Alaska for 30 years now, with 12 of them being right here on the Kuskokwim. We live on a small homestead just upriver from Aniak, and are striving to make it as self-sustainable as possible. We feel so fortunate to be here and for the wonderful people we have come to know, the remarkable pristine character of the river, and the abundant resources it provides.



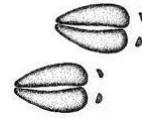
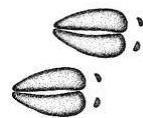
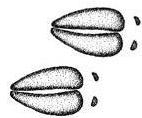
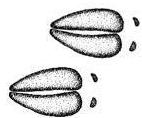
**Joe Kameroff Jr. and Dan Gillikin**

In 2016 we added a new position to the Environmental Department with funding through the Partners in Fisheries Monitoring Program. Joe Kameroff Jr. was hired as the Partners Program Technical Coordinator and has proven himself not only invaluable to the Partners Program but also to other Programs and projects Napaimute is currently involved with.

### Indian General Assistance Program (IGAP)

Napaimute's Environmental Department has been funded through the EPA's Indian General Assistance Program (IGAP) since 2005. In 2016 Napaimute closed out its 4 year grant for the years 2013 – 2016, which has been an amazing effort. In this newsletter I would like to highlight a few of the programs major accomplishment over the last 4 years. The IGAP program covers a wide range of projects mostly aimed at collecting; baseline environmental information, management of solid waste, and sharing information with the Tribe and public on environmental issues. The Programs major goals over the years can generally be described as:

1. Increase capacity by management and administration of the program
2. Conduct environmental assessment and reviews
3. Facilitate: Outreach, Research , Resource Management, and Youth Education activities
4. Promote community planning and good stewardship





## *Environmental Director's Report - cont'd*

Napaimute developed a Tribal Environmental Plan (TEP) which identifies several program priorities, some beyond the scope of the EPA to fund directly. IGAP funding over the years has allowed NVN to engage with stakeholders and resource managers on the critical issues throughout the Region. IGAP funding also allowed NVN to develop the capacity to secure alternative funding for projects to assist in addressing these issues. In the last few years these partnerships have led to several projects being funded that otherwise would not have been without the IGAP Programs assistance, here are a few:

**FY14 – Eradication of Yellow Toadflax at Napaimute.** Funded by the Alaska Association of Conservation Districts, a one year project.

**FY15 – Fishwheel Demonstration Project.** Funded by the Pacific State Marine Fisheries Commission, a two year project.

**FY15 – Aniak Test Fishery.** Funded by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Commercial Fisheries Division, a one year project.

**FY16 – Aniak Test Fishery and Salmon River Weir.** Funded by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Commercial Fisheries Division, a one year project.

**FY16 – In-Season Fisheries Assessment.** Funded by the USFWS Tribal Wildlife Grant Program, a one year project.

**FY16 – Partners in Fisheries Monitoring.** Funded by the USFWS Office of Subsistence Management (OSM), a four year project.

**FY16 – In-Season Harvest Monitoring.** Funded by ADF&G Subsistence Division and OSM, a three year project.

**FY16 – George River Internship.** Funded by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Commercial Fisheries Division, and OSM, a two year project.

**FY16 – Brown Field Program.** Funded by EPA.

**Capacity Building** - one of the fundamental purposes of the IGAP program is to increase a tribes “capacity” to sustain an environmental program that addresses their needs. Beyond just addressing resource concerns the impact of these new projects to the area has been significant; infusing much needed cash into the local economy by employing 15-20 part-time local hire employees. The youth education projects have reached over 40 local (mostly native) students and interns with environmental curriculums and hands-on work experience. The monitoring projects have not only provided jobs and work experience for locals, but also improved communications between managers and subsistence users, building a better understanding of each other’s concerns. As Napaimute continues to develop its staff, skills, administration, infrastructure (i.e., its “capacity”), and builds on a track record of successful projects we will continue to grow our program to meet our goals, and the needs of the region.



## Environmental Director's Report - cont'd

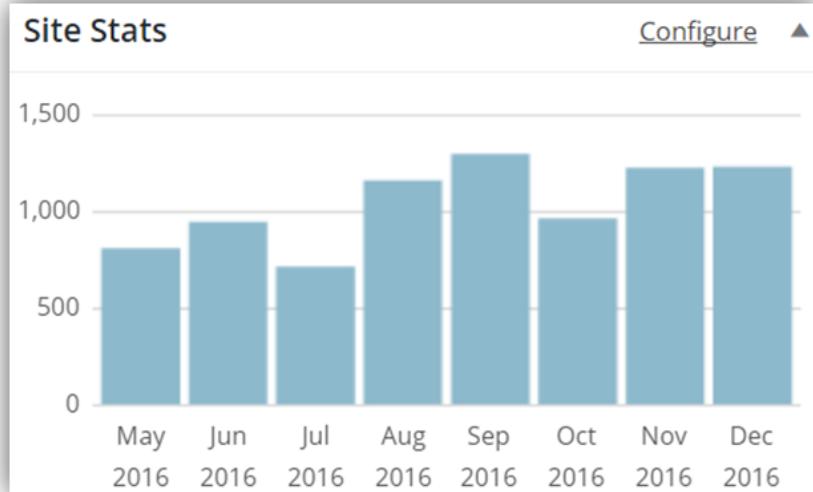
**Outreach** - in addition to capacity building outreach in many ways been Napaimute's IGAP Program's "bread and butter" over the years. The information sharing, collaborations, and issue resolutions that Napaimute has been a part of fills a communications gap in the Region that benefits both Stakeholders and Managers, and ultimately the resource.

Napaimute's capacity to reach such a broad range of users, often with diverse interest on so many different topics has not come easily. It has taken time, development of personal and professional relationships, cultural awareness, credibility with Stakeholders and Agencies, professional staffing, a Council that understands the issues, and is well informed.

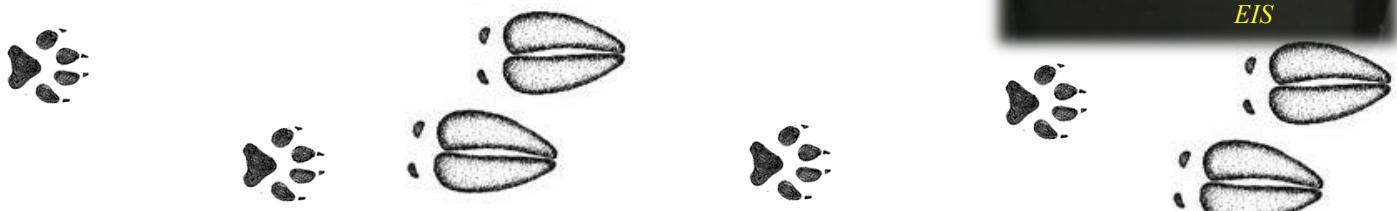
One of our primary tools for outreach has been Napaimute's website, which averages about 1,000 visits to our site each month, see chart below. About half of these hits are on post related to natural resource management, articles on conservation, climate change and other related subjects. In FY15 we also started reposting many of these articles on our Facebook page.

**Environmental Assessment** - over the last four years Napaimute, as a Cooperating Agency (along with other Tribal Organizations) has been collaborating with the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) on the proposed Donlin Gold Project. Napaimute's participation has involved; review of the issues, proposed actions, identifying information needs, and public comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

The scale of this proposed project is enormous, and consequently the scope of issues addressed. As a result the DEIS grew to over 5,000 pages and was very technical in nature. The ACOE is currently evaluating the public comments received and deciding if revisions are needed in the Final EIS, which is scheduled to be released sometime in early 2018. Release of the FEIS will provide one more opportunity for the public to comment, we encourage folks to continue to participate in the process and voice their concerns.



Donlin Gold Draft EIS





## *Environmental Director's Report - cont'd*

### **Partners in Fisheries Monitoring Program (PFMP)**

The Partners in Fisheries Monitoring Project (PFMP) is a new program here at Napaimute, starting in 2016. The program is funded for four years through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Office of Subsistence Management. The program is primarily aimed at building capacity for local involvement in fisheries management through; monitoring project development employing local hires, outreach with local subsistence users and youth, participation in management discussions and the regulatory processes, facilitation of information sharing between managers/researchers and local stakeholders.



In addition to the outreach we do, primarily through our website and Facebook we also hired local residents in four of the Middle Kuskokwim River Villages to act as Fisheries Resource Information Technicians (FRIT). Napaimute believes these positions will provide a critical link between the people tasked with managing the fisheries and those who rely on them to sustain their way of life.

Their main role was to collect and share in-season fisheries information with other fishermen in their villages, and provide feedback to Fisheries Managers on harvest effort, along with whether or not subsistence needs were being met. Given the conservation concerns for Chinook salmon in-season management actions have become all too common place on the Kuskokwim River. Compounding this is the split (at times) jurisdiction between Federal and State authorities as to who retains the management responsibilities on the Kuskokwim River. All this leads to a great deal of confusion, and at times frustration for the subsistence users. Our hope it that the FRIT Program will help to minimize some of this confusion and provide clarification to subsistence users on regulations so they have every opportunity available to them to meet their subsistence needs.





## *Environmental Director's Report—Fisheries*

### Fisheries Summary

Once again in 2016 low Chinook salmon returns were forecasted for the Kuskokwim; to achieve escapement objectives early season subsistence fishing restriction and tributary closures were jointly recommended by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group and the Kuskokwim River Inter Tribal Fisheries Commission also supported these necessary conservation actions.

**Management** - Preseason actions and strategies included: early closure, tributary closures, time-area-gear restrictions, allowing fishing opportunity that allowed for live release of Chinook salmon, and a harvest objective of 40,000 Chinook salmon. One significant regulatory change in 2016 for the Kuskokwim was the establishment of an early season subsistence fishing closure by the Alaska Board of Fisheries. The regulation annually suspends directed subsistence fishing for Chinook salmon in the Kuskokwim River until after June 11. The intent of the early closure is to more evenly spread harvest over the entire run and provide greater densities of Chinook to the Middle and Headwater areas of the Kuskokwim River and its tributaries. Radio telemetry studies in the last few years being conducted by ADF&G have shown that the earlier arriving Chinook are bound for these headwater tributaries. By disproportionately harvesting these early run fish in the lower river exploitation rates of those stocks may be much higher than the rest of the river, putting them at a possible greater risk of over harvesting.

The Federal Subsistence Board adopted a Special Action to close the Kuskokwim Chinook and chum salmon fishery to non-Federally qualified users within the boundary of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (YDNWR), beginning June 1<sup>st</sup>. The USFWS managed the subsistence fishery within the Yukon Delta NWR until July 7<sup>th</sup>, at which time ADF&G resumed management of the entirety of the Kuskokwim River.

Only two short commercial fishing opportunities directed at coho salmon were provided in the Kuskokwim resulting in well below average harvests. Participants were commercial fishermen who had registered with ADF&G as catcher/sellers, and had secured their own markets.

### Run Timing and Escapement

**Chinook Salmon** - The preliminary Kuskokwim River total run estimate is approximately 186,400 Chinook salmon (95% CI: 141,300–245,800). The Kuskokwim River drainage wide escapement goal was likely achieved. Run timing was average based on the Bethel Test Fishery.

Chinook salmon escapement at Kogrukuk River weir achieved the sustainable escapement goal (SEG). The George River weir was below the established SEG. The Kwethluk River experienced operational difficulties due to high water and it is presumed that it did not meet the established SEG. Seven tributaries have aerial survey SEGs and of these three tributaries were within the respective SEG ranges. Four tributaries were either below the SEG or stream conditions prevented an accurate survey. See tables 1 & 2 for additional information.





## Fisheries—cont'd:

### Run Timing and Escapement—cont'd

**Sockeye Salmon** - Sockeye salmon run timing was late based on BTF. Overall, sockeye salmon escapement was well above average throughout the drainage. The Kogrukluuk River weir has the only established sockeye salmon escapement goal which was exceeded. The Telaquana weir observed the second highest escapement of sockeye salmon since 2010.

**Chum Salmon** - Chum salmon run timing at BTF was late and all escapement projects showed a below average run. Escapement at the Kogrukluuk River weir achieved the established SEG.

Year	Chinook Salmon Escapement					
	Kwethluk	Tuluksaak	George	Kogrukluuk	Tatlawiksuk	Salmon
2005	<sup>a</sup>	2,653	3,845	21,819	2,864	<sup>a</sup>
2006	17,619	1,043	4,355	20,205	1,700	7,075
2007	12,927	374	4,011	<sup>a</sup>	2,032	6,255
2008	5,276	701	2,563	9,750	1,075	2,376
2009	5,744	362	3,663	9,528	1,071	1,656
2010	1,667	201	1,498	5,812	546	<sup>a</sup>
2011	4,079	288	1,547	6,731	992	<sup>a</sup>
2012	<sup>a</sup>	555	2,201	<sup>a</sup>	1,116	<sup>a</sup>
2013	<sup>a</sup>	193	1,292	1,819	495	625
2014	3,187	320	2,993	3,732	1,904	1,757
2015	8,163	709	2,281	7,639	2,095	2,285
2016	<sup>b</sup>	909	1,489	6,913	1,888	503
SEG	4,100– 7,500		1,800– 3,300	4,800– 8,800		
Average						
2006–2015	7,333	475	2,640	8,152	1,303	2,817

<sup>a</sup> Weir did not operate or counts were incomplete.

<sup>b</sup> Preliminary numbers subject to change.

**Table 1. Chinook escapements at weirs.**

**Coho Salmon** - High water complicated efforts to assess the coho salmon run at escapement projects throughout the drainage. Coho salmon passage at the Kwethluk River weir met the SEG, counts at Kogrukluuk River weir (the only other system with an established SEG) are considered incomplete due to high water.

Year	Lower Kuskokwim River <sup>a</sup>					Middle Kuskokwim River <sup>a</sup>					Upper Kuskokwim River <sup>a</sup>			
	Eek	Canyon C.	Kisaralik	Tuluksaak	Aniak	Kipchuk	Salmon	Holotuk	Oskawalik	Holitna	Gagarayah	Cheeneetnuk	Salmon (Pitka)	Bear (Pitka)
2005	<sup>b</sup>	5,059	2,206	672	<sup>b</sup>	1,679	4,097	268	582	1,760	788	1,155	1,801	367
2006	<sup>b</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	4,734	<sup>b</sup>	5,639	1,618	<sup>b</sup>	365	386	1,866	531	1,015	862	347
2007	<sup>b</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	692	173	3,984	2,147	1,458	146	<sup>b</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	1,035	<sup>b</sup>	943	165
2008	<sup>b</sup>	487	1,074	<sup>b</sup>	3,222	1,061	589	190	213	<sup>b</sup>	177	290	1,305	245
2009	<sup>b</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	390	379	<sup>b</sup>	303	323	632	209
2010	<sup>b</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	235	<sup>b</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	108	<sup>b</sup>	587	62	<sup>b</sup>	135	75
2011	263	<sup>b</sup>	534	<sup>b</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	116	79	20	26	<sup>b</sup>	96	249	767	145
2012	<sup>b</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	610	<sup>b</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	193	49	9	51	<sup>b</sup>	178	229	670	<sup>b</sup>
2013	240	1,165	597	83	754	261	154	29	38	670	74	138	475	64
2014	206	<sup>b</sup>	622	<sup>b</sup>	3,201	1,220	497	80	200	1,785	359	340	1,865	<sup>b</sup>
2015	<sup>b</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	709	<sup>b</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	917	810	77	<sup>b</sup>	662	19	<sup>b</sup>	2,016	1,381
2016	<sup>b</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	622	<sup>b</sup>	718	898	<sup>b</sup>	100	47	1,157	135	217	1,578	580
Escapement		400–		1,200–		330–			970–		300–	340–	470–	
Goal Range:		1,200		2,300		1,200			2,100		830	1,300	1,600	
Average														
2006–2015	236	826	1,090	128	3,360	942	519	141	185	1,114	283	369	967	329

<sup>a</sup> Estimates are from aerial surveys conducted during peak spawning periods under 'good' or 'fair' survey conditions.

<sup>b</sup> Survey was either not flown or did not meet acceptable survey criteria.

**Table 2. Chinook spawning aerial survey index estimates.**

To see the complete ADF&G 2016 Season Summary Report go to: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?>



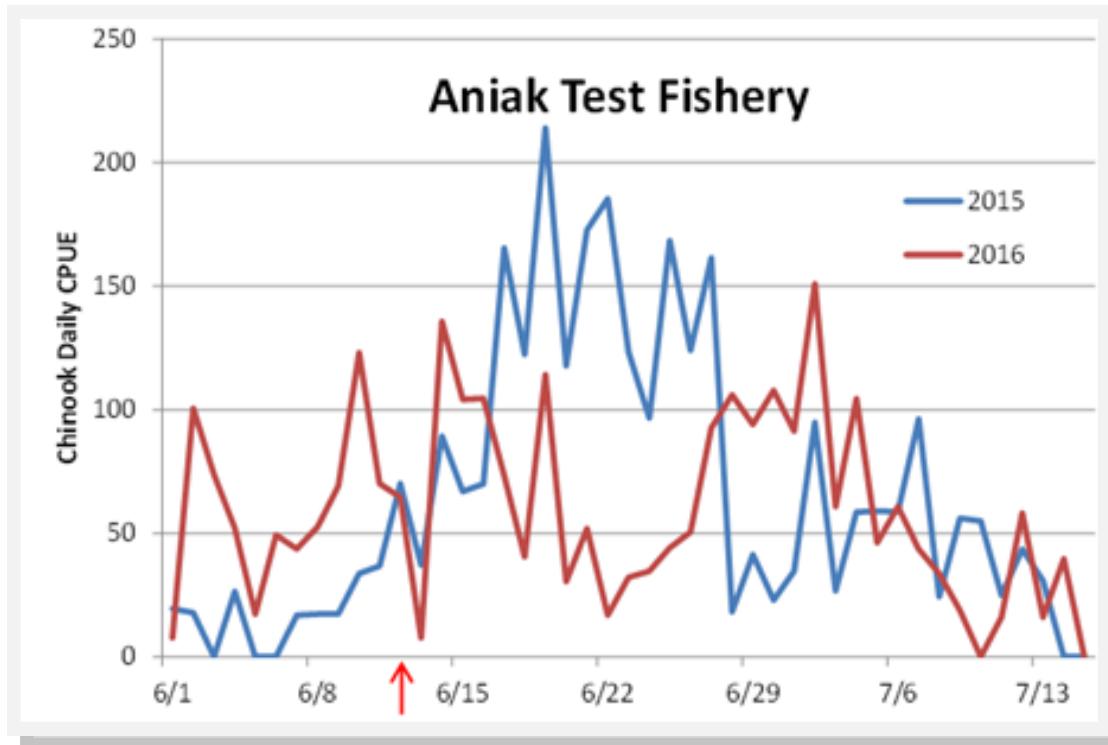
## Environmental Director's Report: 2016 Projects

### Projects

Napaimute is continuing to work with state and federal agencies to conduct monitoring, natural resource education, and outreach activities. These partnerships are providing employment for local residents and opportunities for them to become more engaged with the agencies in management activities, while providing local perspectives on the issues.

**Aniak Test Fishery** - operated for the second year from June 1<sup>st</sup> - July 15<sup>th</sup> with funding from ADF&G and the USFWS Tribal Wildlife Program. The Aniak Test Fishery methods are similar to those already used in the Test Fishery near Bethel. A two person crew fishes a 6 inch drift gill net at the same 3 sites twice daily, recording the total time and catch from each drift.

The information is used by managers to make decisions on openings and closures that both conserve Chinook salmon, while providing opportunity for harvest of other species. Without the information from the Aniak Test Fishery these decisions could have been much more conservative. The catch was distributed to the communities of Aniak, Chuathbaluk, and Red Devil.



Although it is only the second year for the project it is interesting to note the differences in run timing of Chinook at Aniak in the graph above. The earlier run timing in 2016 suggest the early closing of the lower river (until June 12<sup>th</sup>, red arrow in graph) had the desired effect of passing fish bound for headwater tributaries through the lower river fishery.



## *Environmental Director's Report: 2016 Projects—cont'd*

**Fish Wheel Demonstration Project** – this project concluded in 2016 and was funded by the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, in response to the 2012 Kuskokwim Fisheries Disaster Declaration. The goal was to provide for the oversight, materials, logistics and traditional teachings related to the construction and operation of fish wheels.



**Salmon River Weir** – this was another co-operatively funded project from ADF&G and the USFWS Tribal Wildlife Program. Like many of the weirs last summer high water made for operational challenges. The weir had to be removed and reinstalled several times throughout the summer to avoid serious damage to the weir panels. The crew however persevered and was able to continue intermittent operations until mid-September.



**In-Season Subsistence Harvest Surveys** – this is a cooperative project funded through ADF&G Subsistence Division and the USFWS. Despite a late start local crews were trained and able to conduct surveys over a two week period in Middle River Villages in August. This is a three year project which will continue in 2017. The intent is to characterize the subsistence salmon harvest in-season and provide that information to managers to inform their decisions on management actions, and in particular if subsistence needs are being met.



## *Environmental Director's Report: 2016 Projects—cont'd*

**Youth Outreach** - two new exciting projects aimed at youth education and outreach were funded by ADF&G and the USFWS this year.

**The first was Napaimute's support of the Kuspuk School District (KSD) Math Science Expedition (MSE) and post-expedition classroom follow-up.**

The MSE is a 9 to 10 day raft trip down the Salmon and Aniak rivers in late summer during which students are mentored by Professional Biologist and Educators and participate in a variety of hands-on math and science activities as well as events to develop leadership and team building skills.



**The second project was the George River Internship**. In partnership with the ADF&G and the Kuspuk School District Students spent nearly 2 weeks as paid interns collecting water quality data, discharge measurement, stream profiles on the George River. They also conducted identification of critical habitats, fish, macro-invertebrate, learned about biological and hydrological principles of riverine ecology, and career opportunities in the field of Natural Resources.

To see the Interns in action go to: <https://youtu.be/OtfA79ZiMYM?t=26>



## **Future Projects (2017)**

The following projects are ones that are currently in development (with a high likelihood of being funded), have been funded, or are awaiting funding approval in 2017 from the funding sources. These projects include: the IGAP Program, the Partners in Fisheries Monitoring Program, the Aniak Test Fishery, Salmon River Weir, In-Season Subsistence Harvest Surveys, Math Science Expedition, and the George River Internship.

As in the past, Napaimute will be recruiting locally to fill positions to support these projects. Job openings will be announced on our website and Facebook page as openings become available.

## **Final Thoughts...**

The people of the Kuskokwim continue to face many challenges from a variety of sources. As the Environmental Program continues to grow it is our sincere hope to assist not just our Tribal Members but all the folks of the region with these issues. We will do our best to stay informed and engaged...for the benefit of us all.

If you wish to contact me about any of our projects please do so at: [dangillikin@gmail.com](mailto:dangillikin@gmail.com)



## Administrative Support Report: Win Some Lose Some

### Over the last year the Native Village of Napaimute submitted the following funding proposals:

#### **Native American Library Services Basic Grants Program Institute of Museum and Library Services:**

The Native Village of Napaimute was seeking funds to support community wide internet service and fuel to run the generator additional hours.

Status: Applied for in April of 2016 and awarded in July of 2016.



#### **AVCP, TANF Elder/Youth Cultural Grant:** The focus of this project is support programs that promote prevention programs that involve Elder and Youth culturally.

The Native Village of Napaimute applied for this grant in March of 2016 and asked for supply funds to assist in the implementation of our “Spirit Camp”.

Status: Applied for in March of 2016 and awarded in June 2016.

#### **AVCP Tribal Justice: Youth Prevention Grant:**

The monies applied for are funded from a Department of Justice Prevention Grant. The Grant’s goal is looking to prevent suicide, crime, drug use, alcohol use, and truancy in youth. The funds Napaimute applied for will be used primarily for camping equipment, but additionally may be used for participation in subsistence and community service activities, sponsoring social gatherings, and activities associated with the annual tribal gathering.

The Native Village of Napaimute applied for funding assistance to purchase two canoes and tents to support healthy cultural activities.

Status: Applied for in January of 2016 and awarded February of 2016.

#### **Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation: Diabetes Prevention Funds:**

The YKHC has recognized that over the past few decades many of our Native people living in the YK Delta have become less physically active, are eating less Native food, and have been developing more chronic health diseases like diabetes, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, cancers and obesity. We are encouraging city and tribal government and other non-profit agencies to partner with us to develop long-term activity programs that will help prevent diabetes and other chronic health diseases by increasing healthy lifestyle choices for people living in our rural communities.

Status: Applied for in Spring of 2016 and were notified of non-selection in spring of 2016.

#### **AVCP Summer Youth Employment Training Program:**

The Summer Youth Employment Program is designed to provide youth from the ages of 14-20 years old with a summer work experience. This summer youth employment program helps youth to develop their skills and prepare for future employment by spending the summer working for the Native Village of Napaimute.

The Native Village of Napaimute applied for this program and employment three youths at our Lower Kalskag Timber Harvest Site.

Status: Applied for fund in June of 2016 and received funds in July of 2016.

#### **Donlin: Heavy Equipment Operations and Maintenance Training Funding (Northern Industrial Training):**

The Native Village of Napaimute applied for funds to provide training to eight workers on Operations and Maintenance of Equipment at our Kalskag Timber Harvest Site.

Status: Funds applied for in September of 2016 and received in October of 2016.

#### **AVCP: Heavy Equipment Operations and Maintenance Training Funding:**

The Native Village of Napaimute applied for funds to provide transportation and lodging for the NIT Instructor to conduct on site Equipment Training.

Status: Applied for in September of 2016 and received the funds in October of 2016.



## Administrative Support Report—cont'd:

### **Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG) Program for Indian, US Department of Housing and Urban Development:**

The ICDBG Program provides eligible grantees with direct grants for use in developing viable Indian and Alaska Native Communities, including decent housing, a suitable living environment, and economic opportunities, primarily for low and moderate income persons.

Napaimute, *People of the Forest*, sought funding to purchase a local sawmill, Nelson Brother Enterprises, LLC.; disassemble the mill/support buildings; relocate the sawmill from Chuathbaluk 43 miles down the Kuskokwim River to our Kalskag Timber Harvest Site where it will increase our timber harvesting and production capacity. Harvested timber will be milled into lumber; then cured, stored, and inspected; before being transported by river barge or ice road to the Lower Kuskokwim Market. The *Timber to Truss Project* is the foundation of future economic sustainability for the Native Village of Napaimute and will positively impact other Tribes within our region through employment and training opportunities where none currently exist.

Status: Applied for in May of 2016 and awarded September 12, 2016.

**EPA/State Tribal Response Programs /Brownfields:** This Tribal Response Program is our opportunity to inventory, assess, and clean up our environment. Existing toxic waste is known to be in and around our tribally-owned and 14(c) 3 re-conveyed lands. Napaimute is potentially the repository of toxic material weathered and eroded from numerous mining sites along the Kuskokwim River Watershed, particularly from the poorly environmentally documented Mid-Kuskokwim River Basin, Holokuk River Basin, Komakofsky River Basin, New York Creek, Crooked Creek, Oskwalik River, Victoria Creek, Sue Creek, and George River Basin. These watersheds are major tributaries of the Kuskokwim River and are dotted with derelict mines, mining interests, abandoned villages, and historic harbor landing sites. This program, and its associated Brownfields component, will allow the Native Village of Napaimute to immediately locate and catalog potentially hazardous sites that directly affect us and any communities downstream.

The Native Village of Napaimute applied for this grant in December of 2015. We applied for funds to hire a part-time Coordinator and begin tasks outlined in our work plan pertaining to inventory and oversight of environmental issues.

Status: Applied for in December 2015, final application August 11, 2016 and awarded September 2016.

**Tribal Transportation Safety Plan:** The Native Village of Napaimute Traditional Council is committed to reducing the number of deaths and serious injuries related to transportation, therefore, improving the overall safety of the tribal transportation system. As part of the ongoing effort to make safety improvements, this Tribal Safety Plan has been developed with input from our local community and tribal members. The plan identifies current issues and priorities which upon implementation, are intended to further improve transportation safety for the Native Village of Napaimute's residents and others visiting their traditional lands.

This was adopted by the Napaimute Traditional Council July of 2016.

### **Department of Natural Resources: Napaimute Winter Trail System, Phase II:**

The Native Village of Napaimute applied for funds to mark the Winter Trail System of the Mid-Kuskokwim River in the winter of 2017-2018 and 2018-2019.

Status: Applied for October 2016 and not yet notified.

### **Tribal Transportation Safety Program:**

The Napaimute Tribal Transportation Safety Project: Arrive Alive is a winter trail marking project consisting of: Assess ice thickness throughout the corridor; marking hazards as well as marking a designated "safe" trail; and plowing rougher sections of the River, for the most frequently traveled transportation corridors between the remote Middle Kuskokwim River villages of Lower Kalskag, Upper Kalskag, Aniak, Chuathbaluk, Napaimute and Crooked Creek. This project is a direct result of the highest transportation safety priority highlighted in the Napaimute Transportation Safety Plan in the TPPSF categories of emergency response and engineering improvements.

Status: Applied for in fall of 2015 and received April 2016





## Administrative Support Report - cont'd:

### **Alaska Community Foundation: GCI Suicide Prevention Grant:**

The goal of the grant is to reduce the rates of suicide in Alaska and promote mental wellness through strengthened community and personal connections. Eligible applicants included 501(c)(3) nonprofits or equivalent organizations located in the state of Alaska, which may include tribes, schools, churches, local government agencies, and programs.

The Native Village of Napaimute was seeking funds to purchase a boat which will be used to support Spirit Camp activities.

Status: Applied for in August of 2016 and notified unsuccessful in September 2016.

### **USDA: NCRS: Reforestation:**

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers in order to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation or improved or created

Eligible program participants receive financial and technical assistance to implement conservation practices, or activities like conservation planning, that address natural resource concerns on their land. Payments are made to participants after conservation practices and activities identified in an EQIP plan of operations are implemented. Contracts can last up to ten years in duration.

The Native Village of Napaimute was seeking funds to perform the following activities: demonstration tree planting, seed collecting, Fuel Break, wildlife enhancement, and scarification of the harvest areas at our Kalskag Timber Harvest site.

Status: Applied for in March of 2016 and notified we were eligible in September 2016.

### **AVCP, Tribal Workforce Development Department: Employment Training Center:**

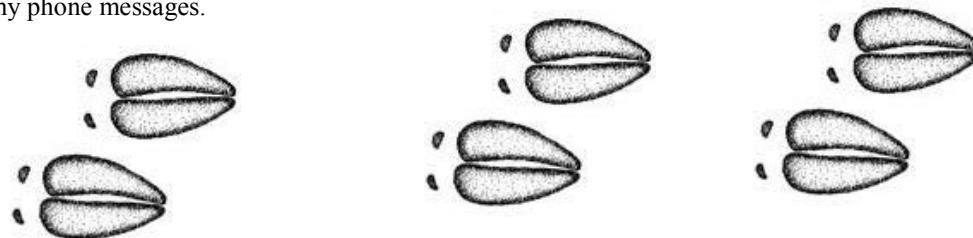
Tribal Workforce Development Department. The goal of this department is improve regional workforce development by connecting TANF clients and young adult tribal members ages 25 and under, with employment, training, and educational opportunities. The program will begin by opening 20 Tribal Job Centers at 20 different locations throughout the AVCP region. All villages interested in hosting please see the attached application. Each job center will employ one full time AVCP Tribal Workforce Development Specialist. That person's job will be to connect individuals with employment and training opportunities, provide assistance with resume writing and interview skills, offer basic workforce development skills such as introduction to Microsoft office, develop and maintain a job skills bank, and facilitate access to GED programs, vocational training opportunities, and Higher Education opportunities including scholarships opportunities.

The Native Village of Napaimute applied for fund to host an area job center.

Status: Applied for in May of 2016 and notified of non-selection in October of 2016.

If there are any questions, need for clarification and/or concerns about any of the programs mentioned above, please feel free to contact me at: [crowvillage@gmail.com](mailto:crowvillage@gmail.com) or by phone, (907) 676-0599. It is usually easier by email as my cell phone does not get reception in Crow Village and sometimes GCI eats my phone messages.

*- Lisa Feyereisen*





## 2016 Napaimute Spirit Camp Report by Audrey Leary

Roughly a hundred years ago, a village sat at the lower end of a hill only 28 miles East of present day Aniak. Along the bank of the Kuskokwim River lived families who traded, lived off the land, and went to school. Children filled the houses of nearly a hundred homes, and life was rich among the soil of a village known as Napaimute. Today, our now federally recognized tribe has been working towards the revitalization of our village and of the home of our ancestors. As a tribe, we have recognized the importance people—especially children—have in establishing a village and building a community, and all efforts made by the tribe embody this value of a community spirit. To add to the essence and strength of Napaimute, this summer our village invited youth from the communities of Lower Kalskag, Upper Kalskag, Aniak, Chuathbaluk, Crooked Creek and also tribal members of Napaimute to attend what would be Napaimute's first summer Youth Spirit Camp.



Spirit Camp 2016

Picture L-R: Sherman Kellia, Scott Sakar, Brianna Sherer, Ethan Morgan, Jason Steeves, Tatianna Morgan, Sharlisa Michaelson, William Morgan, Audrey Leary, Jayce Rhode, Lori Evan

The camp began on July 16, 2016, making for a beautiful day to travel the river by boat and pick up all youth attending. Throughout a duration of 7-days, the youth engaged in many activities encompassing cultural preservation, team building, and traditional learning. A community uprooted by the communities of those in the middle-Kuskokwim was created and the fire of Napaimute's Spirit Camp gleamed bright.

To put on a camp, it takes the hearts of those passionate about our Yup'ik culture and teaching the young minds of those in our region. Led by the coordinating efforts of Napaimute's Community Family Services Specialist, Audrey Leary, Napaimute tribal members Brianna Sherer and Shelly Leary, Director of Development and Operations, Mark Leary, and seasonal employee, Jacob Wise of Chuathbaluk, our Spirit Camp was able to flow smoothly.

When the youth arrived on the first day, each were gifted a tie-dye sweatshirt, backpacks, water bottles, flashlights, journals, and sleeping bags. To kick off the camp, Wassillie Kameroff of Lower Kalskag spoke to the youth and after rules were established, icebreaker games were played to help everyone get to know one another. After a day of games and swimming, the youth settled in Napaimute's Community Building where they would be sleeping every night of the camp.



Bubble Gum Game!

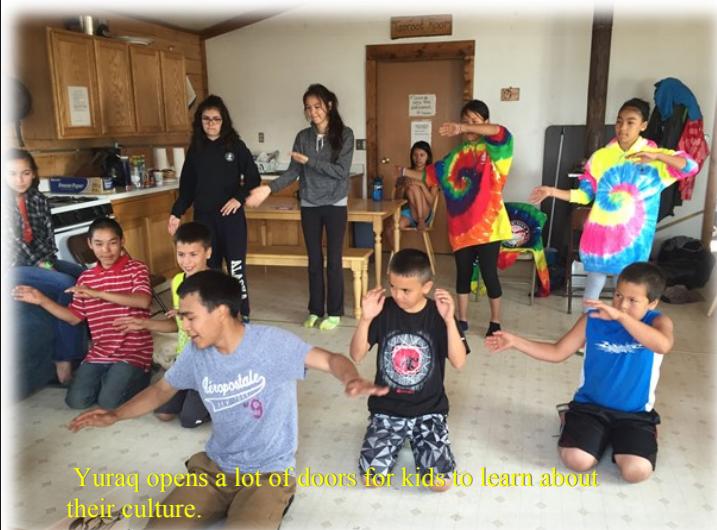
Team Building: Getting everyone over the "electric fence."





## Spirit Camp Report—cont'd:

Along with hiking to one of our Kuskokwim's old villages, Little Mountain Village, and learning about travel safety, how to mend a fish-wheel, cut fish, work with wood, and paddle a canoe, the youth who attended Napaimute's Spirit Camp were gifted the opportunity of learning how to yuraq (Eskimo dance) from the talented Byron Nicholai of Toksook Bay. Together we sang and danced to "I Am Yup'ik," and later performed in front of the community members of Napaimute and EXCEL students traveling from Aniak to the George River. This was one of the more powerful activities of our camp, and Napaimute was proud to see the youth bring what they had learned back to their communities and teach others.



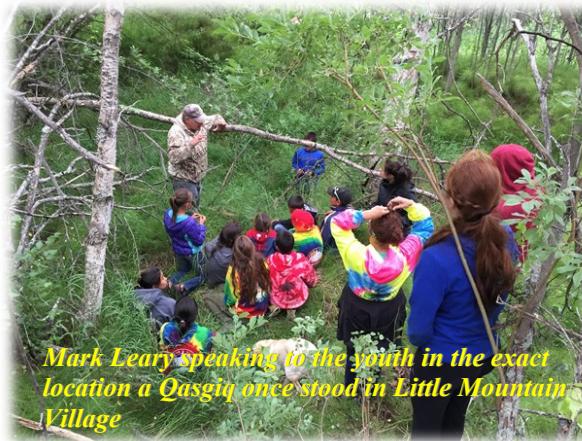
Yuraq opens a lot of doors for kids to learn about their culture.



Fish wheel gold!



Traditions being passed on.



Mark Leary speaking to the youth in the exact location a Qasgiq once stood in Little Mountain Village



Rain or shine, we had a good time camping!

After four days in Napaimute, the youth and all camp facilitators packed up and traveled to Alugak (Holokuk River) where we camped for a night. Together everyone set up the wall tents of camp, packed wood, sat around the campfire listening to traditional stories, and of course...fished and swam! At our campsite, three tents were constructed: one for the girls, one for the boys, and another for our cook.





## 2016 Napaimute Spirit Camp Report by Audrey Leary

The ending of our 7-day camp was celebrated with a panel of elders who shared their traditional stories of life along the Kuskokwim. John Borowski of Napaimute and Nas Avakumoff of Chuathbaluk spoke on the ways life has changed since they were kids and even shared old artifacts with the youth. For taking the time to pass their knowledge down to the youth of our camp, John and Nas were gifted uluaqs made by George Nevak of Toksook Bay, which were generously donated by Bob Herron of Bethel. After an afternoon spent with the elders, the camp ended with a potluck prepared by camp cook, Shelly Leary.



*John Borowski and Nas Avakumoff with their uluaqs gifted by the Native Village of Napaimute through a donation from Bob Herron & family*



*Potluck food! It's our favorite diet!*

Napaimute has always loved seeing the life of children running freely on the grass, and learning from our surrounding resources just as the people of our village once did. As the camp came to a close, it was humbling to be a part of the friendships that were created, but more importantly, to see the community that was formed among a small group of youth with roots to the middle-Kuskokwim region. As a gift to their families, each youth brought back fish from Napaimute's fish-wheel, and after parting our goodbyes, walked away smiling knowing that this camp was the first of many to be had in Napaimute.

As a tribe we believe that kids are the life of our river. They are the future for what is still to come, and because of them, the spirit of who we are as People of the Kuskokwim will always flow steady.





*Happy New Year from the Native Village of Napaimute, dba: Napaimute Enterprises, LLC!*



**Firewood for Sale in Bethel:\***

**Round logs or chopped wood**

**Sizes to fit every budget**

**Credit & debit cards welcome**

**Delivery is available to nearby villages after freeze up  
Call: 545-2877**

\*This firewood can also be purchased through the Energy Assistance Program at AVCP

A product of the Native Village of Napaimute  
In cooperation with the Kuskokwim Corporation & the villages of Upper & Lower Kalskag





## Investing in Our People: Northern Industrial Training



**Freeze up** is normally down time for many of our project employees. This year NVN's leadership set a goal to use this time to schedule trainings that would enhance the skills of our younger employees.

After researching different training options we decided to take a unique approach. Instead of sending our people away for training we brought the training to them.

Northern Industrial Training out of Palmer came to our Kalskag Timber Harvest Site to conduct a 10 day Heavy Equipment Maintenance & Repair course in mid-October.

This was very beneficial training for our employees. Mike Hobbs, the instructor thoroughly enjoyed it as well. He said it was rewarding for him to be with people that were "hungry" to learn.

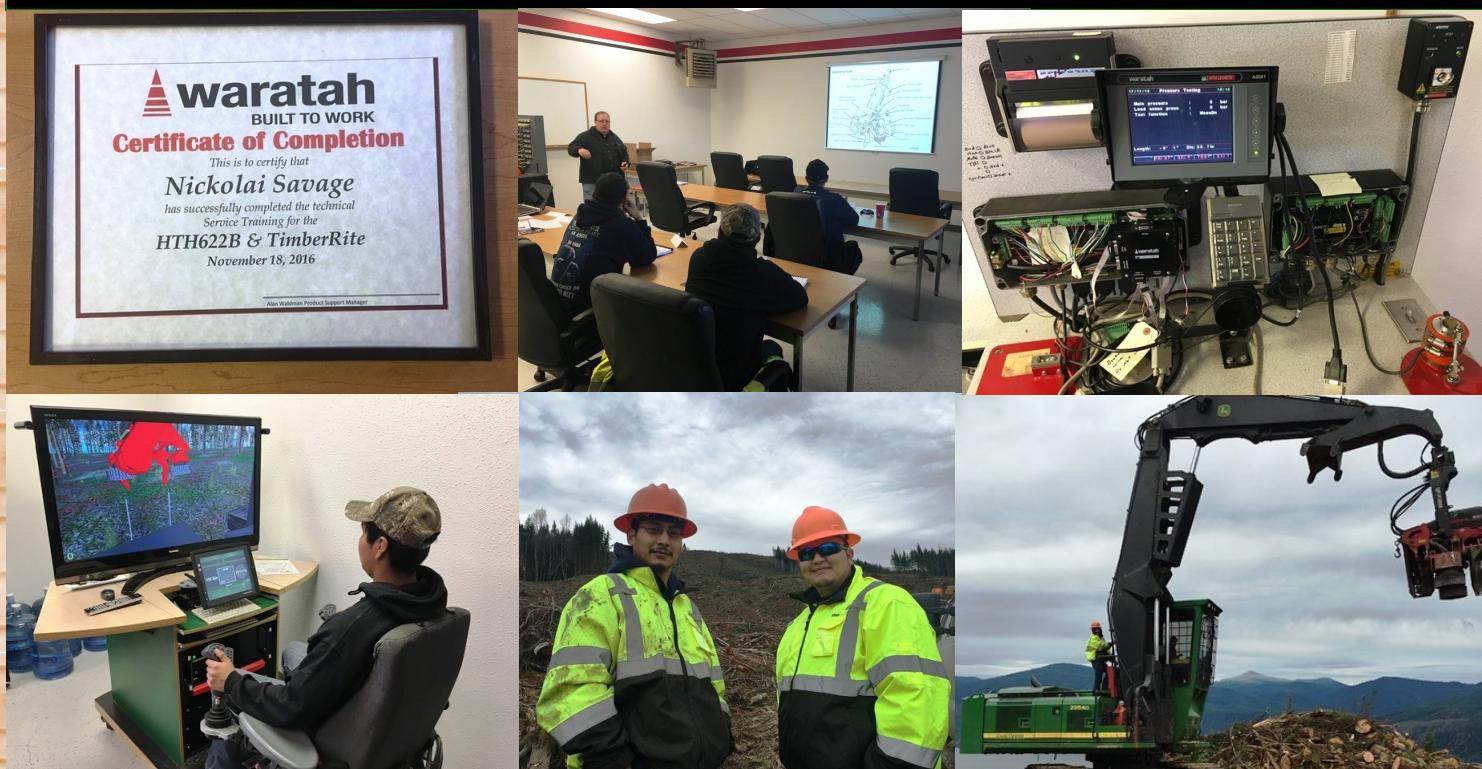
Thank you to NIT, LLC & Instructor Mike Hobbs for thinking "outside the box" and making this valuable training possible right here at Home.

Also sincere appreciation goes out **Donlin Gold, LLC and the AVCP Education Employment & Training Department** for their financial support.





*A new generation of KLG timber harvester operators – possibly the only Alaska Native Certified Harvester Operators in the World: L-R Andrew Kameroff, Jr., Nickolai Savage, Instructor Alan Waldan, Stanley Morgan, unidentified*



*November: Kalskag crew completes timber harvesting equipment Training in Washington funded through the Indian Community Development Block Grant.*

*We are very grateful to the following for making this life changing training for our People possible:*

*U.S. HUD Indian Community Development Block Grant*

*Alan Waldman and the rest of the staff at Waratah, USA*

*Lisa Feyereisen, NVN Administrative Support*

## *Improving Our Equipment Through Partnerships:*

*USDA Rural Business Development Grant, Rasmussen Foundation, Donlin Gold, LLC & Napaimute Enterprises, LLC  
A Big Thank You and Happy New Year to each of our 2016 Partners!*



*"Mad Max" Napaimute's 52 year old plow truck breaks trail on the Kuskokwim River*

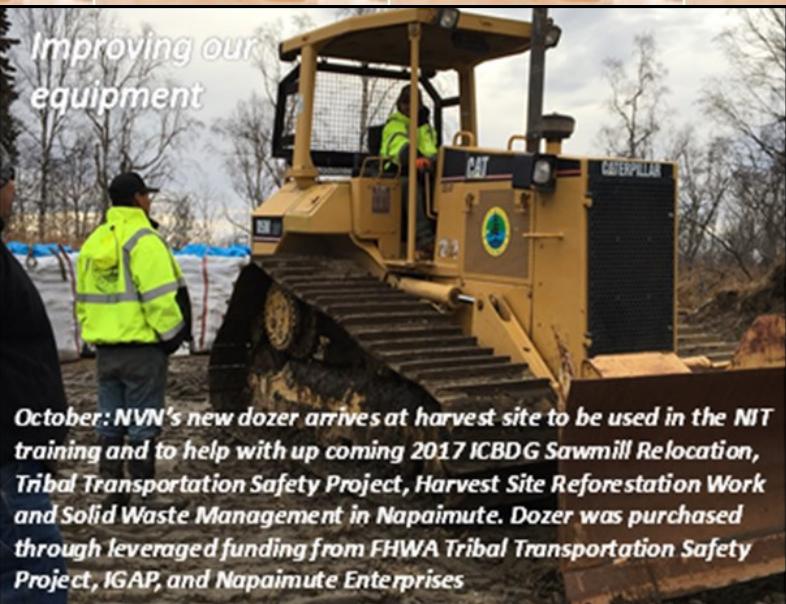


**Our Aged Equipment Fleet** has served us well over the years. With our old dozers, loaders, and trucks we have been able to complete many projects including an airfield and roads. This equipment has also allowed us to do economic development activities such as the firewood business that provides good employment opportunities for Middle Kuskokwim residents.

But our faithful old equipment has gotten to the stage where we spend almost as much time doing repairs as we do getting actual work done.

All of our equipment is at least 25 years old. The oldest is 52!

It was one of our 2016 goals to begin to replace NVN's equipment fleet with newer model used equipment. Here is what was accomplished this year.



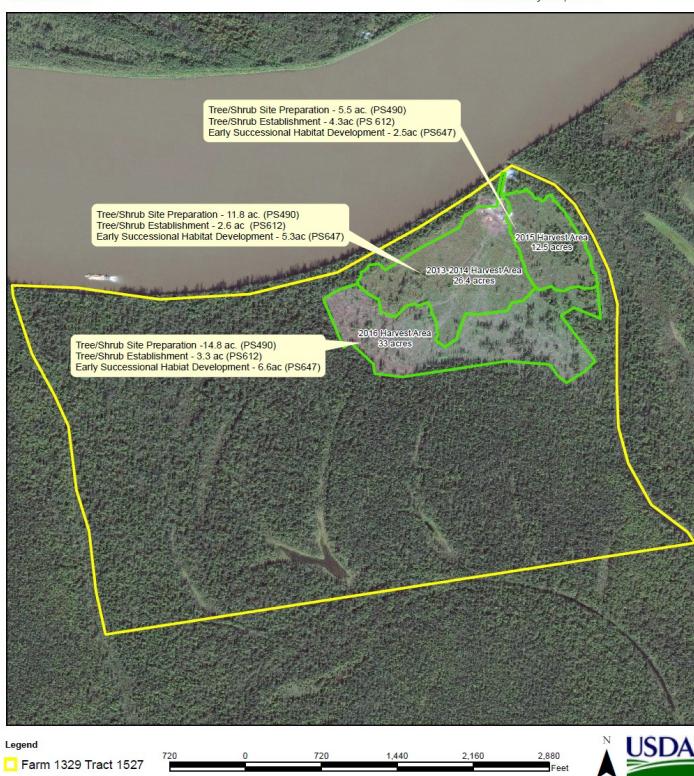


## Kalskag Timber Harvest Site Reforestation Work

Native Village of Napaimute Conservation Plan Map - EQIP 7401501706Z

Customer(s): NATIVE VILLAGE OF NAPAIMUTE  
Approximate Acres: 400  
Land Units: Tract: 1527, Field: 1  
Date: 12/9/2016

Field Office: FAIRBANKS SERVICE CENTER  
Agency: Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Assisted By: RYAN MARONEY  
State and County: AK, 02090



### THE NATIVE VILLAGE OF NAPAIMUTES PROPOSED REFORESTATION PLAN

#### Purpose

The purpose of the following reforestation plan is to provide guidance in the form of specific prescriptions (treatment applied to a specific habitat) in areas harvested under The Kuskokwim Corporation (TKC) land use permit. This permit has been issued to the Native Village of Napaimute (NVN) for the Kalskag harvest site, which is up for renewal and identifies up to 400 acres for commercial timber harvest.

The Kuskokwim Corporation Forest Stewardship Plan 2013 (Plan) identifies several goals, one of which is to "assist and guide managers in making sound decisions for the Corporations' forest lands." Another stated goal in the Plan is to; "promote an overall condition of forest health, and maximize growth, yield, and economic return from forested lands on corporation property. Forest stands managed to maximize forest health and production of timber will also provide a variety of forest uses, opportunities and benefits, including subsistence hunting, fishing and gathering."

The stated purpose in the TKC Plan is to: "develop a strategy for The Kuskokwim Corporation to actively manage their forest and related resources; to keep these lands in a healthy and productive condition in perpetuity; and to increase the economic and environmental benefits of these lands."

#### Objectives / Requirements

The stated objectives in the TKC Plan are to: "manage its lands in a manner that derives the maximum benefit for its shareholders and safeguards land-based traditions and values for future generations."

**NVN's Reforestation Plan** for the Kalskag Timber Harvest Site has been completed as required under the State of Alaska's Forestry Practices Act and the terms of our Timber Sale Agreement with the Kuskokwim Corporation. With technical & financial support from the United States Department of Agriculture - Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) actual implementation will begin in the summer of 2017.

Reforestation work in remote rural Alaska has never been done before. NVN's Reforestation Plan along with the implementation work we do will set the precedent and serve as a model for other rural Alaska entities thinking of using their wood resources for economic development.

**Thank you to Ryan Maroney of the NRCS, the Kuskokwim Corporation, and Clare E. Doig, ACF, CF, Forest & Land Management for their flexibility and assistance in the development of this unprecedented work**

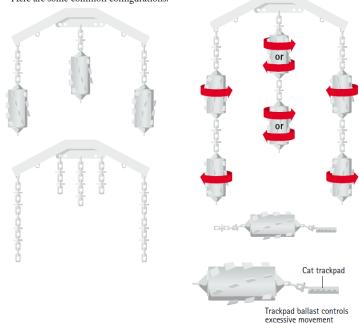


**Kalskag Timber Harvest Crew meets with TKC and State Foresters**



#### Drag Scarification – The Parts

**Configurations**  
The options are almost limitless. However, there are some rules of thumb. When using shurkin drums, be sure the rear drums rotate outwards to prevent tangling.  
Here are some common configurations:





# Napaimute News

News from the Forest People

# Middle Kuskokwim Fish Wheel Project

Mark Leary, Director of Development and Operations, The Native Village of Napaimute



## Project Summary

The Native Village of Napaimute Environmental Director, Dan Gilkin, planned the **Middle Kuskokwim Fish Wheel Project** with a vision to reintroduce the use of fish wheels to the communities of this part of the River. Fish wheels were once a common method for harvesting salmon but in recent years their use had declined to just two or three along the entire River.

The purpose of the reintroduction of fish wheels was to allow people in the Middle Kuskokwim the opportunity to harvest other species of fish during the recent years of King Salmon conservation. The use of other forms of fishing gear such as drift or set gill nets has been severely restricted but fish wheels have remained legal gear under the current regulations – as long as they have a “live box” and all King Salmon are released.

This important project was administered by the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission and successfully completed by the Native Village of Napaimute. The following pictorial essay demonstrates the important work that was accomplished with this funding.

## The Results

Fish wheels were successfully constructed and installed helping the Middle Kuskokwim People to harvest species other than King Salmon. Here are examples of Red Salmon being put to good use... filling smoke houses along the Middle Kuskokwim!



Making fish wheel lumber on the Native Village of Napaimute's sawmill



First the fish wheel baskets are built



Then the ladders, live boxes, and baskets are installed



Two completed fish wheels waiting for delivery

## Phase I: Procurement of supplies and mobilization (August 2015)

A boat & motor dedicated to the project was ordered from Anchorage and shipped by barge to the Lower Kuskokwim Port of Bethel. There it was assembled and driven 160 miles upstream to Napaimute. Successful completion of the project also required use of another tribally-owned boat as well as use of personal boats

## Phase II: Gathering local materials (September - November 2015)



a crew traveled 70 miles above Napaimute to gather arbutwood logs for the fish wheel rafts



The logs were floated to Napaimute where they were hauled out of the water and stored to dry for the winter



Timber was harvested from the Native Village of Napaimute's tribally-owned land. Timber was shocked and milled into lumber for the fish wheels in the spring of 2016



A few of the basic tools needed for fish wheel construction

## Phase III: Milling the lumber and constructing the fish wheels (April & May 2016)



Timber was harvested from the Native Village of Napaimute's tribally-owned land. Timber was shocked and milled into lumber for the fish wheels in the spring of 2016



November 2016: freeze up on the Kuskokwim = time to put a hold on the Project until spring

## Phase IV: Delivering and helping to the install the completed fish wheels (June 2016)



Moving two wheel 40 miles downstream to Crooked Creek where it was assembled on-site



Moving a fish wheel basket assembly 40 miles upstream to Upper and Lower Kukak



on a beautiful June day



Setting up the Upper Kukak fish wheel  
Project Leader Nathan Underwood points out where adjustments are needed



## Salmon River Weir Report by Council Member Audrey Leary

Imagine you're sitting in a boat at the mouth of the Aniak River, mentally preparing for the two-hour long boat ride up one of the Kuskokwim's most unpredictable, swift, and tree covered waters. It's just you and another team member leaving for a summer of isolation, simple living, and repetitive fish counting. Once you take the first turn into the Aniak River you know there's no turning back. As the minutes pass, the bends become swifter, turns become tighter, and the River channel starts to break into different forks making it easy to get lost, miss a turn, or lose the main channel. You wonder to yourself, "how do fish know how to navigate such a complex river just to get to the place where they were born...the Salmon River." The complexity of the Aniak River, blended with the fresh water's of the Salmon River, a camp quietly sitting on the right side bank only a few short minutes inside the Salmon, and a crew of two people are part of the puzzle piece encompassing the magnificence and importance of a weir operation.



**The Salmon River Weir: The first opening in the weir is where boats and rafters can easily slide through the weir, while the second opening is where the crew removed panels as they await the level of the water to drop.**

Prior to traveling the Aniak River, the most complex River I have been inside of was the Holokuk River, or in other terms known as Alugak. I grew up on that river, and was reminded every summer how strong and erratic river's can be. It wasn't, however, until I traveled the Aniak River that I truly grew an understanding of the terms strength and volatility when referring to a river's characteristics. It had been years since I traveled the Aniak River, and the trip to the Salmon River Weir was the first time I traveled that far up her waters. It was an amazing experience, and one I'm glad to say was shared with Napaimute's Environmental Director, Dan Gillikin, and Napaimute employee and tribal member, Ben Leary.

The Aniak River encapsulates everything that makes a river beautiful. From its bluffs, cotton, spruce, and birch trees, to its broad width, gravel bars, and instantaneous current, the Aniak River is one of uniqueness. Throughout our two-and-a-half hour journey a few slight detours caused a pause in direction, and rain poured so hard we had to stop in fear of hitting a gravel bar. I have never seen a river so easy to take a wrong turn on, and unfortunately, its creativity got ahold of us a time or two. As a back seat driver, I tried to keep track of the main channel Dan was traveling on, but again, that too is easy to lose track of. Often times there were trees stuck in the water, breaking apart the river into two's, three's, and sometimes even four sections, and traveling down stream with the current only required a more keen awareness to the river and its own mind. I'm amazed at the ability some people have to read rivers as such, and am even more dumbfounded by the knowledge fish have when traveling a river. **It's another reminder of why the food we eat should be respected and thanked for giving themselves to us.**

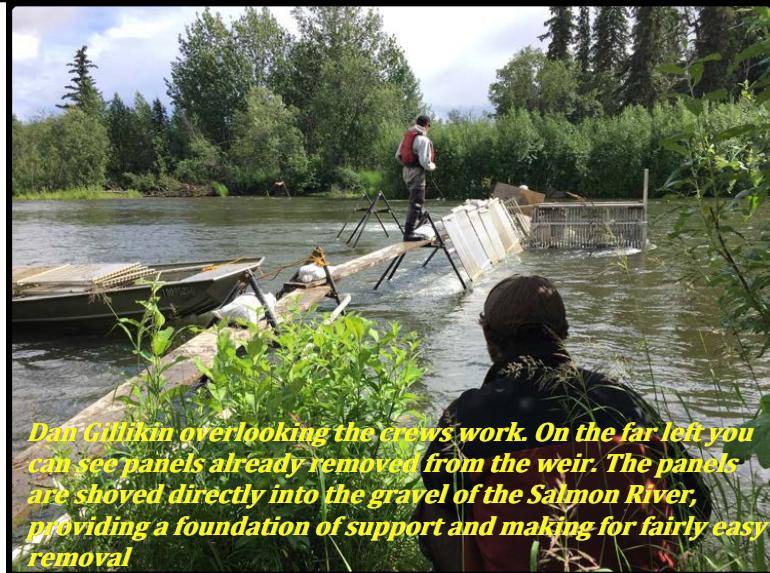


**Inside of the Main Weather Port**



*Salmon River Weir Report by Council Member Audrey Leary – cont'd:*

**In truth,** I thought we entered the Salmon River about an hour before we actually did, and can only laugh at myself as I write this. Initially, I hadn't realized the Salmon River was only going to be a small section of our travel, and that most of our travel would be along the Aniak River. When you come to the Salmon River it's easy to zoom past it if you don't know where you're going. At the Salmon River you come to three forks, much like the rest of the Aniak River; one of the forks continues as the Aniak River, and the other two forks take you into the Salmon River. Mistakenly, we took the first fork into the Salmon River (the right side), and later had to turn around once co-captain Ben Leary told us the fork taken wasn't narrow enough to be the correct one. After turning around, we took the far left fork, and again, I was amazed at how narrow the opening of the Salmon River was. We had trees hitting the boat on both sides of the canopy and trees sticking out of the water required many sharp and drastic turns. Once you've successfully entered the Salmon River, the river eventually starts to look like a normal river (a good comparison for me was the Alugak River), but it wasn't long until we saw three tents lining the right side of the bank, and the Salmon River Weir holding steady right above the camp. It was then that I began to understand how isolated working on a weir is.



*Dan Gillikin overlooking the crews work. On the far left you can see panels already removed from the weir. The panels are shoved directly into the gravel of the Salmon River, providing a foundation of support and making for fairly easy removal*

There are two employees currently at the Salmon River Weir—Napaimute employee, Dakota Phillips of Aniak and Crow Village, and state employee, Kenny Kinzy of Aniak. Ben Leary of Napaimute is the alternate and switches with crewmembers when one takes leave. At the camp there are two small wall tents for each of the crewmembers, and a Weather Port tent sitting between the two small wall tents. Here you can find the cooking stove, refrigerator, electricity powered by solar panels and a generator, camp chairs that act as a living room, food storage, and a wood stove. The Weather Port is the main tent used by the employees. Located at the far back of camp is also an outhouse and a small cabin used for weir storage supply. A portable tent where a shower hangs (it's simply a bag shower meaning you have to heat up water and pour the water into a bag that has a connecting shower hose) also sits in between the Weather Port and far right side wall tent.





## Salmon River Weir Report by Council Member Audrey Leary – cont'd:

A trip made to the Salmon Weir was organized because the camp Internet had been down for a few weeks causing a lack of communication between weir employees and those in other locations. In an attempt to fix it, as well as help with a tree that got caught in the weir, Dan, Ben, and I traveled to the Salmon Weir. As a council member I wanted to see what a weir was like, and never in my life did I think I would get an opportunity as such. During our first few hours at the weir, Dan worked with Dakota, Kenny, and Ben on getting the Internet back up and running. Although efforts were unsuccessful, we ended up taking the entire dish down to Aniak to be looked at.

Our trip to the Salmon River Weir was only an overnight stay, and because of the increase of rain in our area, the weir became inoperable. I learned that weirs cannot operate under water conditions that are too high, and because of this I was not able to see a fish count conducted. During our visit to the weir, the crew had to take out the panels and wait for the water to drop to 30 centimeters to avoid the weir becoming jumbled and scoured. Once the water dropped, which can happen fairly quickly, the panels will be replaced. Working in high water conditions also puts the crew at a safety risk due to the increase in water force. Although I wish I had seen a fish count, experiencing the Salmon Weir crew remove panels was a learning experience in itself.

The Salmon River Weir has been in operation for roughly 7 years. Its uniqueness is one I'm proud to associate with the Native Village of Napaimute and our decision to partner with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. It takes a level head, and a strong mindset to be able to successfully complete work in an environment so isolated. Without Internet, the crew of two relies on movies, cards, and cross word puzzles to get them through days where the weir is inoperable or evenings when counting is not being conducted. The time, efforts, and people it takes to labor the demands of a weir are astonishing. It's often easy to forget the people behind the data used to evaluate salmon escapement numbers, and all the work and thought put into gathering the data used to determine regulations and how much fish we can put away for the winter. It's another reminder of the complexity behind the fish hanging in the smoke houses of families up and down the Kuskokwim River. It was a rewarding experience to see a weir in action, and get to know one of our employees—Dan Gillikin—outside of merely a voice heard on the other end of a phone. He's a knowledgeable person, and his personality, I believe, helps the employees enjoy the work they do. It's a proud feeling knowing our Tribe contributes to a field of work that plays a significant role in issues, and topics embraced regionally and state wide.

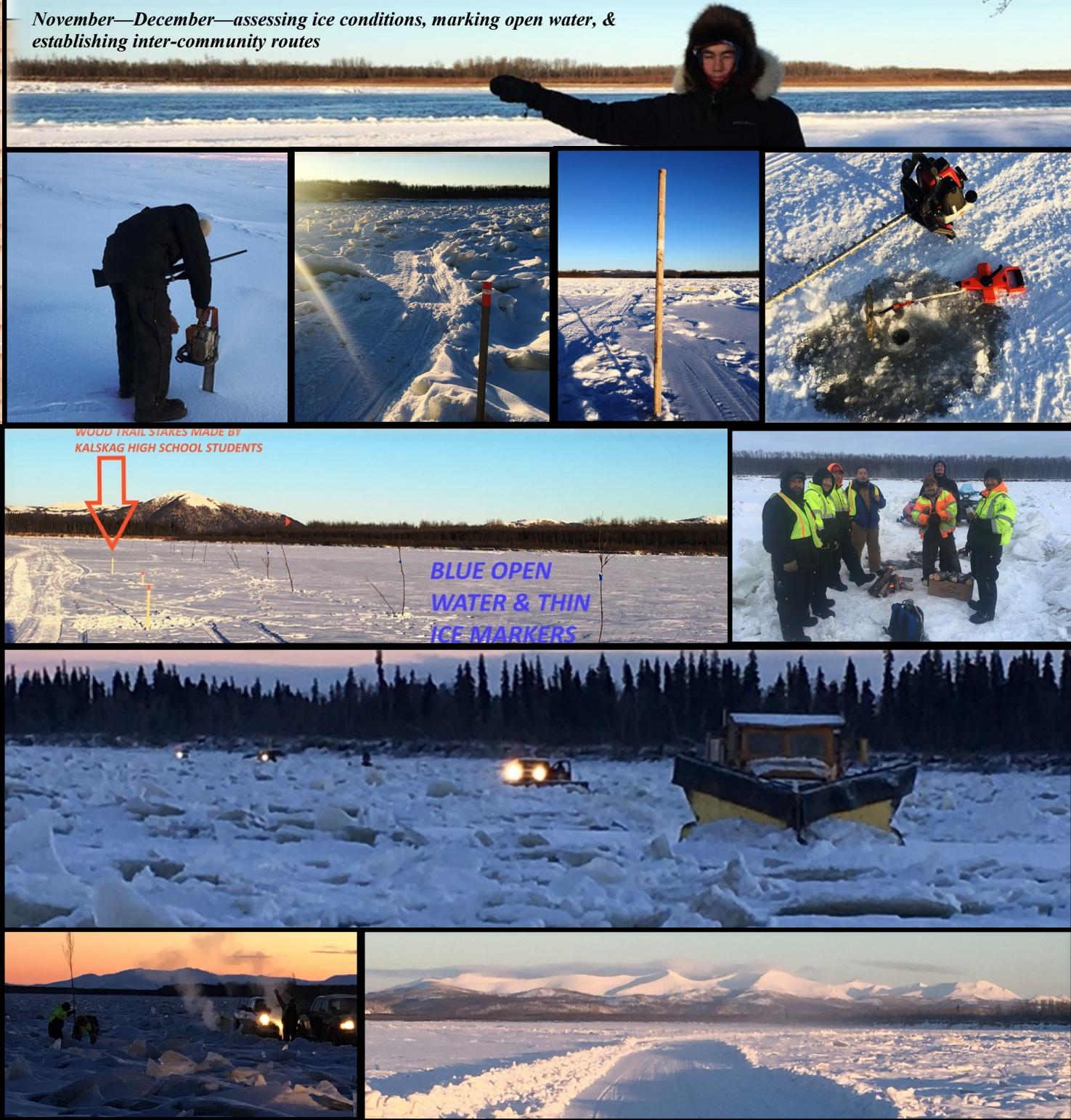




*Arrive Alive – a Tribal Transportation Safety Project funded through the Federal Highways Administration*

**Arrive Alive** is a winter trail marking project consisting of: Assessing ice thickness throughout the River corridor; marking hazards as well as marking a designated “safe” trail; and plowing rougher sections of the River, for the most frequently traveled transportation corridors between the remote Middle Kuskokwim River villages. Here are a few pictures of the good work being done by our good crew to keep winter travelers safe along the Kuskokwim.

*November—December—assessing ice conditions, marking open water, & establishing inter-community routes*





Sometimes at minus 40



A special thanks to all of the People along the River that provided support for this important work: The IRA Councils of Akiak & Tuluksak,

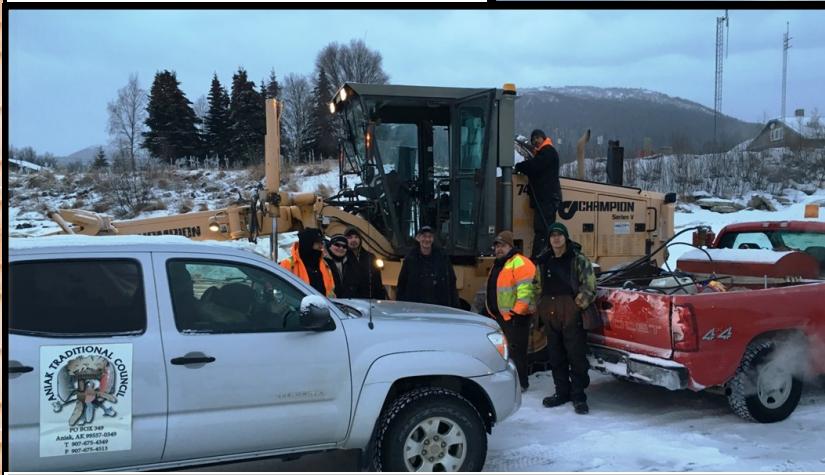
Sometimes with ancient old equipment



The Lower Kalskag, Kalskag, Aniak, & Chuathbaluk Traditional Councils, and the City Councils of Kalskag and Aniak.

***“Working Together for the Benefit of All”***

& Sometimes with newer equipment!





The following was taken from a September 12, 2016 press release issued by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, Alaska State Office:

### THIRTEEN ALASKA NATIVE ORGANIZATIONS WIN \$7 MILLION IN HUD INDIAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT FUNDS TO ADDRESS HOUSING & COMMUNITY PRIORITIES



We are pleased to announce that the Native Village of Napaimute was one of the 13 Alaska Native Organizations that received this funding. The purpose of NVN's award is (as quoted from the press release):

The Native Village of Napaimute is receiving an ICDBG of award to enhance an existing economic development program by purchasing a local sawmill and relocating the sawmill and all support buildings to its Lower Kalskag Timber Harvest Site where it will increase their timber harvesting and production capability. With the purchase of the sawmill, timber will now be able to be milled into truss lumber, cured, stored, and then sold providing a foundation of future economic sustainability.

Currently the sawmill and related infrastructure are being dismantled and being prepared for transport by ice road to its new home at the Kalskag Timber Harvest Site.

A huge thank you goes to Lisa Feyereisen, NVN Administrative Support, for all her hard work towards developing and administering a successful ICDBG proposal for our tribe.

***Also special thanks to the Kuskokwim Corporation Management, Land Committee, and Full Board for their support for this project!***

*September 29, NVN crew visit Chuathbaluk sawmill site & begin initial planning for its disassembly and transport 40 miles down the River*



*The Aniak-Chuathbaluk crew has been working throughout the winter as weather permits taking apart the mill and buildings.*

*Transport by truck over the ice road will begin in February*





Many more photos can be found at: [www.napaimute.org](http://www.napaimute.org) & <https://www.facebook.com/nativevillageofnapaimute/>



# Annual Newsletter

*The Native Village of Napaimute  
P.O. Box 1301  
Bethel, Alaska 99559*

*October Ice Running on the Kuskokwim River*