

# Self Determination at its best: 50 years of Service to the Chugach Region

Building The Next Generation



**SUGT'STUN** Gguangkumcit'stun asiirpiarluta: Tallimaan qula uksut anerturluki Chugachcarmiut nangluki.

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Self-determination is about more than just autonomy: it is about building strong, resilient communities equipped with the skills, resources, and cultural pride to shape their own futures. We know that empowered, self-reliant and self-sustaining communities are the key to our region's future.

Our goal is to give our communities everything they need to independently manage healthcare, education and community services. In addition to building up the financial capabilities of each community, we help individuals seek self-determination through scholarships, training opportunities and employment opportunities.

Our region's rich cultural heritage is at the heart of all we do. We seek to strengthen language, tradition, and cultural practices among the communities. This includes employing language teachers, organizing Elder circles, and supporting local dance groups. Culture is absolutely critical to self-determination, as it instills pride and a strong cultural identity within community members. We see this as support of our communities' spiritual and mental wellness, which in turn contributes to the overall vitality and resilience of our region.



Scan to hear reflections from  
our shareholders and leaders.



**COVER:** Head Start students at the Linda Norman Center in Port Graham show off their new books recently donated to them! Left-right: Gordon Norman, Dariya Norman, Iris Joseph, Ziyana Malchoff, Phillip Nalikak, Jr. and Celeste Hetrick. Photo by Cyrena Joseph.

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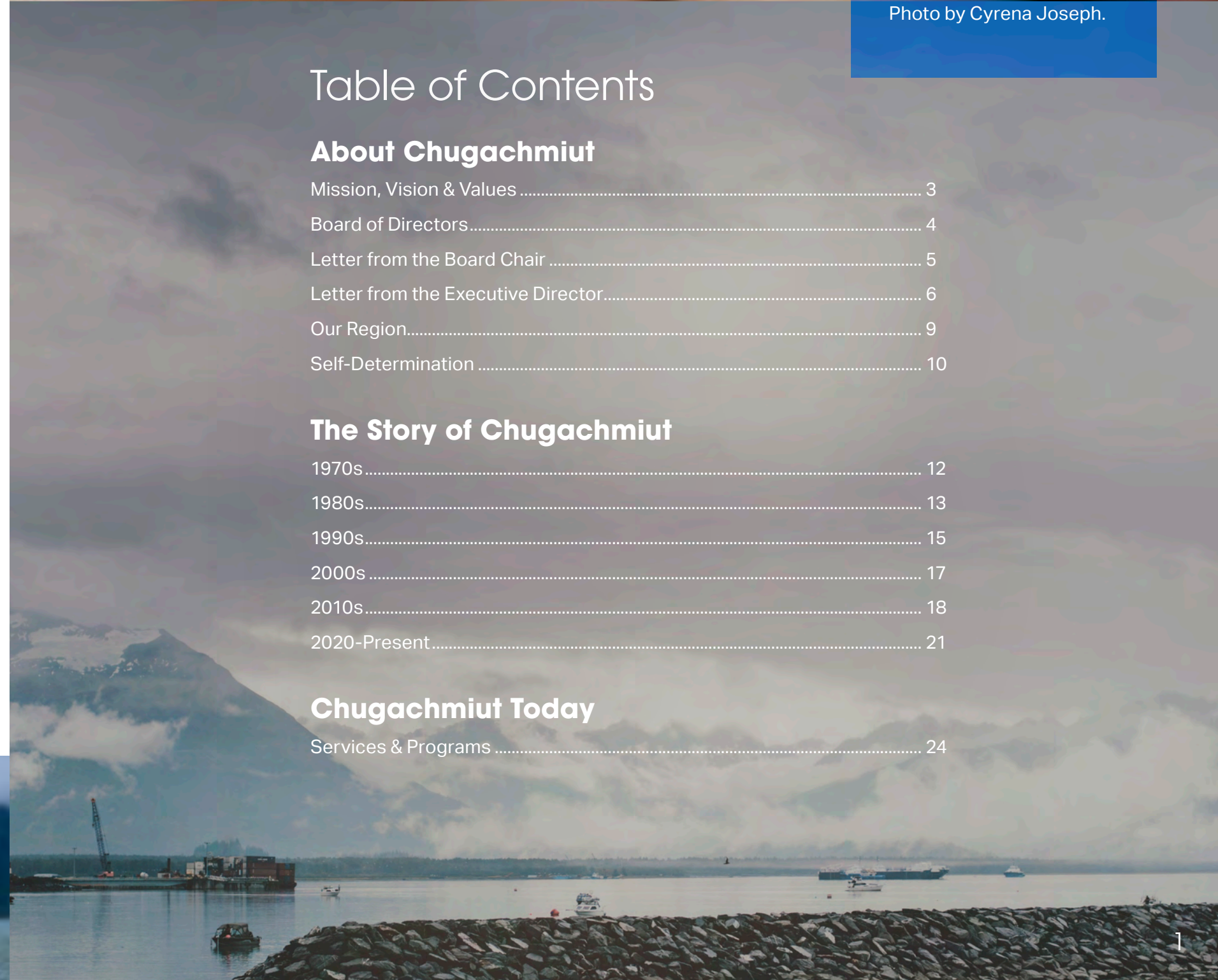
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Pauline Demas, 1978



**FOUNDING BOARD OF DIRECTORS 1974**

*Cecil Barnes, Anchorage; Walter Meganack, Sr., Port Graham; Lydia Robart, Port Graham; Roy Roehl, Seward; Seraphim Ukatish, Nanwalek; Vincent Kvasnikoff, Nanwelek; Edward Haltness, Valdez; Betty Ditman, Valdez; John Borodkin, Tatitlek; Jim Foode, Cordova; Daniel Wheeler, Seward; George Allen, Tatitlek*



Cordova, 2022

## About Chugachmiut

Chugachmiut is a community health organization that works closely with regional tribal leadership to support healthy, happy, thriving people living on their ancestral lands. We serve residents of our region through a variety of services including community health, language and heritage projects, public safety, employment, education, vocational training and more.

### Mission

Chugachmiut is the Tribal consortium created to promote self-determination to the seven Native communities of the Chugach Region. We provide health and social services, education and training, and technical assistance to the Chugach Native people in a way which is acceptable to Native cultural values and tradition in order to enhance the well-being of our people by continuing to strengthen the tribes and increase self-determination opportunities for community operated tribal programs.

### Vision

Building on the inherent strength from our cultural values, Chugachmiut shall work to help member tribes achieve their chosen destiny.

### Values

Chugachmiut acknowledges the traditional cultural values of the seven Tribal communities in the Chugach Region. They include the following:

- Respect
- Cultural Pride
- Sharing
- Teaching
- Cooperation
- Self-Discipline
- Language
- Humor
- Loyalty
- Spirituality

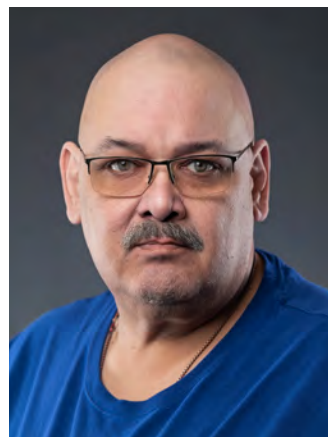
## Chugachmiut Board of Directors



**Fran Norman**  
Port Graham  
Chairman



**Larry Evanoff**  
Chenega  
Vice Chairman



**Jim Ujioka**  
Valdez  
Treasurer



**Priscilla Evans**  
Nanwalek  
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**Arne Hatch**  
Qutekcak (Seward)  
Director



**Pamela Smith**  
Eyak (Cordova)  
Director



**Nanci Robart**  
Tatitlek  
Director



**Angela "Jan" Vanderpool**  
Executive Director

## Alternate Board of Directors

Megan (Green) Bergene, Chenega; Larissa Jimmy, Nanwalek; Cheryl Eleshansky, Eyak (Cordova); Patrick Norman, Port Graham; Ariadne Schablein, Qutekcak (Seward); Rami Paulsen, Tatitlek; William Smith, Valdez

## Letter from the Board Chairman

Cama'il

As we mark Chugachmiut's 50th anniversary, I feel grateful for the journey we've taken together and the impressive progress we've made as an organization. Serving on the board of directors for over 36 years, I've seen firsthand how Chugachmiut has been vital to the development of our region.

Chugachmiut began because our communities urgently needed health and social services. Over time, we've expanded to cover a range of initiatives like dental care, behavioral health support, and preserving our culture. Programs like the Dental Health Aide Therapists (DHAT) and the Heritage Program have not only tackled important health and wellness issues but also boosted our community's pride and strength.

One of our biggest achievements lies in our ability to promote self-determination among our communities. By providing training, technical assistance, and financial support, we have empowered our communities to run their own programs and manage their own funds. This shift towards self-sufficiency has been transformative, allowing us to better serve the unique needs of each community while fostering a sense of ownership and agency.

The last few years, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, have shown how tough and adaptable we are. We made sure our staff and those we help stayed safe while still giving them the support they needed. With things like telehealth and virtual groups, we stayed true to our goal of looking after our communities' well-being.

Looking ahead, my hope for Chugachmiut and the people of our region is one of continued growth, resilience, and empowerment. I envision a future where our communities are not only self-sufficient but thriving, with access to quality healthcare, education, and cultural resources.

As we think about the last 50 years and what's to come, let's remember that Chugachmiut's success depends on our communities' resilience and strength and on our investment in youth. Together, we'll keep building a brighter future for everyone.

Sincerely,

*Fran Norman*

**Fran Norman**  
Chairman



## Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

As we celebrate Chugachmiut's 50th anniversary, I am filled with admiration for the incredible journey this region has undertaken. I'm honored that I've been given the opportunity to share in the collective efforts to improve the lives of people living in the Chugach Region. Over the past five decades, we've grown from a small tribal consortium into a robust organization that supports a wide array of vital services and over 210 dedicated employees, each committed to serving our communities with integrity and compassion.

We are a tribal consortium created to provide health and social services. However, we have since expanded into culture and language preservation and restoration, economic development, tribal technical assistance, and, more recently, education. The milestones we've achieved, from the development of Heritage Kits to the establishment of an archival system and the creation of an award-winning language game, speak to the collective dedication of our team and the unwavering support of our communities. I am very proud of our advances in these areas and hopeful for the future.

### Health Care Improvement

We have seen tremendous improvements in healthcare delivery over the first five decades of our existence. Technology advances drastically enhanced our delivery of health services; we shifted from generic to more personalized medicine, recognized that behavioral health services were vital to the whole person's health, and grew much more aware of how global health problems impact

us. We joined the innovative Community Healthy Aide Program early in its inception and now employ home-grown Community Health Aides who provide essential services in your communities. We initiated improvements to the medical emergency process between the Alaska Native Medical Center and Tribal Health Organizations across Alaska. We've received both State and Federal recognition as a Community Behavioral Health Center through the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities. We also provide rehabilitation services, including the region's Llangarwik: A Place for Awakening recovery camps. Our dental program grew from a lack of dental services to being able to make same-day crowns and dentures in the communities we serve.

### Education Expansion

Our new Education Department seeks to improve student learning outcomes as we develop new systems of teaching Sugpiaq heritage and Sugt'stun language in collaboration with Tribes and school districts. Our Heritage Preservation program has meticulously documented language and cultural practices over decades, and we now seek to collaborate with educators to develop curricula using these archives. Recently, we've developed Nunaka: My Village, a mobile learning app immersing children in Sugpiaq culture and language while targeting key school readiness goals. We are now exploring more Sugt'stun language revitalization projects that will use teaching and learning methods that will be brought to K-12 schools.

Additionally, we're grateful to incorporate language and culture into our Head Start programs and plan

to expand early childhood initiatives with the Tribal Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting grant. Through this, we aim to develop culturally sensitive home visiting services for expectant parents and families with young children, fostering thriving Alaska Native families deeply connected to their culture and ready for academic success.

### Economic Impacts

We have made significant economic impacts in the communities we serve and Alaska, with staff and other expenditures throughout the region, in Anchorage, Kenai, and more. We are seeing continued growth reflected in our annual financial audits. In 1975, Chugachmiut's audited net worth was \$39,202. Since then, our net worth has grown to \$44.77 million, and we currently operate with funds in the \$64 million range.

In efforts to bring more healthcare resources to the region, Chugachmiut competed nationally and was awarded the highly coveted Indian Health Service (IHS) Joint Venture Construction Program, enabling the construction of a new healthcare facility using internal resources. In exchange, IHS will fund staffing and operations, injecting an estimated \$150 million in federal funding into Chugachmiut over 20 years.

This initiative generates federal funding and employment opportunities and significantly enhances access to vital health services in Seward and the Chugach Region. In 2023, we broke ground for the 19,475-square-foot Chugachmiut Regional Health Center (CRHC), slated for completion in early 2025. It will serve as a pivotal medical hub, bolstering

medical, dental, and behavioral health services for underserved Alaskans. This project will also spur job creation by employing 48.5 permanent healthcare positions, including 24 newly created positions.

Since 1998, we have been a nationally recognized player in wildland firefighting. Our wildland fire program not only makes a positive environmental impact but also substantially impacts the economy around the state through jobs and preventing fire damage. Our team, comprised of 40 individuals from the region and beyond, is fully prepared to combat fires across Alaska and the western United States and undertake fire fuels project work to minimize the risk of wildfires in specific areas.

### Looking Ahead

I am optimistic about the future of Chugachmiut and the communities we serve. With plans for continued growth and expansion, we are poised to build upon our successes and further enhance our impact on the region and state. Together, let us continue to uphold the values of empowerment and innovation that define Chugachmiut, ensuring our communities thrive for generations.

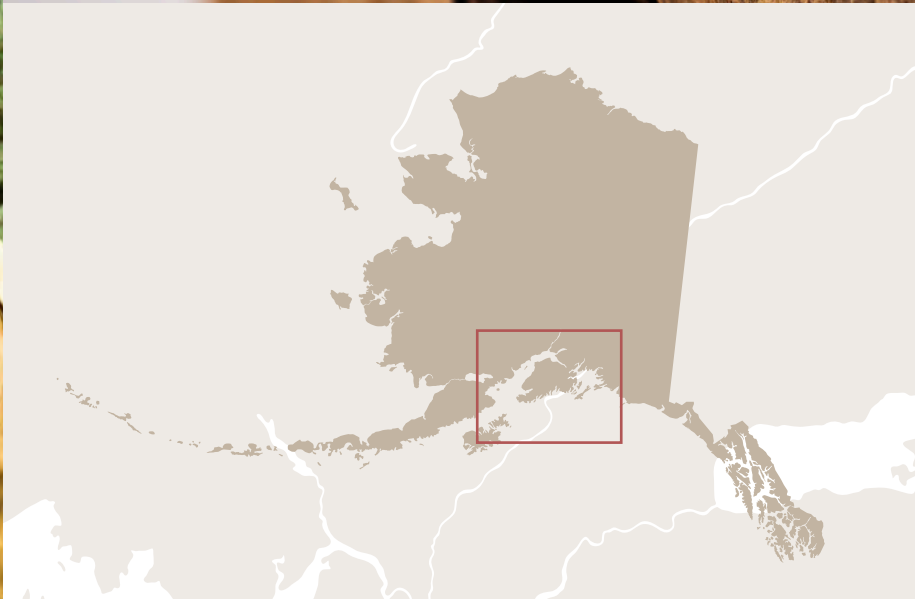
Thank you for your unwavering support and dedication to Chugachmiut's mission.

Warm regards,

*Jan Vanderpool*

**Angela "Jan" Vanderpool**  
Executive Director





### Our Region

The Chugach Region in southcentral Alaska is the home to four Sugpiaq and three multicultural tribes with traditional winter and summer settlements that have existed along the Prince William Sound and the Cook Inlet for centuries. The rich land and marine resources have supported the Indigenous people of the region from historic to modern times.

Our region consists of the seven tribal governments of Eyak (Cordova), Tatitlek, Valdez, Chenega, Qutekcak (Seward), Nanwalek, and Port Graham. Located along the coast of Prince William Sound are Eyak (Cordova), Tatitlek, Valdez, Chenega, and Qutekcak (Seward). The tribes of Nanwalek and Port Graham are located near Lower Cook Inlet. Of the seven tribes, Valdez and Seward are the only communities that have access to the state road system. The other five tribes are accessible by boat or plane only; travel to and from these communities is often disrupted due to inclement weather.

The past 200 years have brought about rapid cultural and traditional changes to the Region.

Some changes have harmed our people: infectious diseases ravaged the tribal communities and language has been lost significantly, as have our subsistence lands, spiritual beliefs, and traditions. The changes also introduced a Western lifestyle and capitalist economy that made way for devastating, man-made disasters such as the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

Chief John Kvasnikoff said, "The people still want to maintain their lifestyle, a subsistence kind of lifestyle. They want to hold on to their traditional knowledge and language and stuff like that, and it's a struggle. But we're not going to give it up. We need to make sure it doesn't get taken away."

Nevertheless, the Indigenous people of the region continue their cultural practices and strive to restore their cultural traditions, traditional languages, and subsistence practices.

"Our dance group is now active. They help with involving the youth, with the elder talks, elder circles, and I think that's been beneficial to quite a few of the young adults that join those groups and listen to what the elders have to say on how some of the words are pronounced in the stories and how they grew up with the language. Because our generation, we really can't speak our language. We understand it because we weren't allowed to speak it in the schools. So it's a benefit to my generation and the younger adults to

*"We didn't want somebody in DC who didn't have any idea what we faced making all the decisions. We had to have representation from the villages."*

— ESTHER RONNE



have our language come back," said Board Chairman Fran Norman.

### The Path to Self-Determination

Chugachmiut was formed in the 1970s when local leaders recognized a need for Indigenous representation in U.S. governmental affairs in the region. It became imperative that medical services as administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Indian Health Service (IHS) were managed by those who had insight into the unique challenges and needs of people in the Chugachmiut region. Empowered with cultural knowledge and regional smarts, it became clear the people of the region were best equipped to serve their own communities. Government officials overseeing the distribution of health services through the BIA and IHS were often unaware of the unique difficulty of serving the Chugachmiut region. Local leaders got together to ensure residents could have oversight of the distribution of funds and services.

"We didn't want somebody in D.C. who didn't have any idea what

we faced making all the decisions. We had to have representation from the villages, so somebody who wasn't used to ever doing that did it. I think people who were the representatives benefited themselves: I think Chugachmiut helped grow leaders. It was a growing experience: representation was good," said Esther Ronne, who served various terms totaling 19 years representing Qutekcak.

Fran Norman, Chugachmiut Board Chairman, said, "There's still a lot of work to be done. I want to make sure our communities get the best services they are entitled to."



*Bear Gut Sewing in Cordova, 2022*



*Nanwalek*



*Chenega, 2024*

# The Story of Chugachmiut

Watch Chugachmiut's financial position stabilize. 1" circle = \$1,000,000

1973

Community members hold Chugachmiut's first unincorporated meeting.

The corporation is created to advance the overall economic, social, and cultural development of the people of the Region.



**Early founders, incorporators and leaders meet in the early 70s,** including Walter Meganack, Sr., Gilbert Olsen, John Borodkin, Sr., Richard Nelson, Cecil Barnes, Betty Ditman, Roy Roehl and Jim LaBelle.

1974

The North Pacific Rim Native Corporation (TNPRNC) was incorporated with the 12 directors who served on the Chugach Natives Inc., Board of directors.



1975

Young friends gather around a Marvel Comics Superhero lunchbox in the Region, c.1975



1976

The North Pacific Rim Native Corporation (TNPRNC) was renamed "North Pacific Rim Corp."



1977

Chugach Natives Inc. transferred board responsibilities to the communities of the Region, changing the bylaws to allow each community to select their own representative.



1978

NPRC becomes a service provider for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Indian Health Service (IHS).

Tatilek purchases a community TV to try to get young people interested in educational programs.

Julia Tabios, Feona Sawden and Michael Tabios on August 1, 1978.



1981

NPRC helps build a school in Chenequa.

"In the 1970s and the 1980s Chugachmiut became a service provider for functions formerly provided by the government, but there was still a lot of oversight with little authority to make any changes. We had to comply with their regulations and how they thought we should budget and only do what we were allowed to do."

- ANGELA "JAN" VANDERPOOL



Scan to watch Chief John share this memory.

"I'm really proud to be on the board, you know? I feel like I'm helping my village along with the other communities that are in that region."

- CHIEF JOHN KVASNIKOFF



1984

*Board Member Arnold Melshmeier and VPSO Larry Evanoff at the Chenega dedication on August 24, 1984.*



1985

NPRC purchases its first computer, an IBM-AT system with two terminals.



1987

Funding is approved for the CHAP Training Center and North Star Health Clinic in Seward.

*Port Graham former health aide Eleanor McMullen, 1987*



Scan to watch Phyllis share about the 50th anniversary.

*"In our vast service area, covering about 15,000 square miles, the communities we serve can't easily access healthcare by traditional means. They're isolated, reachable only by boat, plane, or helicopter. Having healthcare facilities directly in these communities is crucial. It ensures immediate access to care, which, in many cases, can be lifesaving. The role we play in providing this access is absolutely vital."*

- PHYLLIS WIMBERLEY

1989

*"My wife was one of the first board members that incorporated Chugachmiut way back when. We needed a lot of health care for the community. They needed a nonprofit that would take over the health program."*

- LARRY EVANOFF, VICE CHAIR

The Exxon-Valdez oil tanker runs aground near Valdez, causing devastation to the communities and wildlife of the Region.

*Local fishermen were some of the first to begin oil cleanup as Exxon's response to the spill was delayed.*



1990

Construction is completed on the CHAP Training Center and CHC Clinic in Seward.

*Health clinic exam room, c. 1985*



1991

The board adopts its **first mission statement:**

*"The North Pacific Rim is the tribal organization of the seven Native Councils of the Chugach Region, created to promote the unity, self-determination, and empowerment of the Chugachmiut by providing service that will strengthen tribes, increase opportunities, and enhance the mental, physical and spiritual well-being of our people, in harmony with our land and traditional values."*

The Sugt'stun placename Nanwalek is restored to what was formerly "English Bay."



1992

**NPR was renamed "Chugachmiut,"** which means "People of the Chugach Region," in Sugt'stun.

1993

The Qutekcak Training Center closes.  
Nancy Yeaton of Nanwalek prepares seal fat for boiling.



1994

**The IHS is compacted,** giving Chugachmiut newfound autonomy as the primary service providers for the region.

Donna Malchoff, c. 1994



1999

Chugachmiut **purchases the Orca Building** in Seward.

The Chugachmiut Board holds a special meeting to address concerns about Y2K.



2000

**The Village of Eyak compacts.**



*"Having our own clinic became crucial, especially after seeing hospital and drugstore signs indicating all funds had been depleted. This situation forced us to prioritize care for our Elders, who were most in need. Starting our clinic marked a significant change; now, we extend care to everyone in the community, not just Native individuals, through a community health grant."*

- MARK HOOVER, EYAK

2002

*"The Chugachmiut board fights the good fight, getting us everything we ask for. They're always working for us to improve and just keep us moving forward."*

- CHIEF JOHN KVASNIKOFF

The Nanwalek Fire Prevention program is established.

**Chugachmiut Board:** *Benna Hughey, Esther Ronne, Gary Kompkoff, Fran Norman, Robert Henrichs, Priscilla Evans and Larry Evanoff. Photo taken May 2002.*



2004

Board approves purchase of 1840 Bragaw Street building.

2005

The Yukon Fire Crew is established.

The Positive Relationship Pathways project begins, seeking to strengthen family ties by providing workshops, counseling, advice and participating in community events.



2006

Construction on the Chenega health clinic is completed.

Funding is secured for a new clinic in Nanwalek.

2010

Chugachmiut implements the region's first electronic health record.

The Chugachmiut Community Health Aid program is recognized for maintaining 100% certification of health aids.

*"We have community health aides that work in all of our rural clinics and because they're not on our road system, they're really the E.R., the 911. And so we bring them to Seward. Some of the clinics are small and don't see a higher volume of patients. So we bring them here for training."*

- MELODY WALLACE

2012

The Board of Directors adopts an official vision statement and values.

2014

Operators at the Behavioral Health Crisis line answer their first call.

844-891-0444  
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH  
CRISIS LINE

2015

For emergencies, Chugachmiut spearheaded an effort to use a technology called Vidyo during patient encounters in collaboration with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. This new system allows doctors to see patients and work with health aides in real time.



2016

The Outpatient Behavioral Health Program receives accreditation through the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).



*"The organization is deeply rooted in the values, traditions, and customs of its cultures. The commitment to these values demonstrated by the board, executive leadership, and staff helps provide holistic, effective, and satisfying services. The persons served are appreciative of the services they receive. They had high praise for the treatment and supports that have helped them to achieve their goals and feel that the experience is life changing."*

- SURVEYOR WHO INTERVIEWED CLIENTS IN THE CARF ACCREDITATION PROCESS

2017

The Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact is signed into law to address and improve deep structural inequities in Alaska's child welfare system. Chugachmiut is a founding co-signer.

Forestry obtained a Youth Conservation Corp contract from the U.S. Forest Service that employed five youth and one adult supervisor through Qutekcak Tribal Council from Seward, Alaska to conduct natural resource related work for five weeks.



*"Since birth, my mom has been teaching me about our culture. It's something I intend to share with my own children, and it's my hope that others my age will also continue to carry our traditions forward. I trust that Chugachmiut will keep supporting our people so that our cultural legacy endures through the generations."*

- SAMANTHA ELESKANSKY

2018

Funding is secured for a new Head Start facility in Nanwalek to serve up to 20 children.

Head Start received a Health and Safety grant to renovate the Head start building in Port Graham, owned by the Port Graham Corporation.



2019

Construction is completed on the Fire Crew Camp in Kenai.

*Fran Norman and Larry Evanoff cut the ribbon at the grand opening of the Kenai Fire Camp.*



2020

COVID-19 becomes a global pandemic and sends Chugachmiut employees home to telework.

The 2020 Census showed 1,911 Alaska Natives or American Indians residing in the Chugach communities, which is a 28% decrease from the 2010 census.



**Chugachmiut Board:** (standing) Pam Smith, Cheryl Eleshansky, Rami Paulsen, Nanci Robart, Megan Bergene, Jim Ujioka, Patrick Norman, and John Kvasnikoff, and (sitting) Chief Bill Smith, Fran Norman, Larry Evanoff, Ari Schablein. Photo taken October 2023.

2022

Two years after the pandemic began, Chugachmiut employees begin to return to the office.



Scan to watch Fran share about the 50th anniversary.

*"Chugachmiut's transparency has grown because they attend tribal annual meetings, present reports, and openly address any questions or concerns from the community. This openness fosters a deeper trust in the services and programs Chugachmiut offers; they're committed to responding and keeping their promises."*

- FRAN NORMAN

2023

A groundbreaking is held for a new Regional Health Center in Seward.

Chugachmiut releases award-winning language learning app "Nunaka: My Village."



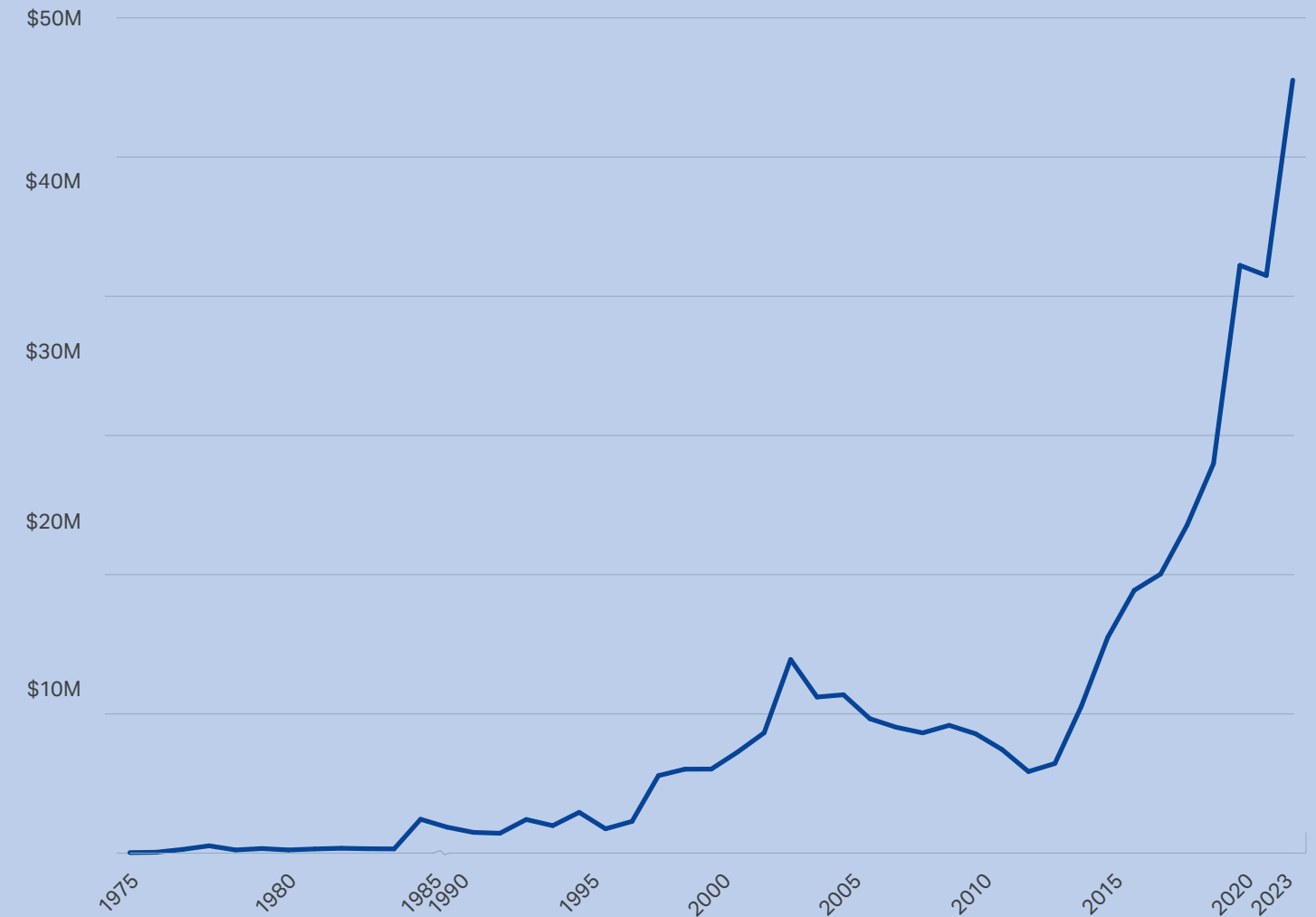
## Chugachmiut Today

As we reflect on 50 years of our history, our mission is as relevant as ever. Going forward, we hope to continue our ongoing work in the communities of the Chugach Region, improving our services in healthcare, education, and cultural preservation, and ensuring the well-being and safety of our communities. We look forward to an abundant and fulfilling continuation of our service to the Native people and communities of the Chugach Region and always striving to fulfill our vision: Building on the inherent strength from our cultural values, Chugachmiut shall work to help member tribes achieve their chosen destiny.

*"You strengthen the tribal office. You bring them up to a certain point financially to run their own finances, to run their own programs, you want to bring your younger adults and bring them to a point where they can become the future leaders and they can run the services within our community."*

- FRAN NORMAN, BOARD CHAIR

## Financial Position



Cynna Mae Evanoff  
Building The Next Generation



## Chugachmiut Services & Programs

### Healthcare Services

Offering a spectrum from primary to emergency care, primary care, preventive services, specialty care, dental and emergency services. Our telehealth program extends these services remotely, ensuring accessibility for all. We have clinics in Chenega, Nanwalek, Port Graham, Tatitlek and Seward.

### Education and Training

Focused on empowerment, we provide academic support, scholarships, vocational training, and job placement, nurturing individual growth and professional development. Additionally, Head Start Centers in Port Graham and Nanwalek enhance early childhood education.

### Cultural Preservation

Dedicated to maintaining the rich cultural heritage of the Alaska Native communities, our efforts include education, elder circles, language summits, culture camps, and leadership camps to keep traditions alive and thriving.

### Job Creation

By fostering local employment opportunities in diverse fields such as healthcare and wildland firefighting, we aim to build a self-sufficient community.

### Community Development

Our services extend to housing assistance, community planning, and infrastructural development, ensuring a sustainable environment for all residents.

### Emergency Services

Ready to respond to crises, our emergency services cover disaster response and emergency medical assistance, prioritizing community safety.

### Social Services

Support is provided for a wide array of challenges, including domestic violence, child abuse prevention, and adult protective services. We collaborate with state agencies to provide ongoing child protection and safety intervention services for elders and vulnerable adults.

### Behavioral Health Services

Dedicated to addressing mental health concerns through comprehensive programs including substance abuse treatment, counseling, and suicide prevention, we advocate for mental wellness across all age groups.



## Self Determination at its best: 50 years of Service to the Chugach Region.

**SUGT'STUN:** Gguangkumcit'stun asiirpiarluta: Tallimaan qula uksut anerturluki Chugachcarniut nangluki.

Quyanaa to the Elder language bearers who helped us to translate the theme into Sugt'stun.

They include Charlie Yaamaq Moonin, Eugenia Cawiguaq Moonin, Eloise Ggali Huntsman, Pauline Tuks Demas and Rhoda Atakaa Moonin. Special thanks to Angelina Kalunka Roehl of our Heritage Preservation Department for her assistance.

*Feona Sawden shares a story with youth at the 2013 Sugt'stun Language Immersion Camp in Port Graham.*





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Behavioral Health Crisis Line: (844) 891-0444

[www.chugachmiut.org](http://www.chugachmiut.org)



**Building The Next Generation:**  
Dannielle "Akuuli" Malchoff

Photo by Lexi Qass'uq Trainer (Cup'ik/  
Yup'ik), courtesy of Travel Alaska.