



*Community Impact Report*  
2023



## Who We Are

**Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC)** is a Tribal nonprofit in southcentral Alaska, serving Alaska Native and American Indian individuals, families, youth, and communities. We're known for culturally responsive services and community empowerment.

## What We Do

Founded in 1983, CITC serves over 12,000 people annually with education, employment, family support, and recovery programs. Our holistic approach, supported by 400 staff, covers all life stages. Affiliates like the **Alaska Native Justice Center** and **Clare Swan Early Learning Center** enhance CITC's reach and services.





Welcome Center  
PAGE 4



Youth Services  
PAGE 6



Family Services  
PAGE 12



Career Development  
PAGE 15



Wellness  
PAGE 18



Social Justice  
PAGE 22



Advocacy & Leadership  
PAGE 24



Clare Swan's  
25 Year Legacy  
PAGE 27

**GLORIA O'NEILL**  
PRESIDENT & CEO  
COOK INLET TRIBAL COUNCIL



# *Welcome to CITC!*

For CITC, 2023 was a year of *transformation, growth, and greater accessibility* to services for Our People. It was a year to commemorate the remarkable milestone of CITC's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary—a moment which prompted us to reflect on the past and dream for the future. In this way, 2023 was all about honoring our founding vision while illuminating a path forward with a renewed commitment to advancing Our Mission.

In 2023, the words “*Welcome to CITC*” filled the first floor of the **Nat'uh Service Center** as our newly-formed **Navigation Team** greeted visitors and program participants. As CITC grows—with more than 50 programs across five core service areas and three affiliate organizations—our Navigation Team has been tasked with simplifying the process of connecting people to appropriate services. For CITC, this is an essential part of promoting greater program accessibility, reducing barriers to service, and deepening the relationships we have with Our People each day.

At its core, “Welcome to CITC” is about much more than a warm and friendly greeting. It's about sending a message to Our People and our community that we're here to be of service—that no matter where you may be on your journey, CITC will meet you there, walk alongside you, and welcome you into our community. It's about building a relationship rooted in grace, reciprocity, and respect as we work together to support your potential.

We've added innovative new online tools, including the **myCITC** portal, which provides program participants with one-stop access to applications, staff messaging, eligibility requirements, and information on all of CITC's programs. Whether individuals come to CITC to explore career development opportunities, youth education programming, financial assistance, family support, or substance misuse recovery, our Navigation Team members—and vital tools like

myCITC—are here to assist, support, and connect Our People to timely and effective services.

Internally, “Welcome to CITC” is also a bold call to action. It's one that challenges us to continually and thoughtfully invest in the resources needed to expand our reach and align our programs, systems, and infrastructure to meet the changing needs of our community. It's the concept that *Our People are at the center of everything we do*, and that every aspect of CITC's ongoing growth and transformation must be unified by our Mission and Values.

*Going forward, CITC will expand in-person resources and online tools to ensure a seamless experience for onboarding, case management, and program accessibility.*

In 2023, CITC deepened its investment in partnerships, statewide initiatives, and expanded services. Through our core programs, we *served thousands of Alaska Native families and individuals* with responsive and personalized care. We officially opened the doors of the **Denelchin Lab**, a state-of-the-art learning space designed to create opportunities for Our Youth to develop skills and strengthen cultural connections. We completed a year-long **Culturally Relevant Schools** project, in which we visited nearly every region of the state to hold listening sessions on education in Alaska to help



→  
**INNOVATION CELEBRATION**

CITC President and CEO Gloria O’Neill welcomes a crowd of supporters to the **grand opening ceremony of the Denechin Lab**, a youth education facility supporting design, technology, and culture.

[lower photos]

**WELCOMING COMMITTEE**

The CITC Navigators were the face of the organization in 2023 with a newly renovated **Welcome Center** in CITC’s Nat’uh Service Center entrance.



drive transformational change. We began implementing a five-year **Generative Leadership** model designed to create transformative growth opportunities for Our People while ensuring that CITC remains a leading employer.

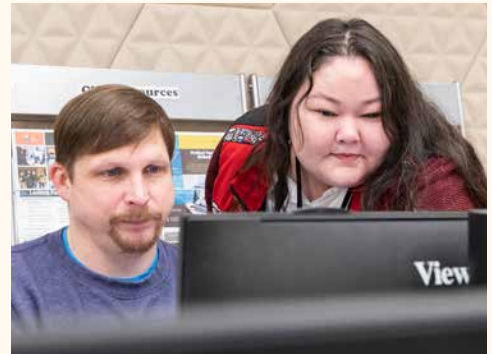
Within the pages of this **2023 Community Impact Report**, you will see a story of growth, progress, and, perhaps most importantly, service. You will find inspiring stories of Our People, their voices strong, resilient, and full of promise. You will see a clear commitment to our core pillars of People, Partnership, and Potential. You will see immense optimism for the year ahead—a year in which CITC will extend its vision of **ThriveAbility** to develop not only a new five-year strategic plan, but a clear pathway to creating a thriving future alongside all of Our People.

From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank our dedicated and visionary Board of Directors, who approach every decision by first asking what’s best for those we serve. I also want to thank our many partners—past and present throughout CITC’s 40 years—for believing in and supporting Our Mission. You help us expand and amplify what we do, and for that I am profoundly grateful.

Finally, to all of Our People: You have a home at CITC. We are here for you and because of you. We proudly walk together with you toward a future full of opportunity and endless potential.

In other words: *Welcome to CITC!*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gloria".





“We provide a warm welcome to everyone coming through our doors. We encourage program participants to use our services, and we help them reach their full potential.”

Zach Gaisoa  
Navigation Specialist

## Meet the Navigators of CITC’s Welcome Center

When someone walks through the doors at CITC, the first person they see will be clad in a red vest and eager to help. These are our Navigators—staff entirely dedicated to connecting visitors with services at CITC and its partners.

**CITC Navigators** help people sign up for the services they’re seeking. They can even suggest additional services and programs that might benefit individuals and families—educational programs for school-age kids, cultural programming for the whole family, groups that support recovery, and more.

Once someone learns more about our programs, our Navigators won’t leave their side: They’re on this

journey with each program participant. **Navigators assist with scheduling meetings, organizing documents, and applying for services.** They also help with signing up for myCITC, our interactive online portal that offers access to services and simplifies communication with CITC staff, ensuring a smooth and supportive experience for everyone.

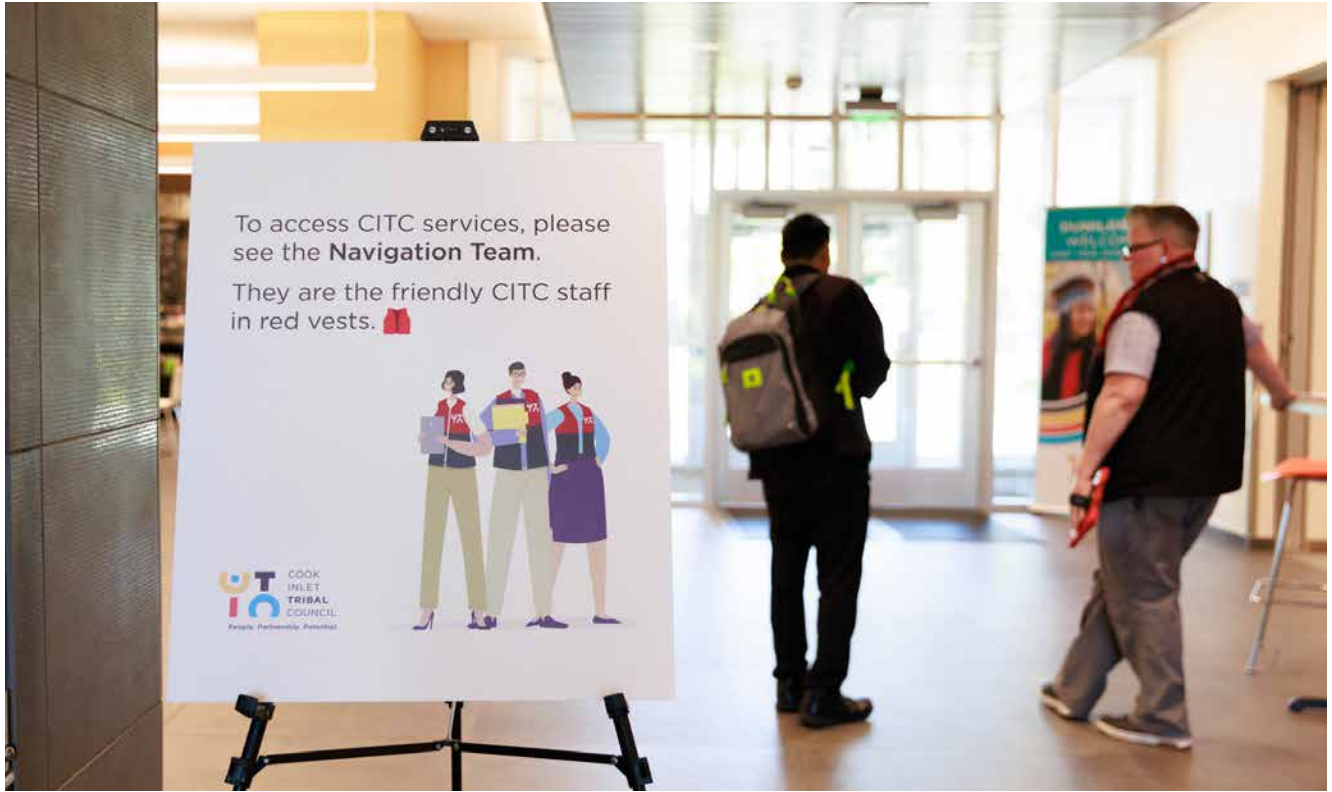
Navigators are experts on community partners, too. They’re ready to connect program participants to additional resources to help them meet their goals.

Whatever an individual’s goals, the Navigation team at **CITC’s Welcome Center** is ready to help each person reach their full potential. ●

“CITC is a one-stop shop with a wide variety of programs and supports. So many people come to CITC for one or two services; they don’t even realize the plethora of programs we offer.”

Billy Blixt  
Senior Manager  
Participant Engagement





*“Our goal is to remove any stigma about asking for help. A lot of times, people come through our doors with no supports at all. We all need help getting back on track sometimes.”*

Drea Whiteside-Ferrell  
Navigation Specialist



**COMMUNITY IMPACT:  
NAVIGATION**

**99%**

**Satisfaction rating of  
CITC Navigation services as  
surveyed by CITC participants**



**24,041**

**Interactions between  
participants and CITC  
Navigators**







# Youth

**CITC's Youth Education programs are making noise.** At the newly opened Denelchin Lab, the sound of 3D printers, laser cutters, and robotic routers form a soundtrack that echoes through the smartly designed facility. So too does the sound of constant collaboration, enthusiasm, and culture-forward instruction from a team of dedicated teachers.

In 2023, more than 3,400 Alaska Native youth took part in CITC's education programming. When the **Denelchin Fab Lab** officially opened its doors, it offered youth an expansive and modern learning space rooted in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). Here, students find a welcoming environment with a curriculum steeped in culture, and access to the latest digital tools--a place for youth to design, develop, and discover.

Denelchin Lab is a hub for all of CITC's Youth Education services, including tutoring, camps, and afterschool programs that support academic success and more. It's a place that equips youth with the tools to succeed through academics, cultural values, and traditional knowledge. It's a place that's buzzing with innovation, dreams, and, yes, plenty of noise.

## STUDENT IMPACT: NYO GAMES

**77%**  
of student athletes credited NYO as an incentive to stay in school

**69%**  
improved their grades to participate in NYO

**96%**  
learned about Alaska Native culture and values

**83%**  
see themselves as role models for JNYO athletes and other youth after participating in NYO



## *The NYO Games*

The Native Youth Olympics (NYO), first held in winter 1971 in Anchorage, Alaska, began as a visionary project by students from the Boarding Home Program. In its first year, 12 schools participated, with athletes from regions as far as Sitka and Nome. Since then, NYO Games Alaska has gained acclaim, growing in athlete participation and community support.

These games are a homage to Alaska Native ancestral traditions, *transforming survival skills into competitive sports*. NYO's purpose was to preserve and demonstrate these skills, a goal continuing with global recognition.

Today's NYO athletes embody their forebears' spirit, focusing on personal bests and mutual support over competition. This aspect of the Games fosters a culture of knowledge-sharing and community, echoing ancestral ethos of collective success. Supported by dedicated students, coaches, and sponsors, NYO remains a vibrant celebration of heritage and skill. ●

# Come As You Are

Ankse “Terrence” Long is acutely aware of the challenges he’s faced—and how many others are still fighting to overcome the same challenges. It’s not often you hear a 19-year-old frame himself as a role model, but Terrence has earned the title and is doing everything he can to live up to it.

Terrence’s family was unhoused during his teenage years, living in their car and fending off wildlife at Bicentennial Park. While his classmates focused on their school work, he helped with his dad’s handyman business and picked up custodial shifts at Alaska Regional Hospital.

CITC entered Terrence’s life through a program called **Journey Ahead**, which provided support to students who were falling behind academically. If you kept your grades up, you were granted access to the original **CITC Fab Lab**.

“I feel like the Fab Lab was the biggest contributor to me coming back to CITC,” said Terrence. “Here, I’m able to truly express myself through the many different forms of art that I love.”

Much of that expression is tied to his Iñupiaq culture. Before passing away, Terrence’s mom made an effort to help him understand his heritage. But his dad was less supportive, and



Ankse “Terrence” Long

*“I’m trying to become a role model for a lot of different Indigenous people to show that we can 100 percent prosper in a Western culture.”*

Terrence often felt shame from his peers for being Alaska Native. Having the green light to embrace his full self was liberating. And, after becoming an assistant at the **Denelchin Fab Lab**, he’s been able to pay that same experience forward.

As he puts it:  
**“Passing on our own culture is one of the greatest things that you can do as an Indigenous person.”**

Terrence is 100 percent prospering in a Western culture, and he’s reaching his hands out to bring others along for the ride. ●

↑ **KAKTOVIK CLOCK** Terrence presents a Kaktovik clock created at the Denelchin Lab. A traditional “base 20” Iñupiaq counting system is reborn using a set of unique numerals crafted decades ago by Kaktovik youth to keep traditions alive.

In this Denelchin Lab activity, students design and make a clock using design thinking, laser-cutting technology, and resin to produce a modern tool inspired by ancient ways.

**COMMUNITY IMPACT: YOUTH SERVICES**

<p><b>3,978</b></p> <p>Total youth served through CITC core services</p>	<p><b>960</b></p> <p>Youth served with afterschool services, culture camps, and Fab Lab programs</p>
<p><b>6,181</b></p> <p>Fab Lab student hours</p>	<p><b>2,492</b></p> <p>Student tutoring hours</p>







## The Space to Dream Bigger

In 2013, CITC opened Alaska’s first **Fab Lab**, a digital creative space intended to empower young people to build their dreams into reality. Ten years later, the new Denelchin Lab offers an expanded learning space, new technology, and advanced machinery—a **place where our people can pick up the tools of the modern world and use them to build the future.**

Denelchin Lab (“to make something” in Dena’ina) is home to CITC’s Youth Education programs. It also features 3D printers, robotic routers, laser cutters, a media room with green screen, and a woodshop. In addition to extending the reach of CITC’s youth STEM education model, the new lab invites the local community to explore technology through community classes open to anyone. Meanwhile, the **Indigenous Set Up Shop** program—a partnership with **Anchorage Community Land Trust** and **Cook Inlet Lending Center**—offers cost-free business training, lending services, and product design aid from trained Fab Lab instructors to Alaska Native and American Indian entrepreneurs. ●





# Denetchin Lab



M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust Printers Peak

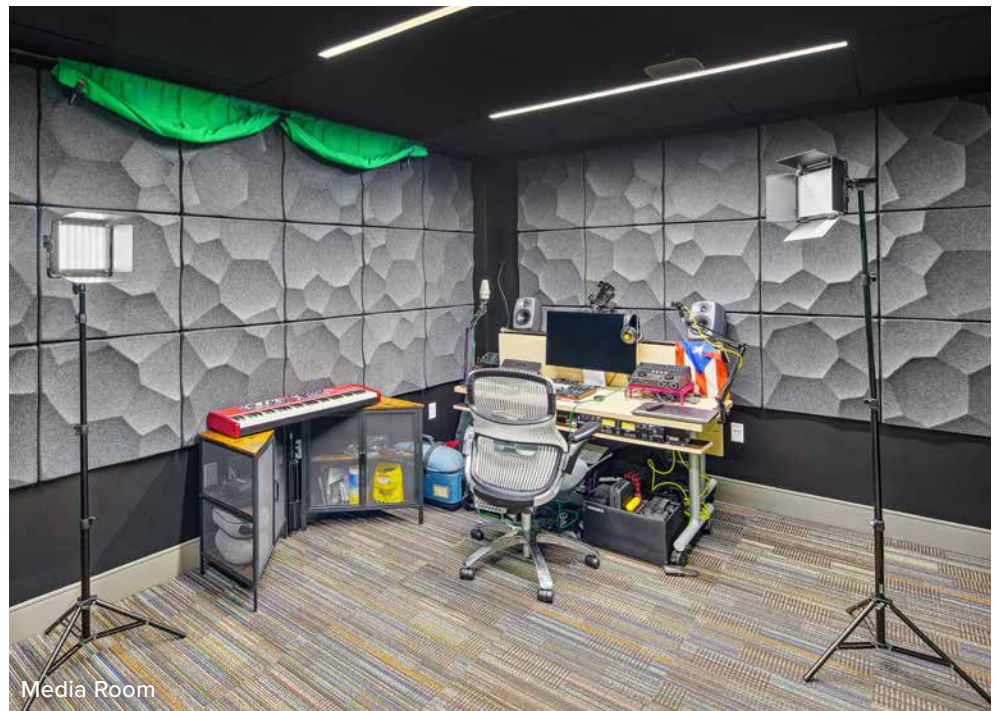




**DENEŁCHIN LAB** CITC's Denelchin Lab hosts a cutting-edge **Fab Lab** with advanced technology, including 3D printers, robotic routers, and laser cutters. This hands-on learning environment offers **Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM)** projects for Alaska Native youth, fusing modern tools with traditional practices. The lab serves as the center of CITC's "Hub & Spoke" model, sharing STEAM learning projects with micro-labs and communities across the state. Community access is provided through various classes on fab lab technology and tools.



Rasmuson Foundation Wood Shop



Media Room



*“Having an Elder in the classroom brings  
a different perspective and patience,  
shaped by years of experience.”*

Inga Garcia  
Pre-School Teacher  
Clare Swan Early Learning Center





# Families

**Simply put, CITC works to keep families whole.** Through respectful and personal care, our dedicated Family Wellness team promotes family unity through outreach centered on healthy parenting and relationships. Family Wellness staff often help families through challenging situations, as they assist those navigating the complexities of the foster care system. CITC works to establish safe, secure, and healthy environments for children to provide a foundation for growth and development.

At CITC's **Clare Swan Early Learning Center**, we apply the strengths of the Early Head Start educational model to promote healthy child development and to support the needs of working families with safe, affordable childcare. Innovative education models—such as Yup'ik language immersion and Elder mentors—ensure that our little ones begin life with a healthy connection to culture.

We know that success in life often begins with family. Across CITC, we're dedicated to supporting healthy families and serving as a vital resource for early childhood development.

## Connecting Generations

### New Elder Mentor program invites seniors to work with early learning center

← **TIMELESS TEACHERS**  
Eva Atchak holds an infant while volunteering at Clare Swan Early Learning Center. She is the first senior to work with the center through the new Elder Mentor program.

Eva Atchak never knew her grandparents; they both passed away when Eva's mother was only four years old. Today, Eva has six grandkids herself. But when she comes to **Clare Swan Early Learning Center (CSELC)** each week, Eva has dozens of grandchildren.

As a volunteer with CSELC's new **Elder Mentor** program, Eva acts as an honorary grandma three times a week when she visits the little ones, ages six weeks to five years, enrolled at the center.

"It makes my day to spend time with them," she shared. "I get the joy of seeing them being excited about playing, about learning how to share and be nice. The little ones make me still feel like a grandma."

A new partnership with RurAL CAP, the CSELC Elder Mentor program hopes to enrich the lives of children through access to cultural values and social

connection. Elders who spend time with the children read to them, play games, do crafts—and provide a special connection not all Anchorage children may have access to.

"We have found that a lot of our families living here in town have lost that connection to their greater [Native] community," said CSELC Health, Safety, and Nutrition Manager Celena Akens. "Our goal was to bring in Elder mentors to **help build more community ties, get some of that historical knowledge to these younger ages, and help the families feel more connected to their own roots.**"

Individuals who work with the Elder Mentor program receive training through **RurAL CAP**. They are also encouraged to bring their own interests and hobbies to the classroom. Staff welcome Elders who would like to do activities or teach skills to the children.

The benefits go both ways, added Eva. While she has some local relatives, her siblings reside in assisted living homes. "Coming here to have fun with the little kids, it's a way to get out of the house and be part of the community," she said. ●





**HERE COMES MICAH!**  
A family mentor from CITC's Ch'anik'en Home Visiting program provided Alma Ashenfelter with parenting and teaching tools as she got her son, Micah, ready for kindergarten.

# Parents as Teachers

Ch'anik'en Home Visiting program helps parents ready their children for kindergarten using tools they have at home

Babies don't come with an instruction manual. But parents who participate in CITC's Ch'anik'en Home Visiting program get something better than a how-to book: They receive hands-on guidance in parenting skills from a family mentor.

In August, Alma Ashenfelter celebrated her son Micah's graduation from the Ch'anik'en program. Now five years old and in kindergarten, Micah participated in Ch'anik'en starting at 17 months old. Throughout that time, Family Contact

Specialist Oxcenia Sonju paid regular visits to Alma and her son, bringing along snacks, books, activities, and parenting handouts. Each visit provided Alma and her son an opportunity to learn together.

"Having somebody like Oxcenia come in and do stuff with us, it helped knowing that she's raised her own daughter and has experienced some of the same things and can give you pointers," she said.

Ch'anik'en's mentors use a **Parents as Teachers** model to help families improve their parenting practices and assist them in readying their children for kindergarten. Working at the family's home allows mentors to see how parents and their children interact, and then provide guidance.

"The goal is to educate parents when they have that time with their kids, when their kids are soaking up learning," Oxcenia explained. "Alma spent a lot of time educating her son. You could see her explaining things to him when he had questions."

CITC mentors also incorporate Alaska Native culture into the activities they bring to their home visits and to the social gatherings the program regularly organizes. The gatherings provide an opportunity for families to get to know each other and form supportive friendships.

The support Oxcenia lent was helpful through the years Alma co-parented with her partner—but it became invaluable when her partner went away to prison, then passed away in April 2023.

"Oxcenia's visits helped to show my son that there are others around who want to give him structure, even outside of daycare," Alma said. "[Ch'anik'en] is so beneficial because they bring so much to you—books and activities, social outings—but also because they really get involved and help you understand the developmental side of your child's growth." ●



## COMMUNITY IMPACT: FAMILY SERVICES

120

Interventions for families with children in foster care

322

Participants in parenting support groups

168

Foster children impacted

140

Participants in *Healthy Relationships* groups



# Career Development

**A meaningful career often begins with a single step.** For many, that means a visit with CITC's Career Development team to explore programs that include direct job training, academic support, skill-building workshops, vocational development, and subsidized employment. CITC's Career Development team is here to help Our People achieve self-sufficiency through meaningful and sustainable employment. Services are culturally informed, personalized, and responsive—designed specifically to support individuals in achieving their personal and professional potential.

## ROAD TO SUCCESS

CITC's Career Development team guides jobseekers with practical help like resume building, training, money management workshops, and finding useful resources.

In 2023, nearly 1,900 people visited CITC's Career Center on the first floor of Nat'uh, and some 473 individuals found employment through CITC services. Not only do jobs support economic wellbeing, they connect us to our passions, purpose, and potential—they help us discover who we are and who we hope to become. Whether a person is in need of financial assistance, vocational training, or help preparing a resume, CITC's Career Development team is ready to serve. It might just be the first step to a thriving career.



## COMMUNITY IMPACT: CAREER DEVELOPMENT

**1,885**

Served through Career Center

**964**

Supportive Services  
caseloads provided

**\$12.88**

Average wage gain per hour  
(after using training services)

**\$17.31**

Average wage earned per hour



# Beyond the Job Search

**Alaska's People provides career exploration, education opportunities, job experience, and new beginnings!**

Tyler White didn't think of himself as homeless. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, he had moved out of his mom's house; he had been sleeping on friends' couches and getting support from his older brother. Three years past the pandemic, though, he was sitting on an inflatable mattress in a friend's guest bedroom, scrolling the internet, and spiraling. What was he doing with his life? Where should he start? How could he get help?

"The first thing that came to mind was CITC," Tyler recalled. "I always had them on my radar, even when I was younger, because of all the programs for Native people. In that moment, I was like, I have to do this."

When Tyler—who was ready to start a career but did not have a clear direction—connected with **Alaska's People**, workforce development coordinators were there to support exploration.

"We do employment assessments and look at the areas each person is interested in, then talk about options," said BreeAnn Davis, Alaska's People senior manager.

In Tyler's case, watching YouTube videos had sparked an interest in learning how to cook. **Alaska's People placed him in a barista apprenticeship at Café Di'eshchin, the coffee shop located in CITC's Nat'uh Service Center.** Here, he developed an even greater interest in growing his kitchen skills.

As Alaska's People assisted Tyler with exploring his career opportunities, it became clear he would need more training. With just a month before classes were scheduled to start at the **Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC)**, the whole Alaska's People team rallied. Once Tyler moved to the Seward-based technical school, Alaska's People staff continued checking with him virtually to ensure the transition was going well and that he had the support he needed.

Today, Tyler has a job working in a kitchen, doing dishes, stocking shelves, and helping serve dinner—but he's hoping to move into a cook position when the opportunity opens up.

"We meet each person with a clean slate and let them tell us where they want to go," added BreeAnn. "Tyler didn't have culinary arts in mind at first—but getting to try it and having the opportunity to train is what helped him move down that pathway." ●

*"I'm getting help with things I should have learned years ago. They're helping me learn and encouraging me to be independent, but it's all at my own pace, and if I need help, they're there for me."*





## IN HER OWN WORDS

*Daisy Workman recounts her transition from hospital employment to CDL training with the support of CITC, a journey marked by perseverance and a quest for a more flexible career to balance her family life.*

## Daisy Workman Gets on the Road Again

“Before I started training, I was working at the hospital. I was happy there, working 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. But then my job was scheduling me for weekends and evenings, and that didn’t work for my family. I needed a position that would allow me flexibility.

I was on **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families**, so CITC was helping me financially. All of a sudden, I was talking to the **Education Services** program, and they said they could pay for training.

*The lady I talked to asked me, “What have you always dreamed of doing?” I said, “Well, if we’re talking about dreams—I’ve always wanted to be a pilot!” She looked at me and said, “Really? We have that, too!”*

I told her, “Let’s see if I could do the CDL training, first.” But that really made me think about what was possible.

I started training for my Class B CDL when I went back and got my passenger endorsement for driving a bus. The thing I enjoyed, aside from driving, was my instructors.

**They took me from not knowing anything to getting into a truck with two other students** and driving for miles and miles.

It was challenging. I almost quit a couple times. But I just reached six years of sobriety, and from that, I learned you can’t quit—even though it’s sometimes hard. No one was making me do this, so I had to choose not to quit. I would not be here today if I had quit.

I was very grateful to CITC, that they were able to fund me and help me get a better job. **I landed a job with 1-800-Asphalt, starting out at \$16 an hour.**

I’m pretty active. But I’m not 40 anymore. I’m 52. I come home pretty tired. So I’m looking for a job with less labor. I know something else will show up when it’s right.

CITC paid for my training, and they covered a week of Certifications Bootcamp, too, where I got certified in basic CPR, flagging, fall protection, confined spaces. I came from just knowing how to drive a car to learning how to inspect a vehicle; I learned a lot about the engine.

I would tell anyone: Come to CITC. And when you’re in training, no matter how hard it gets, see it through—because that’s when things will change.”



Thanks to the training she received through CITC, Daisy now drives a truck for 1-800-Asphalt with her Class B CDL.





*“This is an opportunity to experience a truly Alaskan dish. I love sharing my culture through food. Sharing what we eat is creating community.”*

Carvell Shade  
Nutrition Coordinator  
Ernie Turner Center



**Community is the opposite of addiction**—and that’s just what program participants will find through CITC’s comprehensive **Recovery & Reentry** services. Here, individuals experiencing substance misuse find culturally responsive treatment, including residential and outpatient support, individual/group counseling, and peer support. With a model rooted in community and peer connection, CITC staff meet program participants where they are to chart a path forward toward wellness. This includes working with youth to promote substance prevention and healthy development, and also assisting adults with successful reentry following incarceration.

In 2023, CITC’s **Recovery & Reentry** team conducted nearly 600 intake assessments and more than 925 peer support engagements. While there is no single path to addiction recovery, each interaction is a step closer to wellness, vitality, and potential. A community of support awaits those who are ready to accept the journey ahead.

## Finding Community in the Kitchen

Carvell Shade bustled around the kitchen at **CITC’s Ernie Turner Center**. As the center’s nutrition coordinator, Carvell always has something cooking. But for the final Friday in July, he had something special on the menu: fish pie, a recipe handed down from his uncle.

All year, residents of the Ernie Turner Center, located in Eklutna, and of CITC’s Anchorage-based **Chanlyut** house gather once a month for a potluck that features themed foods from different cultures. The shared meal is more than a culinary exploration. By gathering together, the men and women living at CITC’s two residential treatment centers are practicing ways to create healthy communities to support their sobriety.

For each potluck, Carvell and Chanlyut Nutrition Coordinator Thomas Andrade work together to build a meal that incorporates foods from different cultures and from their own backgrounds (Thomas is Apache, while Carvell is Yup’ik/Sugpiak).

When Carvell gets to serve up his fish head stew, he’s aware that for many residents, it’s often the first time they’re experiencing Alaska Native foods.

“This is an opportunity to experience a truly Alaskan dish,” he said. “I love sharing my culture through food. Sharing what we eat is creating community—and community is the opposite of addiction.”

The potlucks serve as an example of one way to have sober fun and build a network of support. Once individuals complete their treatment and graduate from Chanlyut or the Ernie Turner Center, they will rely on these learned skills to support their recovery outside the treatment facility.

Like many Recovery Services staff, Carvell started his journey at CITC as a program participant. “When I was here, **I got to see that you can be successful after drug addiction**,” he explained. “Having our residents see me being successful, that it’s possible—that’s part of what these meals do.” ●



← **A MENU WITH MEANING** Carvell shares a photo of the squash brûlée Thomas made for the July potluck.

Facing page: Carvell in the kitchen of CITC’s Ernie Turner Center, a facility that supports those in recovery.

# A Better Future

## CITC offers Alaska’s only youth-focused reentry program

At 8 a.m. on a Saturday, the doors of **McLaughlin Youth Center** opened, and CS walked out of the facility. Three years before, at just 15 years old, CS had been sentenced to McLaughlin for a violent crime.

Toward the end of his confinement, CS had the opportunity to go shopping for school clothes with a **CITC Youth Reentry** staff member. As he meticulously went through the aisles to find the right school supplies, he smiled at the CITC employee.

“It’s been a while since I had choices,” he said.

More than 40 percent of the nation’s youth who are charged with crimes like CS’s will be incarcerated again before they turn 25—and the crimes they commit later are more likely to increase in harmfulness. **Alaska Native youth are disproportionately represented in McLaughlin** and similar facilities.

“Time and time again, adult offenders reflect on having needed someone to step in at that pivotal stage of youth before behaviors escalated—and yet much of reentry work is done after incarceration, not during,” explained Kaitlyn Hickey, a youth advocate with CITC’s Youth Reentry program.

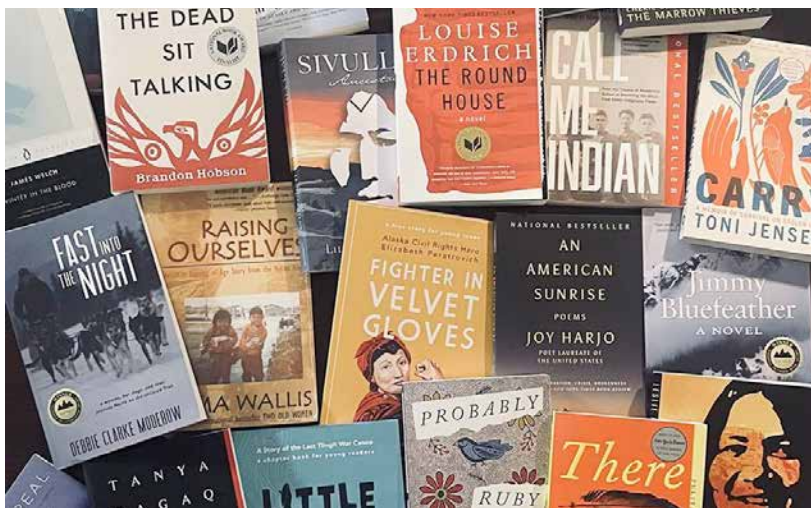
**Reentry: It’s the term for a person rejoining the greater community after incarceration.** And while Kaitlyn’s team provides services for young people who have left or are leaving detention facilities like McLaughlin, the bulk of their work begins on the inside. **CITC’s Youth Reentry Program** is the **only program in the state supporting youth transitioning out of incarceration.**

“That can be a frustrating gap because when you work with adults in prison, you almost always leave thinking, Why couldn’t someone have stepped in when you were 16?” Kaitlyn shared.

### RESTORATIVE READS

In December 2023, CITC Youth Advocate Kaitlyn Hickey purchased books by Indigenous authors for youth incarcerated at McLaughlin Youth Center.

CITC provides those mentors. Youth advocates visit McLaughlin daily, providing support groups, cultural activities, case management, academic assistance, and referrals to any services CITC can’t provide. ●



### COMMUNITY IMPACT: WELLNESS



**PEER SUPPORT SERVICES:**  
*Connecting with Participants  
in need of support*

**634** **293**  
Adult individuals    Adult groups

**596**  
Assessments  
completed

### REENTRY AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

**116** **146**  
Adults served    Youth served

### PREVENTION OUTREACH

**4,089**  
Youth served in outreach activities

**2,558**  
Participants engaged in  
Youth Social Emotional  
Life Skills Training

**101** **624**  
Family wellness  
events    Cultural  
activities



# The Fab Five

## How a group of strangers came to CITC for help with sobriety—and found a family

Lillian Grant sat down next to a stranger in the Nat’uh lobby and felt compelled to invite her to **Warrior Down**, CITC’s weekly recovery talking circle. That stranger was Lulu Bradley, who was scared about embarking on her sober journey. Meeting someone who was on the same journey helped her make the first step.

The two of them soon met three others: Maria Legend, Vince Goodlataw, and his wife, Davina. Before long, all five of the new friends had a group text going.

“It’s not just friends—it’s family,” Davina said as she looked around at the other members of the “Fab Five,” a nickname given to the group by **CITC’s Navigation** team when they saw how close the new friends had grown. “I’m really happy that we’ve met one another because if we didn’t, we probably wouldn’t be where we are right now.”

Davina and Vince know firsthand how important it is to have sober, supportive friends. Both had sought treatment in the past. While they each achieved sobriety before, the lack of a good network of sober friends took its toll.

*“At CITC, we’ve met more people that are sober than we ever have,” Davina said. “This is the first time we’ve ever had this much respect [given] to us or had anyone even try to care. I didn’t even know what friends were until I came here.”*

Maria was so grateful for the encouragement she received from her new friends and from CITC that today she’s working on paying forward that encouragement to others. **She recently earned her certification as a peer support professional** and hopes to work at CITC, providing recovery support and guidance for others.

“These four were my safety people,” Lulu shared. At first, it was sometimes hard for her to attend recovery meetings. But she would text the others and find out who was going—and knowing she would have a friend around made things easier.

“Even when they weren’t there, I was like, all right, they’re here with me in spirit,” she said. ●



### BEADS OF HOPE

The “Fab Five” first met at CITC and supported each other through their recovery journey.

# Social Justice

**Justice for Our People is a collective effort.** In 1993, a group of visionary Alaska Native leaders formed the Alaska Native Justice Center (ANJC). At the time, they were appalled by the public's response to assaults against Alaska Native women and by the disproportionately high rates of incarceration for Native people. The result was the formation of a small nonprofit organization with a bold mission: to advocate for the fair and equitable treatment of Alaska Native people in the justice system. Three decades later, it's a mission that remains at the heart of ANJC.

After 30 years of hard-earned growth, ANJC is positioned for true impact within the justice system. Today, it has a renewed focus on ANJC's core services, a new office location in midtown Anchorage, and a growing team of professionals who understand the unique legal issues of Alaska Native people and Tribes. ANJC is built to serve, advocate, and educate at all levels of the justice system. Not only does ANJC work with survivors of crime—both inside and outside the courtroom—but it supports Tribes through training, advocacy, and representation in state courts. Today, ANJC proudly continues to work on behalf of Alaska Native people and Tribes to advance the urgent mission its founders established more than three decades ago.



**JOURNEY IN JUSTICE**  
Geoff Bacon, a Native Village of Tanana tribal citizen, pursued law to be a good lawyer, driven by the belief in credible advocacy. Working in human resources in Tribal health, he was inspired by in-house attorneys to switch careers. As ANJC's first law clerk during an academic semester, he gained real-world legal experience and advocated for thoughtful lawyering. Now a judicial law clerk at the Alaska Supreme Court, his ANJC experience infuses his work with empathy and understanding.





— Alaska Native —  
JUSTICE CENTER

## SURVIVOR SERVICES

In 2023, the **Alaska Native Justice Center (ANJC)** made a substantial impact in combating domestic violence in Alaska. Their efforts led to the initiation of numerous significant legal cases and the attainment of **32 protective orders**, offering a lifeline to those in perilous situations. ANJC provided invaluable court accompaniments in 46 instances, standing by survivors during their most challenging moments. Additionally, they extended **case management to 147 survivors**, tailoring support to individual needs and circumstances.

ANJC also responded to **172 urgent supportive service needs**, demonstrating their commitment to immediate and effective assistance. Through hosting **24 legal clinics**, ANJC empowered individuals to confidently navigate the court system. Their work not only addressed immediate dangers but also played a critical role in fostering long-term safety and independence for survivors and their families.

**COMMUNITY IMPACT:**  
**ANJC**

**1,435**

Requests for assistance

**107**

New cases for survivors



### ↑ INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT TRAININGS

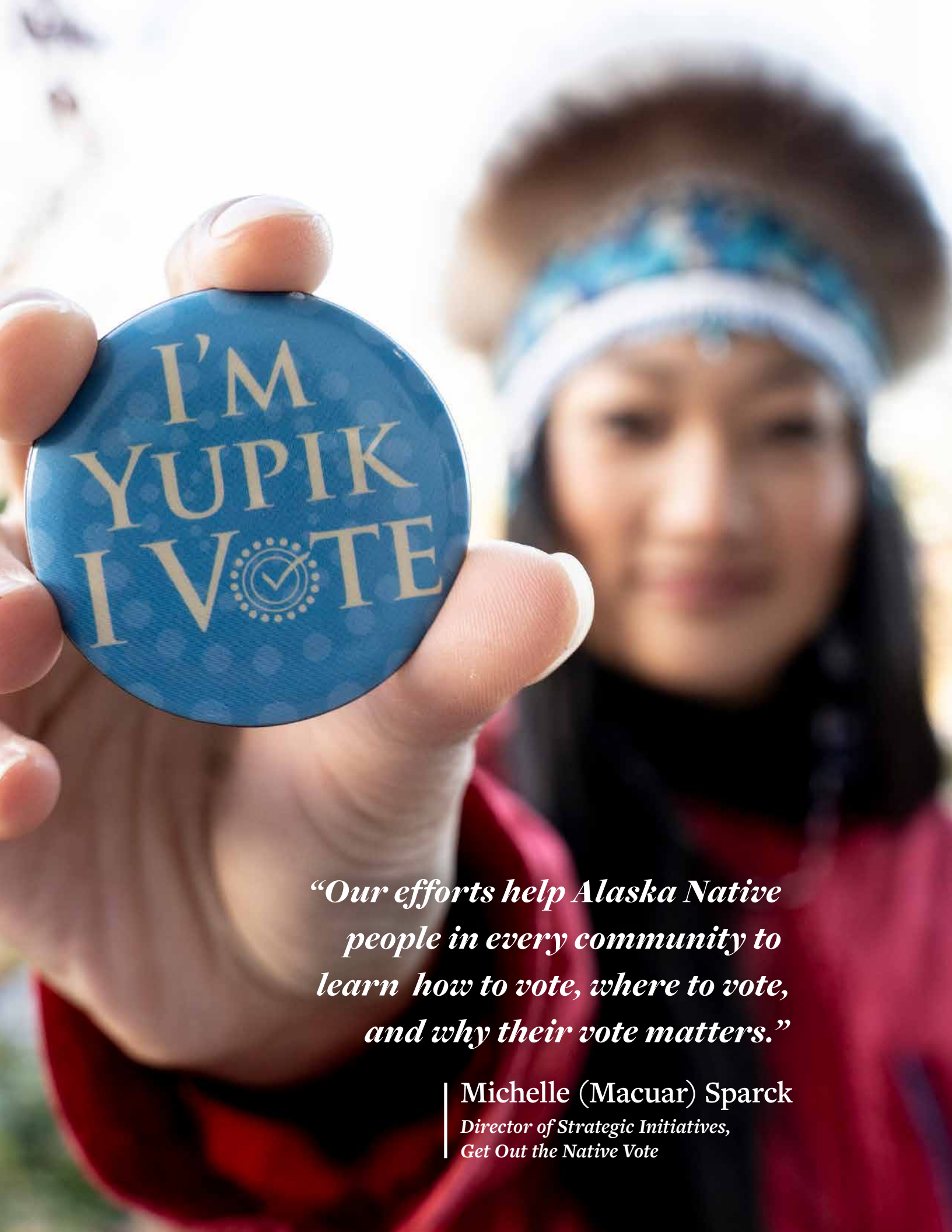
In 2023, **ANJC** designed the first ever training series and child welfare conference for Tribal child welfare workers. During the year, staff conducted two in-person and two virtual **Basic Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)** trainings in preparation for hosting a three-day conference in downtown Anchorage. The September 2023 conference attracted over 200 Tribal Child ICWA workers and affiliated Tribal staff from communities across Alaska. The conference focused intensely on the implementation of ICWA in **Child in Need of Aid** cases as well as responses to allegations of child abuse and neglect.

## Preparing the Next Generation



In March 2023, **ANJC** and **Arizona State University** collaborated to offer “Alaska Native Legal Issues and Solutions,” a pioneering legal course. This initiative, the first of its kind and co-created by ANJC’s Alex Cleghorn and ASU’s Stacy Leeds, educated 29 law students about Alaska’s unique legal landscape, encompassing conflicts, injustices, and the rich diversity of Alaska Native communities.

Beyond the classroom, ANJC’s commitment to increasing Indigenous representation in law continues. They host law clerks for real-world experience, organize **Law & Culture Days**, and participate in events like the **Color of Justice**, connecting students with the justice system. Supported by **The CIRI Foundation**, these efforts underscore ANJC’s role in shaping an inclusive legal future.



*“Our efforts help Alaska Native people in every community to learn how to vote, where to vote, and why their vote matters.”*

Michelle (Macuar) Sparck  
Director of Strategic Initiatives,  
Get Out the Native Vote



# Advocacy & Leadership

**A thriving future requires strong leadership.** Collectively, the CITC family of organizations works to promote the endless potential of Our People. CITC engages in statewide leadership development and advocates for issues that support equal rights and improve the lives of Alaska Native people, families, and communities. In 2021, **Get Out The Native Vote (GOTNV)** joined the CITC family as an affiliate nonprofit. GOTNV was founded with the belief that the right to vote is a fundamental component of a healthy democracy. GOTNV works to ensure that every eligible Alaskan is registered to vote and that barriers preventing registered voters from casting their ballots are removed.

According to the 2020 Census, Alaska Native people make up approximately 22 percent of the state’s population and some 25 percent of eligible voters. Encouraging civic engagement and participation in elections for Alaska Native people—and all Alaskans, regardless of background—is a fundamental goal of GOTNV. Through nonpartisan outreach and education, GOTNV has worked vigorously to remind low-propensity voters how important it is to “Vote Their Voice.” Today, GOTNV is focused on the **core priorities of Leadership Development, Data and Communication, Voter Education and Turnout, and Advocacy.** Throughout 2023, GOTNV worked to align resources, partnerships, and statewide outreach efforts in advance of key 2024 elections.

Get Out The Native Vote is a non-partisan effort in Alaska to mobilize Alaska Native and American Indian voters



## VISION

Alaska Native Peoples are leaders in civic engagement and are powerful advocates for our communities.

## MISSION

Through inspired leadership, voter education, and advocacy, Alaska Native Peoples lead the decisions that shape our world.

←  
**VOTING VOICE**  
CITC’s Brittany Vo displays a GOTNV button, celebrating Alaska’s Tribal heritage and encouraging Alaska Native voter participation.



## Advocating for Our Youth

CITC also works regularly alongside Tribal and statewide partners to improve the systems that impact Our People. In 2023, CITC partnered with **Alaska’s Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)** to complete the year-long **Culturally Relevant Schools** project. Through this, CITC held listening sessions in nearly every region of the state to hear what Our People want for a more inclusive and culturally informed education system. The result was four key pillars of education system transformation:

- *Multi-Generational Learning: Invite Elders into Classrooms*
- *Language and Culture: Celebrate and Teach Native Languages*
- *Tribal Connections: Forge stronger relationships with Teachers, Administrators, Tribal Leaders, Culture-bearers, and Community Members*
- *Heal From Trauma: Honor and Teach Our Past*

Following this extensive project, CITC and its partners developed **OurFutureAncestors.com**, where visitors can see each participating community and listen, watch, or read what Our People feel is important to successful and inclusive education systems. The groundbreaking final report delivered to DEED outlines transformative new models of education, advocates for Our Youth, and demonstrates the clear value of culturally relevant learning systems.

Additionally, CITC presented a short film **“Our Future Ancestors: A Story of Education in Alaska,”** which summarizes education history in Alaska through the eyes of Our People, with particular emphasis on the generationally disruptive Boarding School system that removed thousands of Native children from their home communities. The film depicts history in a way that empowers Our People to reclaim cultural identity and influence the decisions that shape statewide education systems—serving as a powerful call to action for change, leadership, and inclusivity. ●



← **WATCH THE FILM**  
*Our Future Ancestors: A Story of Education in Alaska* is a short film highlighting the past and future of education in Alaska’s rural communities.





## Leading with Heart and Vision

### Celebrating Clare Swan’s 25-Year Legacy at CITC

In December 2023, Clare Swan stepped down from the CITC Board of Directors after 25 years of service. Her leadership, wisdom, grace, and absolute love for Our People has helped shape CITC’s service model. Ms. Swan joined the CITC Board in 1998 and served as chair from 2000 to 2018. Not only did she provide guidance and leadership for CITC’s Mission, vision, and values during a time of tremendous growth, but she reinforced CITC’s pursuit of self-determination. Ms. Swan is the namesake of CITC affiliate nonprofit **Clare Swan Early Learning Center**, which is dedicated to supporting working parents and child wellbeing. Outside of CITC, Ms. Swan dedicated her life to being a strong Dena’ina leader for the

Kenaitze Indian Tribe, the Cook Inlet region, Alaska, and beyond throughout her career.

Those at CITC who worked with Ms. Swan are familiar with her wisdom that “time is passing us by on our little children’s feet,” that we must work together to “clear the moss from the path,” and that “wherever you go, there you are.” Her distinguished leadership is an example for all Native people, reminding us that through dedicated service we can make a difference that impacts generations. CITC celebrates Ms. Swan and is grateful that she shared her heart with Our People during her service on the CITC Board of Directors. ●

# OUR LEADERSHIP

## CITC Board Of Directors

Ivan Encelewski, (Board Chair) Niniichik Traditional Council  
Kaarlo Wik, (Vice Chair) CIRI  
Robert Stephan, Native Village of Tyonek  
Diane Buls, CIRI  
Debra Call, CIRI  
Angeleen Waskey, Native Village of Eklutna  
John Crawford, Seldovia Village Tribe  
John Estabrook, Jr., CIRI  
Douglas Fifer, CIRI

Theodore Garcia, Knik Tribal Council  
Shane Hunter, CIRI  
Philip Ling, Chickaloon Village Traditional Council  
Patrick Marrs, CIRI  
Chris Monfor, Salamatof Native Association  
Debra Morris, CIRI  
Jake Kooly, CIRI  
Wayne Wilson, Kenaitze Indian Tribe

## CITC Executive Leadership

Gloria O'Neill, President & Chief Executive Officer  
LeeAnn Garrick, Chief Operating Officer  
Jennifer Mitchell, Chief Financial Officer  
Tabetha Toloff, Chief Administrative Officer

Kyan Olanna, Vice President & General Counsel  
Joshua Franks, Chief of Staff  
Holly Morales, Deputy Operating Officer

## Our Mission

To work in partnership with our people to develop opportunities that fulfill Our endless potential.

## Our Vision

We envision a future in which all our people—especially our youth, the stewards of our future—have access to vast opportunities, and have the ability, confidence, and courage to advance and achieve their goals, infused with an unshakeable belief in Our endless potential.



### DRUM CIRCLES [above, facing photos]

At CITC's Denetchin Lab, instructors combine traditional Dene drum frame crafting with modern STEM education in the Rasmuson Foundation Woodshop, embodying a fusion of cultural heritage and technological innovation.









**CITC NAT'UH SERVICE CENTER**  
3600 SAN JERONIMO DRIVE  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99508  
907.793.3600



[citci.org](http://citci.org)