

# NEN' EL TUU

The CVTC Tribal Response Program Newsletter

Xay (Winter) 2023/24

Volume 6 | Issue 1



## NTS'E BA HNIYAES?

### WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

- **Bede Nt'aennen?** *Who is this?*  
A 90-second Interview: Kyle Robillard
- **I Called 11 Insurance Companies (So You Don't Have To):**  
Home Owner's Insurance and Home Heating Oil Tanks
- **Kayaxkudghit'iitden:** Trail Marker  
Sutton Community Hall - Update
- **Dahtah:** Among the Branches  
Culturally Modified Trees
- **Hnats'et'aen:** We are playing.
- **Slaaghe dela dezenda?** Can you help?



## dahtah

*among the branches*

*dahtah itsiitl' - it snowed among the branches*

Photo Credit: Norma Johnson

# BEDE NT'AENEN? WHO IS THIS? (a 90-second interview)

## 1.What's your name?

Kyle Robillard

## 2.What's your job?

I'm an Environmental Technician at the Native Village of Eklutna. I work on the Tribal Response/Brownfields Program, The Indian General Assistance Program (IGAP), and a Tribal Wildlife Grant working on the Eklutna River.

## 3.Have you ever been to Alaska?

Yes, I've happily lived here since spring of 2020. I visited Southeast Alaska back in 2013 and fell in love with it. After that trip, I spent a lot of time scheming for a way to move up here, which finally did happen!

## 4.How long have you been working in your position/field?

I've been at NVE for almost 3 years now and have been working in different environmental science type jobs for the last 10 years.

## 5.What's something you wish the general public knew about your job?

I guess I wish that people knew more about the impact that our activities as humans have on the natural environment. From the contaminated sites that I work on, to finding litter and pollution miles into the backcountry, human impacts are everywhere. Especially if you take climate change into consideration. And there really are small, everyday things that can make a difference, like packing out your litter, recycling, and disposing of hazardous wastes properly!

## 6.Most routine part of your job?

I guess I would say the administrative side of the grants. Each grant I work on requires reporting either twice a year or once a quarter. Then, we must reapply for the grant funds to keep the programs moving. It takes a surprising amount of time.

## 7.Weirdest/Wildest thing you witnessed while working?

Last field season we were working out of a remote camp doing salmon habitat characterization, and all through the night, a mother moose and her two calves were tromping through the camp, nearly crashing into our tents! It was pretty restless night. Early the next morning, I found out why- there was a grizzly circling around the camp wanting to come after the moose calves, but I think he was too scared to come into the camp. The cow moose was using us for protection. It was definitely wild!

## 8.Favorite animal?

Tough question! I guess I'd have to go with a cougar/mountain lion. I've been lucky enough to encounter them in the wild on several occasions, and it is just such a cool experience. They have no fear. They are the top of the food chain, and they know it!

## 9.Favorite thing about winter?

I love winter recreation! Since moving up here, I've really gotten into cross-country skiing, as well as snowshoeing/winter hiking and fat biking. It is so much fun!

# I CALLED 11 INSURANCE COMPANIES (SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO): INSURANCE COMPANIES AND HOME HEATING OIL TANKS

Author: Richard Chiolero, CVTC, TRP Coordinator

**Note:** The author does not promote any good or service in this article, nor do they guarantee any good or service that a mentioned company will provide. It is up to the reader to reach out to these companies on their own and establish whether or not they are eligible for goods and services the companies provide.

Picture this: waking up to a basement soaked in heating oil, and your insurance agent saying, "Sorry, not our problem." It happened to a couple in Massachusetts, and it was going to cost them an estimated \$200,000 to clean up. Fortunately for them, their insurance company had a change of heart and covered the cost (which had more to do with public outcry and an impending environmental disaster than empathy). That was a close call, and it got me thinking - how ready are we for something like that in our neck of the woods? I mean, commercial businesses like gas stations have insurance options and coverage. Industrial businesses have environmental insurance, too. What about private property owners here in Alaska?

I dialed up 11 insurance companies to see who'd have our backs if the unexpected oil spill chaos hit. Guess what? Only two (2) said, "Yep, we've got you covered." (GEICO and State Farm) but here's the hitch - they've got some rules, like your oil tank's age, model, and whether the accident they're planning on covering is an "act of God" (covered) or due to "poor maintenance" (not covered).

Here's another shocker: most insurance folks don't exactly shout about these policies from the rooftops - and they're not required to do so. Some agents I spoke to didn't know if their company would cover us in an oil spill, and some flat-out said that they didn't. My advice: ask! It never hurts to ask because the worst thing you'll hear is "no," and wouldn't you rather know this about your insurance carrier before you need them?

Now, I'm no insurance whiz, but it feels like since a house and property is one of the biggest investments we'll ever make in our lives, we should start asking questions to our insurance agents to protect our investment. Let's make sure our homes are safe and sound, so we don't find ourselves in a mess if things go sideways. Stay sharp, stay secure, and let's keep our homes happy places! (Oh yah: and check the condition of your home heating oil tank and make repairs as necessary before disaster strikes!)

A leaking tank can even happen in the winter! A surefire way to notice is if you need more frequent tank fills than you used to. Make sure that you look at your tank before the snow starts falling! This issue has a handy inspection check list, Check it out!

Slick Says:



**Aboveground Heating Oil Tank Inspection Guide:**

<https://dec.alaska.gov/media/8427/aboveground-tank-inspection.pdf>



# KAYAXKUDGHIŁ'IITDEN: TRAIL MARKER

## SUTTON COMMUNITY HALL - UPDATE

Hey Sutton Community! It's been a while since our last update on the Sutton Community Hall brownfield site, so let's catch up on the latest happenings.

Back in February 2023, we applied for a Department of Environmental Conservation Brownfields Assessment and Cleanup grant, and since then, there have been some significant developments. Here's the scoop:

1. In October 2023, BGES, Inc. submitted their site workplan, and it got the green light from Breanna Mahoney with the DEC.
2. A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) was completed in September/October 2023. The report was submitted to the DEC and approved by Breanna Mahoney.
3. BGES, Inc. sent out environmental scientists Lisa Vitale and Tyler Murrell to the site on October 5, 2023, to take samples for laboratory analysis. Richard Chiolero (CVTC, TRP Coordinator) and Stephanie Freeman (CVTC ESD Administrative Assistant II) were there too, shadowing the samplers to earn hours towards their own qualifications. Samples were taken around the building, both inside and out, but not from the basement due to safety concerns.
4. Pace Analytical® analyzed the samples, with results coming in on October 19, 2023.
5. By December 30, 2023, BGES, Inc. submitted their Phase II ESA report to the DEC, and it was approved by Breanna Mahoney.

These reports (including a Final Report) are available through the CVTC TRP Coordinator, Richard Chiolero, and interested parties can request copies by calling or sending an email: 907.745.0737; rechiolero@chickaloon-nsn.gov



The location of the former Sutton Community Hall: 15462 N Glenn Hwy

### Key Findings:

The soil samples revealed higher-than-Alaska-standard levels of benzene and naphthalene. Inside the building, mercury dust (not regulated) and asbestos were found. (Remember: just because it isn't "regulated" doesn't mean it's okay to be there.)

### BGES, Inc. Recommendations:

Additional site assessment activities are recommended, including using a drilling rig to obtain soil samples from greater depths. If groundwater is encountered, collecting samples for analysis is also advised to assess potential migration pathways. For any renovation, evaluating indoor air quality is also recommended. Further details from the final report include XRF readings for lead (none exceeded EPA limits), identification of asbestos-containing materials, and recommendations for mercury abatement and indoor air testing if renovation is planned.

While we're planning next steps, please start thinking about what you want to have here the site is cleaned up. It's never too early to plan for what you'd like to see in the future. Dream big (even if the property is small)!

Stay tuned for more updates as we work towards revitalizing the Sutton Community Hall site. I'm happy to keep our community informed and involved in this important process!



Photo Credit: Richard Chiolero

The CVTC Tribal Response Program Coordinator, Richard Chiolero, standing outside of the former Sutton Community Hall which is now a brownfield site. This was the initial site visit with BGES, Inc. Staff to see what we were working with. (23 August 2023)

## DAHTAH - AMONG THE BRANCHES CULTURALLY MODIFIED TREES

Author: Norma Johnson, CVTC, Cultural Resource Coordinator

In the world of archaeology, we've uncovered a fascinating practice called Culturally Modified Trees, or Ancestral Trees, scattered across the Americas. These are trees that bear marks of human activity, like having their bark stripped off to mark trails or for various uses such as crafting paper, canoes, or food storage. Ahtna Dene Elder Wilson Justin shared his knowledge about these trees, inspiring staff at Chickaloon Village Traditional Council (CVTC) to delve deeper into different types of tree modifications.

These modifications aren't just about stripping bark. They also include intriguing shapes like "elbows" and "twisted" branches. Imagine using roots and sinew to gently bend and shape branches as they grow, creating unique forms that serve specific purposes. Norma Johnson, exploring the Kenai Peninsula, often found these trees leading to archaeological sites in the Cooper Landing area.

CVTC staff collaborated with archaeologists from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson to document nearly 200 Ancestral Trees in the fall of 2022. Further research by Norma and Liz Ortiz challenged our assumptions about their age. Contrary to expectations, these trees turned out to be older than we thought, dating back 100-160 years according to dendrochronology (the study of tree rings). Interestingly, the scars left by stripping birch bark are tricky to date accurately, leaving behind dark marks that can't be precisely aged. These trees have been around longer than Tent City, the colonial settlement that once thrived on the banks of Ship Creek.

While these trees aren't created routinely as markers anymore, they still dot the landscape of Southcentral Alaska and even stretch as far as Toronto and Oregon, though these sightings haven't been confirmed yet. CVTC is keen on experimenting with modern trees to understand how difficult it was for our ancestors to modify them and how long it took.

If you're curious to learn more about Culturally Modified Trees, check out the research paper "Their Markers as they Go: Modified Trees as Waypoints in the Denáina Cultural Landscape" by Douglas Deur, Karen Evanoff, and Jamie Herbert.



Photo Credit: Norma Johnson



Photo Credit: Richard Chiolero

Ancestor Trees/Culturally Modified Trees will be the theme for the enamel pin Chickaloon Village Traditional Council designed for the 2024 Arctic Winter Games!

## Signs of A Spill

- ◆ Keep track of your fuel consumption. Dramatic increases in fuel consumption may indicate your tank or fuel line is leaking.
- ◆ If you have a fuel gauge or an overfill alarm, make sure they are functioning properly.
- ◆ Check for fuel stains around the fill or vent pipes.
- ◆ Check around the tank for visible signs of a spill such as, sheens on water surfaces, puddles of oil and unexplained dead vegetation.
- ◆ Check for an odor of diesel around the tank, in your house or in your crawlspace. It could be from a leaking fuel tank.

## What to Do in Case of a Spill

- 1) Try and identify the source of the spill or leak.
- 2) Stop or contain the spill to the best of your abilities. (This may mean calling your fuel provider and having the tank emptied.)
- 3) Report the spill to your local ADEC office.

For more information on  
heating oil systems visit:

[www.dec.alaska.gov/spar/perp/hho.htm](http://www.dec.alaska.gov/spar/perp/hho.htm)

**For questions or to report a spill during  
business hours call:**

**Anchorage: (907)-269-3063**

**Fairbanks: (907)-451-2121**

**Juneau: (907)-465-5340**

**To report an oil spill after hours call:**

**1-800-478-9300**

## Aboveground Heating Oil Tank Inspection Guide



**Alaska Department of  
Environmental Conservation**  
Division of Spill Prevention and  
Response



# Inspect Your Tank ... Correct the Problems & Save Money!



Replace your tank if it is rusting or if the tank appears damp! Painting tanks with a rust inhibitor paint will prolong the life of your tank.



Check for ice, snow or tree limbs that can fall on your tank or fuel lines. Photo shows a tank at risk of ice and snow falling on it during the winter.



Check your tank for water! Water can corrode a tank from the inside out or cause the fuel filter to crack during cold weather. (Photo)



Check for tank stability. Legs for tanks should be resting upon a solid foundation. The bottom of the tank should be off the ground and clear of debris.



Check fuel lines to make sure they are not damaged or leaking. Pay close attention to connections or joints which can fail.



Check the tank vent for any obstructions like snow, ice, insects or spiders.

# HNATS'ET'AEN: WE ARE PLAYING

Winter 2023-24

Created with TheTeachersCorner.net Word Search Maker



In this puzzle, words and phrases might be forward, backwards, up, down, or diagonal. Once you have found all the words, can you find the hidden quote? It is made with all the unused letters. Work from top to bottom, left to right. The first word is "Dust."

## Word Find List:

Kyle Robillard  
dahtah  
trees  
insurance  
heating oil  
cougar  
inspection  
trail marker  
recommendations  
visioning  
benzene  
naphthalene  
snow  
xay  
ne'iine' (without the 'i')  
tank  
lead  
mercury  
Norma Johnson  
dendrochronology  
ancestor  
brownfield  
prevention  
maintenance  
Eklutna

D	A	E	L	D	N	O	I	T	N	E	V	E	R	P	U	S	T	O	F	S
N	O	W	T	H	E	I	N	S	P	E	C	T	I	O	N	W	T	A	Y	A
C	I	N	S	U	R	A	N	C	E	C	R	M	E	R	C	U	R	Y	O	E
O	W	S	H	B	R	O	W	N	F	I	E	L	D	O	O	K	A	D	O	N
U	W	N	O	Y	N	O	S	N	H	O	J	A	M	R	O	N	I	N	M	E
G	E	H	A	T	H	A	D	T	Y	H	E	D	U	S	T	O	L	F	S	L
A	N	X	O	W	E	F	R	O	G	M	A	H	E	M	L	O	M	C	K	A
R	T	R	E	E	H	C	A	S	O	G	E	K	L	U	T	N	A	I	V	H
E	N	M	Y	H	E	A	N	R	L	T	A	C	H	A	N	G	R	E	D	T
O	F	M	O	O	D	A	N	A	O	D	S	A	V	E	D	S	K	O	R	H
M	E	S	N	O	I	T	A	D	N	E	M	M	O	C	E	R	E	G	A	P
P	A	R	T	O	F	A	D	A	O	E	Y	I	H	W	A	D	R	N	L	A
R	U	E	D	R	O	B	E	T	R	R	T	T	O	F	R	O	S	I	L	N
L	I	O	G	N	I	T	A	E	H	T	L	N	L	R	R	T	E	N	I	M
T	A	E	T	E	Q	N	R	A	C	W	S	K	I	G	U	L	N	O	B	L
M	F	X	F	O	K	N	E	C	O	U	T	R	Y	A	S	P	I	I	O	E
T	R	E	E	S	Z	A	L	I	R	Z	Q	O	Q	W	M	I	I	S	R	N
J	G	I	M	P	O	G	K	S	D	O	N	N	H	O	G	K	E	I	E	K
M	U	H	S	X	G	Z	M	C	N	C	M	G	N	O	X	I	N	V	L	Q
M	R	O	T	S	E	C	N	A	E	Z	T	J	B	O	J	H	M	G	Y	L
C	H	I	O	L	E	R	O	W	D	G	A	B	E	N	Z	E	N	E	K	S

Photo Credit: Richard Chioloro



ne'iine' - chickadee



@brownfieldbear

**SLAAGHE DELA DEZENDA?**

**CAN YOU HELP?**

Curious about the Tribal Response Program?

Wanna talk about brownfields or have me do a presentation?

Got an idea for an article you'd like to see? I'd love to hear from you!

Richard Chioloro

CVTC Tribal Response Program Coordinator

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website: <https://www.chickaloon-nsn.gov/tribal-response-program/>



"This project has been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under assistance agreement (BP 02131601) to (CVTC). The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views of the EPA or the United States Environmental Protection Agency, nor does the EPA endorse trade names or recommend the use of commercial products mentioned in this document."