

Dear Friend,

When someone experiences something intense, it can be difficult for them to describe their experience. A good friend will listen patiently while they find words to express what's on their heart.

In this issue, several Western Alaskans take to the radio waves to share their stories and speak up for their communities. Thanks to you, their voices are heard by many. Thank you for being a good friend to this region!

How one Unalakleet teen is advocating for a green future

"I really want to show people that if we move away from resource extraction, there's many jobs for people to have revolving around renewable energy. We could move towards a different kind of future. What would our future look like if it were more oriented towards the greener option?"

Maiyuraq Lauryn Nanouk Jones was awarded The Spirit of Youth Discovery Award, which highlights youth in science with a specific focus on environmental issues. Jones is majoring in environmental policy with minors in environmental justice, education, social justice and hopes to attend law school.

She had the opportunity to advocate for renewable energy projects on a statewide level. She says when the community comes together, it helps everyone's bills go down.

"If you buy into community solar, it helps reduce the prices for people who are paying for electricity. It's also a way to help sustain our way of life. Renewable energy resources are great for the environment, and that's something they care about."



Portrait of Maiyuraq Lauryn Nanouk Jones, used with permission.

But renewable energy is just one of Jones' focus.

Growing up in Unalakleet, a village of about 700 people, subsistence was a large part of her childhood and Inupiaq culture. She noticed that the caribou of the Western Arctic Herd were no longer visiting the community. Fish numbers and other subsistence food sources were less abundant. Jones blames resource extraction, like mining and oil drilling, for the decline.

Jones' future goals are to help communities throughout Alaska deal with the effects of climate change, figure out how to combat climate change effectively, and understand the changing ecosystems.

*God looked at everything he had made,
and he found it very good.*

— Genesis 1:31



The 2014 Nulukataq event at WEIO in Fairbanks. Photo by Ronn Murray Photography, WEIO.

Olympic games held in Interior Alaska

The World Eskimo-Indian Olympics (WEIO) is a cherished tradition where crowds gather to watch athletes compete in traditional Alaska Native games. The games connect to the rich history and spirit of the region and reiterate the need to be strong both mentally and physically, making it possible to survive a harsh climate as the Elders of the region once did. Many traditional hunting and survival activities are reflected in the 19 games represented at WEIO, ranging from the one-foot high kick to seal skinning.

We pray for those persons living on the margins of society, in inhumane life conditions; may they not be overlooked by institutions and never considered of lesser importance.

— Pope Francis' prayer intention for September 2023

Sharing the Word in Western Alaska

Today's Gospel reminds us of one of the requirements of belonging to the Church. Belonging to the Church means belonging to a community of brothers and sisters. And, as a family, we have a responsibility for our brothers and sisters. Not just those that live next door, in the same village or region, but also all those throughout the world.

As a community, if we are concerned with others, we cannot ignore the social problems that exist, such as alcoholism, drugs, gambling, violence, discrimination, and abuse. Most of us don't like to get involved in the actions of others. However, the Gospel reminds us that being Christian calls us in love to show the brother or sister who has sinned against themselves, against us, or against others, their faults, so they may hopefully make positive changes and become more of who God calls them to be.

— Patrick Tam, 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, September 10

This year, audience members enjoyed amazing moments like Kyle Worl's backflip on the blanket toss and the and the impressive performances of Marjorie Kunaq Tahbone and Asaaluk Nichols in the fish cutting contest from Nome. There are four awards given as tribute during WEIO.

In addition to the games, WEIO crowns a young woman as Miss WEIO during a pageant each year.

The competition showcases cultures and languages of the region, and being a positive role model in their community. This year's Miss WEIO is Michelle Pearl Kaleak, of Utqiagvik.

Summer camp connects youth with their roots

Each year, youth from around the region gather at Camp Igaliq to learn new skills, participate in activities, and work with mentors. This year, the summer camp took place at a lakeside campsite outside Nome.

Activities offered at Camp Igaliq include learning from elders, guest presentations, canoeing, hiking, Native dancing, and more. Zoe Okleasik is the Community Wellness Coordinator at Kawerak, and provides resources for substance abuse, mental health, and more. As a former camper at Camp Igaliq, she says camp activities are run by Indigenous faculty members which allows for a deeper understanding.

"It's a lot of culture-based activities. We have a lot of indigenous people facilitating these activities. And so we'll have things like hunter safety and soapstone carving, or the kids will make seal oil lamps. So it's really structured in indigenous practices and indigenous teachings."



Landscape seen from the site of Camp Igaliq. Photo courtesy of Adam Fagen via Flickr Creative Commons.

"Having those good mentors and people that would help lead you in the right path, I think is a great way to help solve our substance abuse problems in the region." Okleasik adds that the campers learn to speak and engage with their languages, enabling them to connect more deeply with their culture. "We do language revitalization and really get people connected with their culture again, because once you are feeling good about yourself, and you feel healthy in your culture then our people ultimately thrive."

Morning Prayer

Dear Jesus, Thank you for the love you shine in my heart so that I might pass it on to everyone I meet throughout the day. Thank you for the grace to overcome sin one day at a time. And thank you for the sacrifice you made for my eternal salvation! In your precious name, Amen!



Above: Mandy Ellanna's "Dreaming of Summer" salmon design won third place in the adult category. Photo by Ava White/KNOM.

Below right: Two boys determine what is important to pack in an emergency kit in the Junior Ranger Program. Photo by Ava White/KNOM.

Colorful Creations: Nome's 'Salmon on Parade' inspires young artists

Norton Sound Health Corporation, sponsored the "Salmon on Parade" contest, where community members in Nome and surrounding villages had the chance to decorate a salmon cut out and win a cash prize.

One of the artists is seven-year-old Elizabeth Phan. Her salmon, decorated with swirls and bright colors, is titled "Ocean Glamour" and was inspired by one of Nome's scenic spots.

"Since we live in front of the ocean, I thought oh, maybe I should do my fish as inspiration from the ocean." She says she used acrylic paint, a swipe technique, and glitter to decorate her salmon.

Prizes were awarded for the best overall, best message, most creative, and most culturally-inspired projects. There were no rules in decorating your salmon, besides signing your name and keeping your decoration family-friendly. The decorated salmon showcase artwork from artists from across the region.

The salmon on parades give all ages an opportunity to creatively express themselves and display their artwork to the community.

Youth in Nome become Junior Park Rangers

The Bering Land Bridge National Preserve held its first Junior Ranger Program, geared towards children ages 6-12. Through team building games, crossword puzzles, and learning about emergency equipment, children learned about how to survive in Arctic and Subarctic regions. The program was led by Nome-grown Park Ranger Kat Scott of the Bering Land Bridge National Preserve.

While sharing stories of her family's subsistence, Scott says that the smallest ecosystem changes can affect hunting, fishing, and gathering. "I think the main reason is keeping the ecosystem intact, keeping the harmony between all of the animals and all the plants. Just a shift in like one degree of the weather can change, the waterways, the fish with how early spring gets or how late it gets."

The Bering Land Bridge National Preserve is made up of 27.5 million acres across the Seward Peninsula. Programs like the Jr. Ranger Program teaches children how to be safe when encountering wildlife and what to do if there's an emergency while out in the country. After the new rangers completed their activities, earning the official title of Junior Ranger, they were awarded with high-fives and stickers to celebrate their achievement.

