



Sitka Tribe of Alaska Presents . . .

Summer 2008

The Council's Voice

State of the Tribe featuring: **Dennis Demmert**



Dennis Demmert,
STA's Vice Chairman

I would like to take this opportunity to share information about several of the Sitka Tribe of Alaska's (STA) programs and services available to STA's tribal citizens. Currently, while not all of STA's tribal citizens reside in Sitka, there are approximately 4,020 men, women and children who are enrolled with STA.

The Sitka Tribe of Alaska (STA) is a federally recognized tribe and for this reason receives federal "compact funds" to provide social, legal, economic, and educational services for its citizens. STA's share of federal "compact funding" is never adequate to meet the needs of our citizens so STA's staff write grant proposals to attain additional funding. While most of these grants help STA to provide more services to tribal citizens, some grants require that certain services be provided for tribal citizens *and* the community at large.

In this way, STA provides services that benefit tribal citizens, and at times, the whole community. Because some of STA's services are not readily apparent, this newsletter describes some of the services provided by STA. If you want to learn more, please stop into STA's Administrative Offices (located at 456 Katlian Street) and our staff can provide you with our **2008 STA Services Guide**.

Education Programs and Services

Native students are as capable as other students, but for a variety of reasons, average grades are lower and the drop-out rate higher for many of our young people. STA has created many programs and services over the years to improve Native education. Below I provide short overviews of several of the educational opportunities that STA currently provides.

Home to School Liaison. Students do better in school when they have the support of advocates from "outside" the school and when parents/families are involved in their children's education. In 2006, STA received a 3-year federal grant from the US Department of Education to place an STA employee in each of Sitka's five public schools. Our "Home-to-School Liaisons" advocate and encourage students to achieve their potential while working to identify solutions to obstacles preventing families from being fully involved in their children's education.

Elders / Culture Bearers in the Classroom. The same grant that allowed STA to hire its "Home to School Liaisons" has allowed STA to develop an Elders / Culture Bearers in the Classroom program. Through publically advertised planning meetings, twenty (20) tribal elders and local culture bearers have stepped up to offer their services in the classroom. Participants in the Elders / Culture Bearers in the Classroom have been interviewed and their biographies are compiled into a resource catalogue that has been made available to each school and can also be accessed on the STA website at www.sitkatribes.org We look forward to teachers making use of this resource!

Sitka Boys and Girls Club. The Boys & Girls Club is a national organization with an excellent record for assisting all youth, ages 7 to 18, to engage in wholesome, fun activities. Presently, our community's Clubhouse is funded by grants written and managed by STA. In 2008, the Clubhouse was moved to the Rasmuson Student Center on the Sheldon Jackson campus from its original location on Alice Island. The clubhouse draws many young people for swimming, gym time, trips to Totem Park, berry picking and even held a "youth Olympics." Clubhouse programs discourage drug and alcohol use and encourage school success. Tutoring is available Monday - Friday.

Shee Atika/STA Youth Scholarships: School Activity, Musical Instrument and Community Activity. STA is honored to be collaborating with Shee Atika to administer a program that allows income eligible students and their families to apply for up to \$300 in funding to participate in a sport, purchase a musical instrument or participate in a community activity. Shee Atika provides up to \$15,000 in awards to qualifying families each year and STA is grateful for this investment in our tribal youth.

Higher Education and Adult Vocational Training Scholarships. Few people can get good career jobs with just a high school diploma any longer. And today trades like carpentry and plumbing require specialized training. STA provides scholarships for both college and vocational training, and provides career advising. In 2007, the Tribe paid out over \$105,000 in scholarships with \$90,000 of that amount being awarded to our higher education students and \$15,475 awarded to vocational students.

Pre-school Scholarships. Families that qualify by income may receive scholarships for pre-school. This program is offered through our US Department of Education grant to promote school readiness. Over the 2007-2008 school year, twenty youth/families received pre-school scholarships.

School supply assistance. Students whose family qualifies by income may obtain assistance in getting a backpack (available every other year due to the cost of the packs) and school supplies specific to their teacher's supply list.

Service learning. Participation in community service makes for good citizens. Through the Corporation for Service Learning funded "Learn and Serve Grant" administered by STA, our community's young people are engaged in community service programs and projects offered by the Sitka Native Education Program (SNEP), Sitka's Community Schools program and the Sitka Boys & Girls Club.

Small Business Opportunities. STA staff wrote and received a grant in 2006 which allowed the Tribe to collaborate with Sitka's small business support center "Sitka Works" to host three free six-week small business development classes. As a result, 38 community members received this training, of which 47% participating were tribal citizens or eligible to be enrolled at the Tribe. Contacting participants following the training, we learned that eleven (11) new businesses were created, five (5) businesses were expanded and 9.25 new jobs were created as a result of these small business development training opportunities.

Upcoming Tribal Council Meetings

- [September 3, 2008 @ 456 Katlian Street](#)
- [September 17, 2008 @ the Shee'tka Kwaan Naa Kahidi Community House 200 Katlian Street](#)

Monthly Council Meeting Summaries

Meeting Summary: July 2, 2008

Meeting Summary: July 16, 2008

The Council reviewed and accepted the STA Finance Committee's recommendations, acting to: (1) Adopt Tribal Resolution 96-2008 - "Authorization and Support for Applying for Federal Transit Administration Tribal Transit Program Funding"; (2) Approve a one-month contract extension between the Center for Community and STA; and, (3) Approve a two year contract with the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

Postponed was action on an application to the Rasmuson Foundation grant funding.

The Council accepted revisions to the Sitka Family Justice Center's Steering Committee Policy.

The Council tabled approval of the 2007 Annual Report on Collaborative Herring Management until their next meeting.

The Council received a government-to-government report from Cheryl Westover, City Assembly Liaison to the Tribe.

New staff were introduced: Lara Fluharty, Community Engagement Specialist at the Sitka Boys & Girls Clubhouse; Jamie Moy, Tribal Court Clerk; and, David Pratt, Americorps Volunteer at STA's Resource Protection Department.

Acceptance by motion of the "2007 Annual Report on Management of Customary and Traditional Herring Harvest." By motion the word "collaborative" was struck from the document's original title.

The Council reviewed and accepted the STA Finance Committee's recommendations, acting to: (1) Approve Tribal Resolution 97-2008 Authorizing STA's 2009 Funding Agreement (*allowing the Tribe to*

receive funding directly from the Department of Interior rather than its funding being administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs or "BIA"); (2) Approve Tribal Resolution 98-2008 - "Authorization and Support for Applying to the Economic Development Administration for Funding to Build a Free-Standing Facility to house the Sitka Tribal Tannery; and, (3) Approve Tribal Resolution 99-2008 - "Authorization and Support for Applying to the Administration for Native Americans (ANA) to Complete a Comprehensive Language Survey for the Community of Sitka, Alaska."

The Council approved fourteen Resolutions for Tribal Enrollment (Resolutions 100-2008-113-2008).

The Council accepted STA Committee and STA Staff reports as submitted for their review and approval in written form.



*This article, written by the Sitka Tribe of Alaska's Vice Chairman **Dennis Demmert**, is continued from the front page. Below Dennis highlights several programs and services currently being provided by the Sitka Tribe, its council and staff for our tribal citizens and, in some cases, for the community of Sitka as a whole.*

Programs and Services Available at STA

Sheet'ka Kwaan Naa Kahidi. STA's community house is a much favored location for cultural events, community events, performances, community meetings, weddings, funerals, graduations, and much more for the entire community. Operating and maintaining the building is costly, so users usually pay, but the Tribe encourages its citizens to contact staff regarding our ability to offer free use of the building for traditional funeral services. Rental rates for other uses vary - please contact our staff to inquire about holding your next event at the Sheet'ka Kwaan Naa Kahidi.

Sitka Family Justice Center (SFJC). Alaska has the highest rate of domestic violence in the nation. The SFJC advocates for victims of family violence and offers legal assistance for divorce, child custody and protective orders as well as referrals to child and family therapy, law enforcement, and substance abuse treatment. The SFJC is a part of STA's Social Services team which works to promote healthy family relationships. Our on-site full-time attorney is available to provide tribal and non-tribal individuals with professional support, legal representation and referrals. An advocate from Sitkans Against Family Violence (SAFV) is also on-site to coordinate services for survivors of domestic violence.

Subsistence protection. Powerful people, including legislators, oppose the subsistence rights held by rural Alaskans. In 2007 and 2008, some people and political organizations attempted to have Sitka removed from the list of qualified subsistence villages. STA successfully led the fight both times to protect Sitka's subsistence rights. STA also monitors commercial herring harvests in order to protect subsistence harvests. STA has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Alaska Fish and Game that requires the department to advise STA in advance when there is going to be an opening for commercial harvests. STA's Resource Protection Department also monitors environmental issues and assists in harvesting traditional foods for elders.

Sitka public transportation program. STA receives funds and contracts to operate the bus system in Sitka. Riders still have to pay, but not the full cost. The funding that STA receives makes a public bus system a reality. The average daily ridership level for 2007 was 110 riders per day and the average daily ridership for the first quarter of 2008 (Jan.-Mar.) was 102 riders per day. However, in May, 2008 the average daily ridership jumped to 228 riders per day, representing a 125% increase! While increased ridership was partly in response to some promotional free ride opportunities it is clear that with the high cost of fuel that utilizing public transportation is providing the support that families need to address financial challenges facing us all.

As a Council member, I've seen good, conscientious work by STA staff, and have seen staff members work beyond their job descriptions. For example, our annual picnic was enjoyed by hundreds of people, but that enjoyment was made possible by the hard work of staff before, during and after the picnic. Also, on occasion, subsistence fish for elders was brought in, and staff, including administrators, dropped what they were doing and worked on fish, even when they had other work to do.

This year the theme of the annual meeting will be "Know your tribe; It's yours! Be an active part of it; Be proud of it!" The annual report and the oral presentations will give much more detail about the activities of STA than this letter does. I encourage STA tribal citizens to learn more about their tribe. We all need to understand its services, and we need to understand that our tribe contributes so much to the larger community.

The STA annual meeting will be moved from November to January 31, 2009. This date will allow the Council to give a full report on the programmatic and fiscal year, which for the Tribe ends on December 31, 2008. The STA annual meeting, like the picnic, is a time for good food, good entertainment, seeing friends, and revitalizing our cultural ties. We hope to see you there.