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## **Qizhjuh Vena, Alaska**

Attn: Karen Evanoff

10108 Colville St. Eagle River, AK 99577

qizhjuhvena@gmail.com

# 2024 Strategic Plan

1<sup>st</sup> February 2024

## **OVERVIEW**

Qizhjuh Vena is the name of our organization and the Dena'ina (Alaska Native) name for Lake Clark. We aim to create a world-class gathering center inspired by Dena'ina values and culture. The landscape we operate in is very rural. The only method of transportation to get to Qizhjuh Vena is by bush plane. However, the Dena'ina ancestors traveled by foot and kayak in historic times, and they were known to walk long distances, including through the Lake Clark Pass to Cook Inlet. Today, there are fewer roads and trails throughout the region. For today's travel, people rely on a boat, ATV "Honda," or snow machine for transportation. The cost of fuel averages \$8.5/per gallon, and the cost of freight averages \$1.20/lb.

## **GOALS**

1. Purchase Koksetna Wilderness Lodge - \$750,000
2. Purchase Lot 13 Block 7 Keyes Point - \$350,000
3. Property Maintenance and Repair- TBD
4. Program's Budget- TBD
5. Employment Budget- TBD

## **Koksetna Wilderness Lodge**

Lead Director Karen Evanoff from the village of Nondalton has had her eyes on this property for many years. She grew up learning how her ancestors took care of the land surrounding the Koksetna Wilderness Lodge. She's made a consistent effort to maintain a relationship with the property owners throughout the years. Knowing that if the property fell into the wrong hands, it could harm the local culture and Chulitna River environment. When the current lodge owner, Kemp Laidley, reached out to Karen (fall 2023) to tell her he was looking to sell the lodge and is willing to hold the offer till the end of June 2024, the timing could not feel but 'meant to be.'

The Lodge is located at the outlet of the Chulitna River on Lake Clark. We know this location is ideal for a Dena'ina Center for Sustainable Living. There is a backcountry (grass) airstrip, lodging, a kitchen, running water, and a septic system. There is a machine shed and a wood shop. There is a greenhouse and garden. The purchase comes with all the equipment on the property: four-wheelers, snow machines, boats, and a tractor.

The property is essential to protecting the natural resources, local Dena'ina lifeway, cultural resources, and health and well-being. There are limitless educational opportunities to facilitate seasonal camps and retreats year-round, especially with securing the Keyes Point property as well (details below).

## **Koksetna Wilderness Lodge Property Maintenance & Repair**

Koksenta Wilderness Lodge was originally built in the 70s. Upgrades have been made since it was initially created, but long-term remodeling will happen to turn it into our Center for Sustainable Living. An effort to transfer to a renewable energy system is one of our main priorities. The lodge owner has recently installed a solar system for summer operations. Additional greenhouse/ high tunnel space would be ideal for healthy nutrition as part of our programs. Expanding the woodshop would also be beneficial to our programs. The dozer and skid steer from Keyes Point (below) could be barged over and used to maintain the airstrip, providing another layer of safety and security to our operations.

2019 Expense Report from the current owner:

- The caretaker was based on 8-9 months living there at \$400/month, equaling \$3400-\$3600 annually. Our elder advisors, Butch and Pauline, caretook for the lodge owner for many years.
- Fuel is always based on how cold it gets and the usage of the generator. The lodge usually goes through 6-8 barrels of fuel/year. That costs about \$3,000/year. The lodge owner just updated to a solar power system and hopes the generator won't be needed in the summer except to pump water occasionally to fill the cistern.
- The owner flew in his propane to cut down on costs. The lodge usually went through (4) 100-gallon bottles per year.
- The other main costs were gasoline for the lawnmower and boats. At least (2) 55-gallon barrels in summer and sometimes (1) in winter.

## **Keyes Point Property**

Kiana Till has been collaborating with the owner of Lot 13 Block 7 on Keyes Point. For the past two years (2022-2024), Kiana has had hands-on experience working with the owner on finishing

this project. Through her experience, she gained an understanding of the Keyes Point community and operations. She learned that the services provided to Keyes Point property owners are consistent, more affordable, and predictable than any other community on Lake Clark. The owner is willing to hold the property till the end of summer when we can reassess our organization's fundraising trajectory and updated timeline. The owner is a good friend willing to provide us with some time.

Owning Keyes Point property is important because it will grant us airport rights to a long gravel airstrip that commercial services operate on. This airstrip can be easily accessed via land from Koksetna Lodge by four-wheeler or snowmachine during “freeze up” and “thaw out” periods. Keyes Point has reliable access to fuel and waste services. It offers us a significant shop space for maintenance, fully equipped with tools. It has a Hewescraft (U.S. Coast Guard Certified Boat, eight passengers) and a shed. It also comes with a 1998 Ford Ranger Truck with reasonably low miles. The owner also has a dozer and a skid steer with tracks, auger bits, forks, and a bucket to accompany the purchase. There is also a small cabin where guests would not be allowed to stay (current HOA rule, unless it was an emergency) that could be used as office space, winter storage, and a staff boarding house. The cabin has a kitchen, a wood stove, a washer, a bathroom, a shower, and a built-in capacity for solar-powered electricity. Both the shop and cabin are currently powered by a large diesel generator.

## **Keyes Point Property Maintenance & Repair**

The Keyes Point Property is tax-free. There is no need for immediate maintenance at the Keyes Point property. However, there are a few points to keep in mind. The homeowners' association charges an annual airport, waste, and fuel service fee of about \$300. There is a corner of the shop and a section of the outside of the shop that needs to be repaired and finished. The outside of the boat shed still needs to be completed. Maintaining the Ford Ranger truck, boat, skid steer, and dozer will also be a small cost. If we'd like to use the skid steer and dozer at Koksetna, we must barge them over via Leon Alsworth. We'd like to convert to a renewable energy system, so there would be an upfront cost to install solar or other renewable energy systems, which will offset the annual cost of fossil fuels in the long term.

## **Program's Budget**

Insurance:

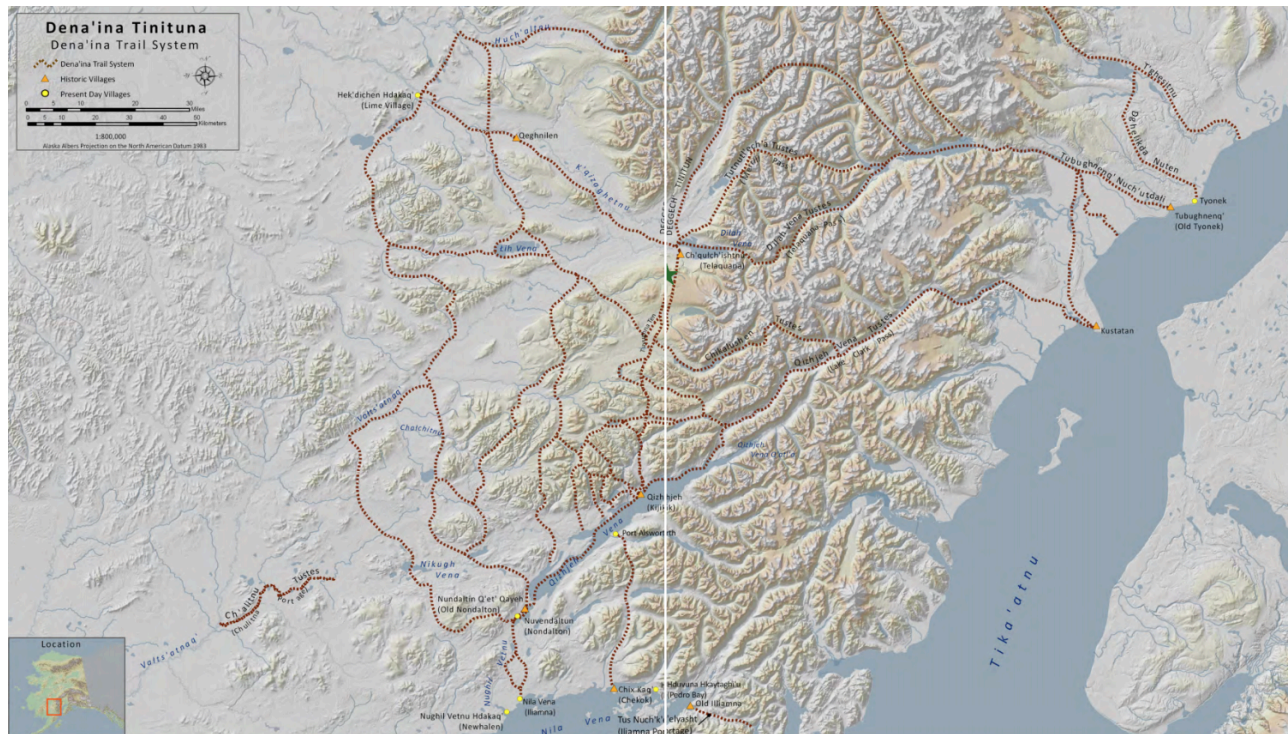
Quk'Taz'un Camp: We currently have \$20,000 and plan to host the 2024 Quk' Taz' un camp. We are purchasing and shipping out a woodchipper and stump grinder for campsites and trails.

Kayaking: We currently own ten kayaks.

Hiking and Camping: We have limited camping supplies but enough to start.

Trail Running: The trails we plan to renew will be meaningful and educational. When we create these trails, we will use the Dena'ina language.

We intend to continue Karen's work; the map below is one of many throughout *Dena'ina Elnena a Celebration*. (Keep in mind the scale of the map below).



[Evanoff, K. (n.d.). NPS history. <http://www.nps.history.com/publications/lacl/denaina-elnena.pdf>]

Greenhouse & Medicinal Plant Gardening: With the purchase of Koksetna Wilderness Lodge, we will have an excellent start for this program. Qizh'eh Vena will collect plants and seeds this summer for next spring (2025).

Skiing: We have very little ski equipment available at this time. Skiing is a program we need to find additional funding or partnerships.

Snowshoeing: While we still have Dena'ina elders who know and are willing to pass on the art of snowshoe craftsmanship, this program has outstanding time-limited potential.

## Employment Budget

Professional accounting, taxes, and IRS reporting services: Our Board of Directors who volunteer their time have kept all our financial documents. Hopefully, when the economic flow starts

running through our organization, we will have the capacity to hire a professional to maintain our books, taxes, and IRS reporting documents.

Grant writer: We have about \$2,000 left in our account from the 2021 business competition. We are actively searching for help with a \$2,000 budget. Securing the lodge is our top priority.

Transportation: Commercial flights to Lake Clark from Anchorage average \$500 round-trip. The average cost for fuel is \$8.5/gallon. Through grants via the National Park Service & Nondalton Tribal Council, we have coordinated transportation costs for the 2024 Quk'Taz'un camp.

Manual Labor: Through grants from the National Park Service & Nondalton Tribal Council, we have coordinated small stipends for manual labor-intensive jobs.

Intellectual Services: Through grants via the National Park Service & Nondalton Tribal Council, we have coordinated travel, food, and small checks for elders & teachers' intellectual services.

## **BUSINESS MODEL AND ENVIRONMENT**

The Lake Clark Business Environment: We have observed the Lake Clark business environment as aggressive and predominantly caucasian. Our organization would bring a cross-cultural atmosphere rooted in Dena'ina values, providing educational opportunities for all cultural backgrounds on Dena'ina land.

Established Businesses in Lake Clark:



*(Red dots are rapidly developing business environments. Blue dots are places that urgently need cultural protection and where Qizhjih Vena will operate in 2024).*

Port Alsworth is currently the largest community on Lake Clark. Dice Bay and Keyes Point also show rapid development due to a limited and competitive land market in Port Alsworth. Qizhjih (Kijik) was once the largest Native village in the area, when contact hit the people of Qizhjih were forced to move down the lake due to devastating epidemics that wiped out the Native population. Many people from the village of Nondalton have ancestral ties to the old villages of Qizhjih and Chulitna Bay. These places are considered sacred and are important to protect for the next generation.

- ★ **Tanalian Bible Camp** operates through the church located in Port Alsworth, it is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Tanalian Bible Camp exists to build up the Body of Christ in rural Alaska by providing an opportunity for evangelism, discipleship, retreats, and Christian fellowship through camping, conferences, retreats, and biblical education. This organization currently offers the only other summer camp and leadership services for the Lake Clark area youth.

Link to website: <https://www.tanalianbiblecamp.org/about/>

- ★ **Samaritan's Purse ("SP")** is a 501(c)(3) nondenominational evangelical Christian organization providing spiritual and physical aid to hurting people around the world. The organization serves the Church worldwide to promote the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Franklin Graham is the president and CEO of "SP".

Link to website: <https://www.samaritanspurse.org/>

- ★ **Samaritan Lodge Alaska- Operation Heal Our Patriots** is a 501(3)(3) operation that welcomes 10 U.S. military couples each week for 16 weeks to experience a time of relationship building, spiritual refreshment, and physical renewal.

Link to website:

<https://www.samaritanspurse.org/education-2/operation-heal-our-patriots/>

- ★ **Wilderness Pro** is a beautifully handcrafted lodge in Dice Bay. Their company offers lodging and activities for small groups visiting Lake Clark.

Link to website: <https://mywildernesspro.com/home/adventures/>

- ★ **Stonewood Lodge Alaska** is currently up for sale for 3.4 million dollars. It is located in Dice Bay, which used to be Native-owned allotment land but is now rapidly developing into a non-Native community.

Link to website(s): <https://stonewoodexpeditions.com/project/stonewood-lodge/>

<https://www.remax.com/ak/port-alsworth/home-details/12-b6-lake-clark-port-alsworth-ak-99653/9798326513898444167/M00000001/23-789>

- ★ **The Farm Lodge Resort** offers unique Alaska wilderness tours and outstanding lodging accommodations.

Link to website: <https://www.thefarmlodge.com/>

- ★ **Lake Clark Air** was the first air taxi service provided to Lake Clark. Lake Clark Air offers regular service between Anchorage, Merrill Field, and the airports in the Lake Clark and Iliamna area and charters to destinations throughout the state. The owners of Lake Clark Air also run the Farm Lodge. They own most of the land in Port Alsworth and rent to other larger entities.

Link to website: [https://lakeclarkair.com/air\\_service.html](https://lakeclarkair.com/air_service.html)

- ★ **Lake & Peninsula Airlines** offer regularly scheduled flights throughout the greater Southwest Alaska Lake area, Kuskokwim, and Yukon regions- and charters beyond.

Link to website: <https://lakeandpenair.com/>

Market Demands: Travel & Tourism is the leading industry providing economic revenue for the communities of Lake Clark.

Target Market: Leaders, educators, and inspired individuals within and beyond the Dena'ina community.

Marketing Strategy: Sharing the vision with individuals and forming partnerships with larger organizations & entities. We also will launch social platforms and encourage influencers to help our center.

## **TIMELINE**

### **2024**

Winter (December-February):

- Launch & Share Website
- Create & Share Strategic Plan PDF on the Website
- Fundraise for Koksenta Lodge Purchase
- Board Planning Retreat

- Further develop plans for 2024 Quk'Taz' un Camp

Spring (March-April):

- Share Website
- Share the organization's vision
- Fundraise for the Purchase of Koksetna Lodge
- Prepare for the 2024 Quk'Taz'un camp
- Gather seeds

Summer (May-Aug):

- Share the organization's vision
- Host the 2024 Quk'Taz'un camp
- Find the rest of the funds needed for the Koksetna Lodge Purchase
- Purchase Koksetna Lodge (**JUNE 30th 2024**)
- Gather seeds
- Put up salmon

Fall (Sep-November):

- Thank Donors.
- Develop a maintenance and repair plan for the property to secure a realistic fundraising goal for our budget.
- Further, fund programs and write an operational spreadsheet (cash flow) for our offerings.
- Work towards purchasing the Keyes Point Property
- Gather seeds
- Pick berries
- Moose Hunt

## **IMPACT**

Our organization supports the "Land Back" and "Defend the Sacred" Movements.

We are an Indigenous Majority, Women-led organization.

Our programs are grounded in the Dena'ina values of sustainability and respect. We see our offerings for people of all ages and cultural backgrounds. Quk'Taz'un leadership camp is essential to continue, for youth (ages 12-25).

We aim to promote health, well-being, and Dena'ina education in the Lake Clark community.



We will promote the interrelationship between people, the community, and the natural environment.

Qizjeh Vena, Alaska will be the first Indigenous-led travel & educational enterprise on Lake Clark. This will be the first time in roughly 100 years that the Dena'ina people will have a large (modern) presence in the "big lake" area since the people had to leave the old village due to epidemics brought by European explorers. It will be a historic moment to come around "full circle" and provide offerings rooted in Dena'ina values and culture for all ages and backgrounds.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

We intend to maintain a relationship with the Lake Clark National Park Service. Karen will be retiring from the Department of the Interior as a Cultural Anthropologist on July, 2nd 2024. We also intend to participate in a conservation easement for Chulitna Bay.

As part of our long-term broader vision, we plan to offer a private commercial transport service through our organization since commercial aviation capacity through local airlines is getting to a "maxed out" phase during the summer season and is not as reliable or predictable in the off-season. One of our advisory members, Chase Rodriguez, will pursue a commercial transport pilot license. Kiana Till is studying to earn her private pilot license and is open-minded about pursuing a deeper knowledge of rural Alaska aviation.

We plan to work towards developing relationships with gear companies to promote, test, share, and, potentially even sell their products!

We are open to partnerships with Corporations and other organizations who believe in and align with our mission and vision.

We are willing to negotiate agreements and partnerships with corporations & entities for hosting board retreats, conferences, culture camps, classes, work training, traditional healing, and more.

## **CONTACT US**

Karen Evanoff- Lead Director      [tavaview@gmail.com](mailto:tavaview@gmail.com)

Fawn Silas- Director      [fawnsilas@gmail.com](mailto:fawnsilas@gmail.com)

Kiana Till- Director      [tiedie4@gmail.com](mailto:tiedie4@gmail.com)