



Tanana
Chiefs
Conference

Setsoo Yeh' - My Grandma's House
"We are the ones we've been waiting for!"

Youth Share Stories of Trauma and Resilience at 570-Mile "Healing Journey" Kickoff

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Fairbanks, AK -- With the goal of ending the vicious cycles of child abuse, trauma and suicide throughout Alaska, dozens of Alaskans from all around the state will embark on a 570-mile "Healing Journey" starting on Friday, June 7 at 5pm at the Chief David Salmon Tribal Hall.

Twelve children and youth ages 9 to 20 will lead the 570-mile Interior roadtrip. They've flown in from communities around the state, including the villages of Twin Hills, Bristol Bay, Dillingham, Kotzebue, Napakiak, Hooper Bay, Goodnews Bay, Aniak, St. Marys, Rampart, Tanana, and Bethel.

A silent auction offering handmade Alaska Native artwork, crafts and foods will be featured at the event, as well as Indian tacos and a 50/50 raffle.

This is the second "Healing Journey" to raise awareness about the tragically high rates of child molestation and abuse in Alaska, and the trauma and repeated cycles of abuse that follow, said Cynthia Erickson, Executive Director of Setsoo Yeh' -- My Grandma's House -- which is hosting the event along with Tanana Chiefs Conference and the Fairbanks Wellness Coalition.

"Children are our most precious resource," Erickson said. "We are only as healthy as the generation that we are raising. If you hit, our children hit. If you misuse alcohol and drugs, they will. If you sexually abuse, they will. We must fight harder to protect our children, that they may never experience abuse and repeat these cycles."

The youth will offer personal testimonies at the kickoff event on June 7, telling their own stories of trauma and resilience. Trauma counselors and representatives from addiction, suicide, mental health and shelter services will be available at the event to provide resources and help for community members.

"Each of the children who are taking part in our "Healing Journey" are doing this to help protect the future children of Alaska," Erickson said, adding that the group has collectively

experienced four suicides in recent months. “It will take time, but we will never give up the fight for a better future for our children.”

Last summer, Cynthia, 11 children and Dr. John DeRuyter -- a mental health therapist -- traveled by plane, bus and boat from Fairbanks to the villages of Minto, Tanana, Ruby, and Galena on their first “Healing Journey.” This week, Cynthia and Dr. DeRuyter will lead the young group to Tok, Dot Lake, Healy Lake, Tetlin, Northway and Nenana, where they will form talking circles to work through their experiences -- and like last summer, dance traditionally, pray together, and talk some more.

The mission of My Grandma’s House (Setsoo Yeh’) is to expose the issues with child abuse and neglect that too many Alaskan children face today, which impacts Alaska’s suicide epidemic. The nonprofit has been honored by the Alaska Federation of Natives and received the 2014 Alaska Volunteer of the Year Award. Founder Cynthia Erickson, who resides in Tanana, Alaska, also serves on the Alaska Suicide Prevention Council and the Alaska State Commission for Human Rights.

For more information or to donate, please go to: mygrandmashouseak.com/the-healing-journey/ or visit Facebook at www.facebook.com/mygrandmashouseak/. The event is at the Chief David Salmon Tribal Hall, 111 Clay Street in Fairbanks, AK at 5pm.

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