



NATIVE VILLAGE OF KOTZEBUE

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Tribal Government serving the Iñupiaq people of Qikiqtaġruk.

“FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE”

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Partnerships Work To Create A Space For Young Learners, Future Leaders

Kotzebue, Alaska – August 22, 2024 – The Native Village of Kotzebue Nikaitchuat Iļisaġviat Iñupiaq Language Immersion School and Early Learning Center is destined for a new home. On May 24, 2024, after uncontested public hearings, the City of Kotzebue approved the sale of a parcel of land to the NVOK in the amount of \$170,000.00.

The 19,000 square feet of land, located at 4th & Lagoon near the Ashley Johnson-Barr Park, will accommodate the new construction of a two-story facility designed to house both the school and administrative offices. The design combining classrooms and office space allows learning, curriculum development and day-to-day business to be centrally located. Currently we have an RFP requesting bids to fill the property.

“It’s the strength of our community—people coming together with a common purpose—that’s turned this vision into reality,” says Christina Hensley, Executive Director of the Native Village of Kotzebue.

“This vision, which our tribal leadership have had for decades, is finally coming to life, and we’re excited to see it happen. I want to acknowledge the collective efforts of everyone involved for their dedication to nurturing our future leaders.”

The City of Kotzebue played an essential role in facilitating the land sale, and this project has also been supported by two significant grants awarded earlier this year.

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Nikaitchuat Iļisaġvait serves children 3 through 8 years-of-age. Its mission is to instill the knowledge of Iļupiat identity, dignity, and respect, while cultivating a lifelong love of learning. Nikaitchuat Iļisaġvait is the only Iļupiaq immersion school in the state of Alaska and the United States. The school opened in 1998 with an enthusiastic staff of three teachers and 20 students. Today, Nikaitchuat Iļisaġvait has served more than 130 families. Annually, they average more than 300 parent volunteer hours, 75 community volunteer hours, and 75 elder volunteer hours, each seeking to instill within local youth and the community the importance of revitalizing and preserving the region’s identity and culture.

“The dedication of the staff, families, and volunteers is truly inspiring and essential in nurturing the next generation with a deep sense of identity and respect for our heritage.”

This Agreement is also supported by the Native Village of Kotzebue Resolution 24-044, dated May 5, 2024, a copy of which is available at city hall through the public records department. Once the new construction is complete, the current building will revert back to Manliiaq Association.

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