



NATIVE VILLAGE OF KOTZEBUE

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Tribal Government serving the Iñupiaq people of Qikiqtaġruk.

ATTN: Arctic Sounder

In response to the article published in *The Arctic Sounder* titled “City of Kotzebue Grapples with Budget and Infrastructure Challenges” by Desiree Hagen (KOTZ) on January 16, 2025, the Native Village of Kotzebue would like to offer clarification and context regarding our role in the Cape Blossom road project and our broader efforts to support the community.

As a federally recognized Tribe, the Native Village of Kotzebue holds Tribal sovereignty, which includes the authority to act in the best interests of our people and our shared community. With this responsibility in mind, we have been actively partnering with the City of Kotzebue on the Cape Blossom road project. Recognizing the importance of this infrastructure for our region, we are leveraging our unique relationships with federal partners to secure funding and resources that may not be directly accessible to the City. In addition, the Tribe is pursuing funding for the critical bridge at the current road’s endpoint—a vital piece of this long-envisioned project that dates back to planning efforts by past and present leaders since the 1980s.

While the Tribe and City work closely together, it’s essential to acknowledge that we operate as separate entities, each with distinct responsibilities and priorities. Our collaboration is rooted in mutual respect and a shared commitment to the well-being of Kotzebue, allowing us to effectively address challenges while maintaining our respective areas of focus.

We also wish to address a point raised in the article regarding the Tribe’s new facility. While this project is significant, we want to emphasize that it does not detract from our ongoing commitment to collaboration with the City of Kotzebue. Unfortunately, we were not contacted for comment, which might have provided additional context. Nevertheless, our dedication to community efforts is evident through recent collaborations, including our joint response to two disasters in 2024.

Most recently, the Tribe distributed 150 countertop Aquasana water filtration units to Elders aged 65 and older in Kotzebue, underscoring our commitment to the health and well-being of our community. This initiative is one of many efforts that highlight the Tribe’s leadership and service.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide clarity and reaffirm our commitment to working in partnership with the City and other organizations to support the long-term well-being of Kotzebue and its people.

Best regards

Christina Hensley

Better Life, Greater Security

The Qikiqtaġrunmiut, forever sovereign, will live our Iñupiaq way of life for all generations.