



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 27, 2017

By Senior Master Sgt. Paul Mann, 168th Wing

Alaska National Guard

Release: 17-044

Clear opens its doors for Alaskan Natives

EIELSON AIR FORCE BASE, Alaska — The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines neighbors as one living or located near another, as in next-door neighbors or friends and neighbors, but does not define the distance. Separated by only 24 miles, Clear Air Force Station and Nenana, Alaska, are neighbors spending time getting reacquainted.

Clear AFS, Alaska, home to the 168th Wing's, 213th Space Warning Squadron and the 13th Space Warning Squadron, whose parent unit is the 21st Space Wing, Peterson Air Force Base, Colo., plays a role in relationship building between the U.S. government and Alaska Native tribal governments, which is why Clear leadership invited the Nenana Native Council out to the base earlier this month.

"Tribal relations are part of the Air Force's responsibilities, and as Guardsmen we are uniquely suited to support this responsibility," said Lt. Col. John Oberst, 213th SWS commander.

Clear and the NNC have had a formal relationship for almost ten years, but the base and Alaska Natives have been neighbors for almost 60 years. Leadership has changed several times in the past ten years, so the meeting held on July 12th reestablished the formal relationship and allowed Clear's newest leaders to meet their Nenana counterparts.

"We are doing these meetings all across the Air Force," said Pamela Miller, Cultural Resources Media Manager for the Air Force Civil Engineer Center, Peterson AFB, Colorado.

Air Force Instruction 90-2002, Air Force Interactions with Federally-Recognized Tribes, provides Air Force personnel with the information needed in identifying roles and responsibilities, designating an Installation Tribal Liaison Officer, and creating an Installation Tribal Relations Plan.

"Following guidance of a new Air Force instruction, [we're] helping installations move back toward better tribal consultations and relationship building practices," Miller said.

The meeting, followed by a cookout luncheon, brought together several members of the Nenana Native Council, Air Force and Air National Guard leaders from Clear, civilian employees of the Air Force, and a tribal consultation specialist from the Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands at Colorado State University.

-more-

-2-

Several members of the NNC expressed their gratitude for being invited and welcomed onto Clear, and remarked how excited they were to receive the invitation. During the open discussion period of the meeting, 1st Chief Donald Charlie invited the Clear leadership to Nenana and their community meeting.

“When I responded to the invitation to come out here, I used the word historic in my response,” said 1st Chief Charlie.

“Although Nenana and Clear have been partners for a long time, our backdoor neighbors,” said Charlie, “I don’t in recent memory remember any kind of meeting like this between the tribe and the personnel at Clear. So that’s why I called it a historic meeting, and I think it should go down as one.”

Several personnel from Clear attended the Nenana Community Safety-Village Pride event on the 13th of July, shared a meal and heard the latest news from various villages within the tribe.

For Alaskan Natives, storytelling is an important and vibrant tradition, and perhaps these meeting, these new beginnings will be incorporated in stories for future generations.

###

1. **Attached pdf** includes story and selection of low-resolution photos for viewing on screen.
2. **DVIDS** link includes story and selected full-resolution, free downloadable images. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.) <https://dvidshub.net/r/w84sc7>



Willie Lord and Victor Lord, members of the Nenana Native Council, listen as Lt. Col. John Oberst, commander 213th Space Warning Squadron, Clear Air Force Station, Alaska, welcomes the members of the Council to a tribal relations meeting at Clear, July 12, 2017. Air National Guard and Air Force leaders invited the Council members to the base in order to reestablish relations between the Alaskan Natives and the interior-Alaska base, located 24 miles from Nenana. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman 1st Class Amber Bowers/Released)



Kane Evan and Victor Lord, members of the Nenana Native Council, Nenana, Alaska, talk with Master Sgt. Travis Oaks, quality assurance for the 213th Space Warning Squadron, Clear Air Force Station, Alaska, during a break at the tribal relations meeting at Clear Air Force Station, Alaska, July 12, 2017. Evan and Lord, along with several other members of the Nenana Native Council, were invited to the meeting by Air Force and Air National Guard personnel in order to reestablish relations with the Alaskan Natives. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. Paul Mann/Released)