

# RAVEN'S CIRCLE

SHAREHOLDER AND DESCENDANT NEWSLETTER  
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2023



CIRI CEO-elect Swami Iyer



CIRI President-elect Sarah Lukin

## SWAMI IYER HIRED AS CEO, SARAH LUKIN PROMOTED TO PRESIDENT

CIRI is pleased to welcome new leadership! In October, the CIRI Board of Directors announced the appointment of Swami Iyer as CEO and promotion of Chief Strategy Officer Sarah Lukin (Alutiiq) to the role of president.

Swami began his new role as CEO-elect on Oct. 16, and Sarah began serving as president-elect effective Oct. 10. They will begin their respective tenures as CEO and president on Jan. 1, 2024.

Current CIRI President and CEO Sophie Minich will remain with the company through Dec. 31 to aid the transition in leadership.

A veteran of the U.S. Air Force, Swami brings 25 years' experience in multi-billion-dollar international and domestic companies and projects. He comes to CIRI from

Virgin Galactic where, as president of Aerospace Systems, he helped lead and support the design and build of current and future vehicle fleets.

As CEO, Swami will manage the overall direction of CIRI, set long-term strategy goals, and serve as the primary point of contact between the Board and the business. He holds Bachelor and Master of Science and Engineering degrees from the University of Michigan and a second master's degree in flight-test engineering from the U.S. Air Force Test Pilot School.

As CIRI's chief strategy officer for the last two-plus years, Sarah has played a key role in identifying long- and short-term strategies and providing strategic

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 3**

### SAVE THE DATE: 2024 NEXT GEN DAY

Shareholders and Descendants ages 10-17 are invited to apply to Next Gen Day, which will be held Jan. 15 in Anchorage with a virtual option available.

PAGE 4



### 2023 CIRI ART CONTEST

Winning artwork depicting the theme "IN the CIRI Family."

PAGE 6



### UPDATE: ALASKA NATIVE VIETNAM VETERANS LAND ALLOTMENT PROGRAM

CIRI and partners are working to advocate for the fulfillment of land transfers.

PAGE 9



Alexandra J. "A.J." McClanahan was CIRI's historian 1998-2008. Photo by Kevin Bennett.

## A CONVERSATION WITH FORMER CIRI HISTORIAN A.J. McCLANAHAN

Alexandra J. "A.J." McClanahan was CIRI's historian for a decade, beginning in 1998. While at CIRI she wrote several books, including "A Reference in Time: Alaska Native History Day by Day" and "Alaska Scrapbook: Moments in Alaska History, 1816-1998."

During a visit to Anchorage earlier this year, the Raven's Circle sat down with A.J. to discuss how she got started, her time at CIRI, and her passion for Alaska Native culture and history.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 5**



## SEEKING CULTURALLY ROOTED, COMMUNITY- MINDED LEADERS TO JOIN THE CIRI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE NOV. 27

Voting CIRI Shareholders age 18+ are invited to apply to the CIRI Board of Directors. Board application materials will be available Nov. 27 at [ciri.com/board-election](http://ciri.com/board-election). Application materials are due Jan. 8, 2024. For the most current information, visit the CIRI website and follow us on social media.



## 2023 CIRI GOLF CLASSIC RAISES \$90,000

On Aug. 4, CIRI hosted its 39th annual CIRI Golf Classic to benefit two nonprofit organizations: Boys and Girls Clubs of Alaska and Facing Foster Care in Alaska. Thanks to participants and generous corporate sponsors, the Golf Classic raised approximately \$90,000 for this year's proceed recipients.

CIRI would especially like to thank Platinum sponsor Weidner Apartment Homes and our Silver and Major sponsors: Alaska Airlines, Alaska Communications, Alaska Glacier Lodge, Baird, Bitterblue Inc., Calista Corp., Doyon, HighGold, Hilcorp, Kodiak Brown Bear Center, Marsh & McLennan Agency, North Wind Group and Pape-Dawson Engineers.



## A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT AND CEO

As my time as your president and CEO comes to a close, I want to express my sincere gratitude to each and every one of you. This role has been a profound journey of self-discovery as I connected with my culture and heritage in ways I never anticipated. This connection has enriched my professional life and instilled a sense of pride and belonging that I carry with me every day. It is a reminder that our cultural identity is a source of strength and wisdom; CIRI has not only enriched my own life, but enabled me to contribute to the well-being of the community that has given me so much.

My 30-year journey with CIRI—my last 10 as your president and CEO—has been filled with challenges and triumphs, setbacks and growth. I have had the privilege of working with Elders, Shareholders and Descendants, and alongside incredible colleagues, learning from mentors and making lifelong friends. It has truly been a profound part of my life's story.

In my next chapter, I will remain committed to the betterment of our region, the place I call home—whether it's through volunteering, mentoring the next generation, or participating in community-improvement projects and initiatives.

While moving on from CIRI is bittersweet, I have the utmost confidence in Swami and Sarah, who have the full support of the CIRI Board of Directors and are joined by an experienced leadership team. Their respective records of accomplishments and innovative thinking will undoubtedly steer the company toward new heights. As a Shareholder, I am excited about the fresh perspectives they bring to the table and am confident that this transition marks a promising new chapter in CIRI's journey.

I look forward to the future, whatever it may hold for me, with the same enthusiasm and determination that has driven me throughout my career. Let us embrace the future together.

It has been my privilege and honor to serve as CIRI's president and CEO for the past 10 years. Thank you for your support and kindness. I remain a proud member of the CIRI family.

Sincerely,

Sophie Minich  
President and CEO



## NEW CIRI LEADERSHIP, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

leadership for the company. She has more than 20 years' experience working with Indigenous businesses across the U.S. and Canada. As president of CIRI, she will focus on the day-to-day operations of the company and ensure CIRI's diverse Alaska Native cultures, programs and values remain at the forefront of all we do.

Sarah is Alutiiq and hails from Port Lions, a remote village on Kodiak Island. She is a shareholder of Koniag, Inc. and Afognak Native Corporation and an enrolled Tribal member of the Native Villages of Afognak and Port Lions. She holds bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Alaska and is a graduate of Alaska Pacific University's Alaska Native Executive Leadership Program.

## SWAMI IYER

**Where were you born and raised, and where do you currently reside:** Born in New York and raised in Florida. I currently reside in Great Falls, Virginia. After the first of the year, I will divide my time between Alaska and Virginia.

**Family:** Wife and three daughters—middle-school-aged twins and our oldest is in college.

**What inspired you to pursue a career with CIRI:** As giving back is important to me, I had initially thought I might want to work for a nonprofit. But CIRI is the ultimate cool job—a for-profit corporation with a diverse portfolio of high-quality operating and financial assets that contributes to the economic well-being of its Shareholders and their Descendants. It's the best of all worlds.

I've worked and traveled all over the world, but I'm most excited to learn about Alaska Native culture. I would love to learn an Alaska Native language. I'll be spending about 75% of my time in Alaska, and I just want to immerse myself and learn as much as I can.

**What is a professional achievement you are proud of:** I am a third-generation U.S. military veteran, of which I am very proud. I'm retired from the U.S. Air Force, where I most recently served as the South Asia and Oceania chief under the Deputy Undersecretary of International Affairs. I

earned multiple aerial and combat medals, as well as two humanitarian service medals.

**What is your favorite quote or words to live by:** "Be the change you wish to see in the world." The only way to effect change is through our actions.

**What is something that had a profound impact on your career or life:** My father began his life in India at a level of poverty that is difficult to comprehend. Both my parents were orphans, and my father was physically disabled. Both were eldest children and had to raise their siblings. My mom was a night-shift nurse for 30 years while my dad worked during the day. He earned two engineering degrees because the U.S. didn't recognize his first degree from India. My parents—their example and the work ethic they instilled—has had the most profound impact on my life, much more than any education or training.

**What nonprofit or community organizations are closest to your heart:** I serve on the advisory board of New Majority Capital, which works to increase the number of under-represented business owners. I make a point of investing in minority- and veteran-owned businesses—time, money and mentorship.

**Favorite books, music and movies:** I listen to a wide variety of music but especially enjoy hard rock. "Jonathan Livingston Seagull" by Richard Bach is my favorite book, and my favorite movie would have to be "The Right Stuff." I also love anything sci-fi.

**Favorite pastimes and hobbies:** Spending time with my family, travel, chess, poker, and flying planes

## SARAH LUKIN

**Where were you born and raised, and where do you currently reside:** I was born in Kodiak, Alaska, the nearest hospital to my village of Port Lions. I grew up in Port Lions and spent a few years in Grand Junction, Colorado. I currently reside in Anchorage.

**Family:** Husband, Jeff; son, Kadin, age 22; and daughter, Kiya, age 17. We also have three dogs and one cat.

 CONTINUED ON PAGE 9



# BOARD CORNER

It's a time of transition here at CIRI. On Dec. 31, Sophie Minich will step down after an incredible 30-year career with our company, her last 10 as our president and CEO.

While at the helm of CIRI, Sophie helped restructure our company to meet new objectives, boost efficiencies and increase profits. Over the last decade, our net income has nearly doubled, and annual distributions per share have achieved their highest amount in CIRI's history.

On behalf of your Board of Directors, I want to thank Sophie for leading our company with integrity, foresight and compassion. While she will be stepping down as our president and CEO, she remains a valued member of our CIRI family.

The Board launched a search for Sophie's successor this spring. I am pleased to announce that after a diligent and thorough search process, we have hired Swami Iyer as our CEO. In addition, Sarah Lukin has been promoted from CIRI's chief strategy officer to the role of president. We are confident that Swami and Sarah will successfully lead CIRI in this new chapter.

As we evaluated how to keep CIRI's operations, investment portfolio, values and community strong and sustainable for years to come, the Board ultimately decided to split our leadership into two positions: CEO and president.

We are confident that, with support from CIRI's executive leadership and team of talented employees, Swami will lead CIRI into its next phase of growth and build on the successes and initiatives already in place. The promotion of Sarah to president strengthens CIRI's business and leadership continuity.

This dual-leadership role aligns CIRI with other Alaska Native regional corporations that employ similar organizational structures. This change will help CIRI foster growth and positively impact the services available to our Shareholders, Descendants and the 60,000 Alaska Native and American Indian people that reside within our region.

As always, your 15-member Alaska Native Board, Swami and Sarah will keep CIRI's diverse Alaska Native cultures and values at the forefront, with the goal of building a strong future for CIRI for generations to come.

 CONTINUED ON PAGE 11



# NOVEMBER IS NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

During National Native American Heritage Month, we honor the profound impact Indigenous peoples continue to have in shaping our nation; celebrate the rich and diverse cultures, traditions and histories of our people; and work to build healthier, stronger and more resilient Native communities.



# SEAFOOD CHOWDER

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pound halibut, diced (may substitute cod or haddock)
- 1 fillet (5 to 7 ounces) salmon, diced
- 10 ounces canned clams, juice reserved
- 2/3 cup salted butter
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 4 tablespoons seafood or poultry base (Better than Bullion is a popular brand)
- 3 cups water
- 3 cups heavy cream
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 teaspoons chopped garlic
- 1 can hominy (may substitute corn)
- 2 potatoes, diced
- 2 carrots, sliced
- 3 stalks celery, diced
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 2 teaspoons dried basil
- 2 teaspoons dried thyme
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Optional: fresh parsley for garnish

## DIRECTIONS:

1. In a small saucepan, boil the potatoes until tender, about 10 minutes.
2. While the potatoes are boiling, in large soup pot, melt butter and sauté onion, celery and carrots over medium heat until onions are translucent, about 5-7 minutes.
3. Whisk in flour to make a roux and cook down for 5 minutes.
4. Add the water, seafood base, halibut, salmon and clam juice (save the clams for later).
5. Add the potatoes, hominy, chili powder, basil, thyme, garlic, and salt and pepper to the pot. Cook on medium heat, stirring often, until fish is cooked.
6. Add heavy cream and clams. Cook 10 minutes, stirring often.
7. Garnish with fresh parsley and freshly ground black pepper and serve.

Serving suggestions: Pair with fresh sourdough bread and a garden or Caesar salad.

*Thank you to the Alaska Native Heritage Center for this recipe—we appreciate your partnership!*

# SAVE THE DATE: NEXT GEN DAY



## Mark your calendar: 2024 Next Gen Day will be held Monday, Jan. 15

CIRI Shareholders and Descendants ages 10-17 are invited to:

- Learn about CIRI and future opportunities available to CIRI youth.
- Receive career and post-secondary education advice (ages 14-17).
- Enjoy traditional Alaska Native foods.
- Engage in Alaska Native cultural projects.
- Play games and win prizes.
- All attendees will receive a custom culture box!

2024 Next Gen Day will include in-person and virtual options—apply no matter where you live! The application deadline is Friday, Jan. 5.



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT  
[www.ciri.com/shareholders-descendants/programs/next-gen-day/](http://www.ciri.com/shareholders-descendants/programs/next-gen-day/)

**You're from Nebraska originally. How did you come to Alaska?**

I was working at the Omaha World Herald as a legislative reporter. My focus was on water resources. Water is basically Nebraska's oil, and the fight over resources in Nebraska and Alaska is very similar.

A reporter from the Anchorage Times sent an ad to all the press corps. He had been covering the legislature for Juneau and was looking for someone to replace him. I saw the ad and thought, that sounds interesting.

When I came to Alaska, they had filled the legislative-reporter position. The editor and I talked back and forth, and they ended up creating a position covering federal government agencies. This was in 1982, and the Alaska Board of Fisheries and Game was in the process of adopting regulations to create a rural subsistence priority. I started covering Fish and Game board meetings, and that's what led to me focusing on Alaska Native issues for the Anchorage Times.

**Where did your passion for Alaska Native people and culture and history come from?**

When I covered the Fish and Game board meetings, I remember there were Yup'ik Elders testifying in their Native language with a translator. And I was just blown away, because where else in the world would you see this? They were very passionate about subsistence rights.

Covering the subsistence issue, I went out to Quinhagak and Tyonek and a few other Native villages. And for some reason they welcomed me, a non-Native, with open arms. It was such a gift.

**How did you land the position as CIRI's historian?**

I was hired by (former CIRI President and CEO) Carl Marrs in 1998. I don't even remember where I met Carl [laughs]; I've just always known him.

Before I worked at CIRI, I had written "Our Stories, Our Lives: Twenty-Three Elders

of the Cook Inlet Region Talk About their Lives," so I did have that background.

When Carl hired me, he said, "I really want materials on ANCSA (the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act)." I went to the office of Sen. Ted Stevens, and they didn't have any materials on ANCSA. I was shocked. Later, I found out in speaking to (former Sealaska President and CEO) Byron Mallott that the Department of Law had everything related to ANCSA, and that Byron had copied it for Sealaska. We had at least three copies made for CIRI.

**What was your process for digging into records and finding all this information?**

The original idea for "A Reference in Time" was we wanted a key event in Native history—and, by extension, Alaska history—for every day of the year.

My husband (former Alaska Department of Natural Resources Commissioner) John Shively came to Alaska in 1965. He had worked for NANA, RurAL CAP and the Alaska Federation of Natives. He had a lot of materials himself.

With John's materials, and the stuff from Byron, and because I'd been a reporter, I had a lot of materials of my own. When we started, we didn't know if we could find events for every day of the year. But once we started sifting through information, there was so much. In fact, we had a hard time narrowing it down.

None of the books I worked on were assigned to me; there was no template. I do remember (former CIRI Chief Operating Officer) Mark Kroloff saying to me at one point, "You know, A.J., we didn't really expect you to do quite this much." But I loved it. The best I could ever hope for was to work for CIRI.

**What have you seen that's changed since your time with CIRI until now?**

I think CIRI is putting much more focus on the younger generation. They didn't invite Descendants to attend Annual Meetings unaccompanied until 2022, and now CIRI is really making an effort to involve young

Shareholders and Descendants. It's wonderful to see.

I've also seen CIRI embrace Dena'ina as the culture of the corporation and the region. When Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) opened its new building in 2005, the original idea was to have all Alaska Native cultures featured. And Aaron (Leggett) and I were working together at that point. We were in a meeting with (CITC President and CEO) Gloria O'Neill, and I said, "Gloria, I really think it would be better to have a focus on Dena'ina, because this is Dena'ina country," and she agreed 100%.

**When did you leave Alaska?**

It was 2008. I did not want to leave, but I had been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and I was having problems. My daughter Natasha, just before her junior year of high school, she said, "We're moving back to Nebraska." And I'll never forget, we drove the Alaska Highway, which we'd never done before, and on the way out of Anchorage, tears were streaming down her face. But we knew it was the right decision.

**Do you miss being in Alaska? And maybe there were some things you were happy to leave behind?**

I really miss it so much. I was so blessed. My daughter is adopted; she's half Inupiaq. She came to us when she was six days old, and she's 32 now. She loves Nebraska—she married someone from Nebraska—but I do remember when we first moved there, her saying to me, "Mom, I don't know—is it Alaska or Nebraska?" And I said, "Well, Natasha, it's both."

John worked as a VISTA volunteer in the '60s in Yakutat. All these years he's had a plot of land in Yakutat. He was actually adopted by the Tlingit people in Yakutat, so he has a Tlingit name and an Inupiaq name. He has strong ties to Yakutat, and that's where we're heading today. To me, that is Natasha's piece of Alaska. ♪

*A list of A.J.'s books available for purchase can be found on The CIRI Foundation website, [thecirifoundation.org/publications](http://thecirifoundation.org/publications).*



## CIRI GENERAL COUNSEL STEPHANIE AICHER NAMED ONE OF ALASKA'S 'LEGAL ELITE'

For her excellence in providing legal services, CIRI Vice President, General Counsel Stephanie Aicher was named to the inaugural list of Alaska Business Legal Elite. The list features Alaska's most talented attorneys as nominated by their peers.

The list of Legal Elite represents only about 8% of practicing lawyers in Alaska, all of whom were selected by those who are intimately knowledgeable about what it takes to be a good lawyer. For the full list, visit [digital.akbizmag.com/issue/august-2023/alaska-business-legal-elite](http://digital.akbizmag.com/issue/august-2023/alaska-business-legal-elite).

Congratulations, Stephanie!

# 2023 CIRI ART CONTEST

## 'IN the CIRI Family'

Thank you to our Shareholders and Descendants who submitted original works of art for the 2023 CIRI Art Contest interpreting the theme "IN the CIRI Family"! All winners received cash prizes and had their art displayed at our fall Friendship Potlatches.

### ADULTS (18+)



**JESSIE RICE**  
YUP'IK – ANCHORAGE, ALASKA  
**MEDIUM: DIGITAL**

**FIRST PLACE**

"The Alaskan animals represent our CIRI family; all beautiful, different, living together in this beautiful state. We love our land and sky, which provides for us. The mama and baby polar bear represent me and my baby, admiring Alaska's beautiful northern lights, reminding us of our ancestors watching over us."

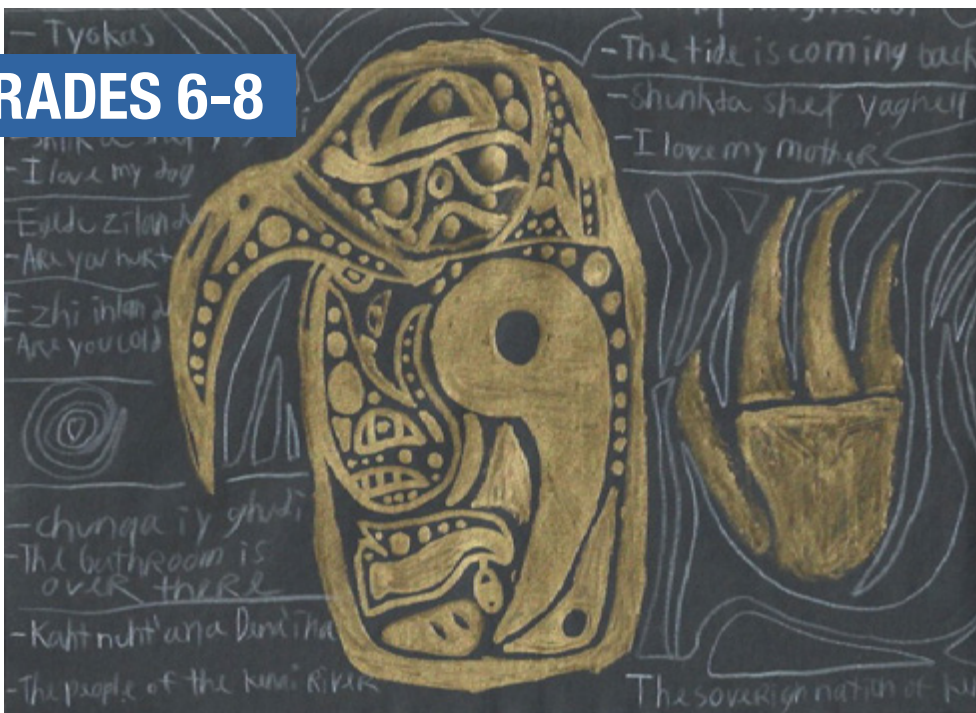


**ARTIST: KAREN GARCIA**  
INUPIAQ – ANCHORAGE, ALASKA  
**MEDIUM: PAINTING**

**SECOND PLACE**

"A Day at Grandmas"  
"Our Native traditions strongly depend on subsistence. We are taught to cherish our culture while respecting the animals that God has brought to our table. I am forever proud and thankful to be Alaska Native."

### GRADES 6-8



**ARTIST: MASON MILLER**  
DENA'INA ATHABASCAN –  
CHUGIAK, ALASKA  
**MEDIUM: DRAWING,  
COLORED**

**FIRST PLACE**

"I have drawn an eagle totem, representing family, with many cultural references, including feathered hats, birch baskets, and beading. I have surrounded the totem with Dena'ina words and phrases, with their translations. I also drew shapes and lines to represent trees, oceans and the northern lights."



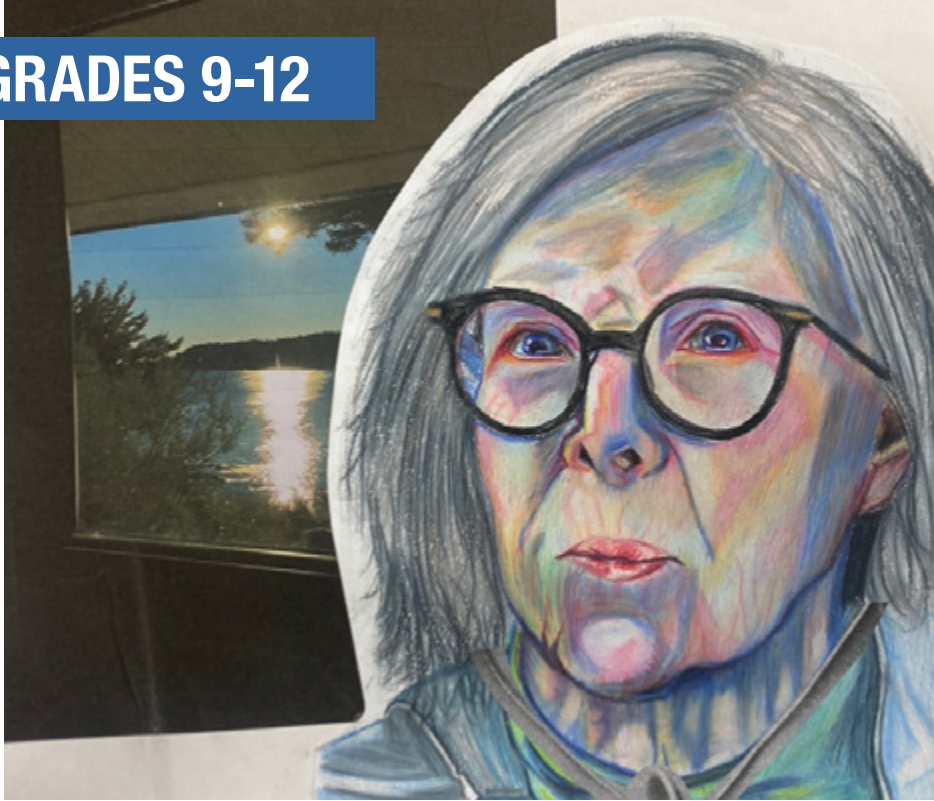
**ARTIST: PEARL SETHI**  
ALUTIIQ – HOMER, ALASKA  
**MEDIUM: SCULPTURE**

**SECOND PLACE**

"I sculpted these ceramic birds to represent my family and then glazed and fired them in a kiln. Birds remind me of family because we watch the birds that come to our house every year. I like thinking about how birds migrate across our region."



**GRADES 9-12**



**ARTIST: ALEXANDRA CLOUTIER**  
**ALEUT – CORVALLIS, ORE.**  
**MEDIUM: DRAWING, COLORED**

**FIRST PLACE**

“This is a colored pencil piece of my great-grandmother, Laura. I added a cut-out photo of the view from her home on Kodiak Island where I have stayed during my many visits. I also glued on a cut-out of her necklace that I wear nearly every day, taken from my own senior photo. Laura was the daughter of Dora Ursin, who was an original Shareholder of CIRI. I never had the privilege of meeting her, but I have heard many stories through my grandmother Laura.”



**ARTIST: DYLAN HILL**  
**ATHABASCAN – MARQUETTE, MICH.**  
**MEDIUM: PAINTING, WATERCOLOR**

**SECOND PLACE**

“My artwork is a watercolor portrait of my great-grandmother, Marina Tepp (Miller). As an original Shareholder, she conveys ‘IN the CIRI Family’ and my connection to being ‘IN the CIRI Family.’”

**GRADES K-5**



**ARTIST: SIBYLLE SETHI**  
**ALUTIIQ – HOMER, ALASKA**  
**MEDIUM: DRAWING, COLORED**

**FIRST PLACE**

“Every year a sandhill crane family comes to our house. They stay during the summer and lay their eggs. Sandhill cranes always stay with their family, and they remind me of mine. I drew a baby sandhill crane with a sunset behind it.”



**ARTIST: NEVAEH CAGUNGUN**  
**ALUTIIQ – ANCHORAGE, ALASKA**  
**MEDIUM: DRAWING, COLORED**

**SECOND PLACE**

“My artwork is of the northern lights and nature in Alaska. There are two moose and berry bushes and a stream and there are mountains and lots of stars in the sky.”



PHOTO: CIRI Shareholders Cody Henrickson, Tayler Higgins and Larry Oskolkoff II. Photo by Thomas McIntyre.

# BONDED BY BLOOD (AND INK)

By Thom McIntyre, Cook Inlet Tribal Council

CIRI Shareholders Larry Oskolkoff II, Tayler Higgins and Cody Henrickson can trace their ancestry to Ninilchik, one of seven villages in the CIRI region. However, it wasn't until they crossed paths at Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) that they discovered their bond. Recently, CITC staff had the chance to hear how the three of them came together—and the creative way they chose to celebrate their family ties. This is their story.

**Larry:** I didn't have a strong connection with my father's side of the family when I was growing up. I knew I had a lot of family out there, but I've never been super closely connected to most of them. I've joked over the last couple years that I assume we are related if you can pronounce my last name (Oskolkoff) because almost nobody can.

**Cody:** I was told through my work to sign up for this [the Tribal Youth Leadership Summit] and I was like, "Sure, yeah, sounds great." I love CITC, and I love getting out of work a little bit [laughs]. I signed up, and then I got an email from Larry Oskolkoff, and I was like, "Why is my uncle who's passed on sending me emails?"

**Tayler:** I was at CITC going to my Youth Advisory Council meeting and I met Larry. I saw the Oskolkoff name, and I was like, "Oh, man, we're cousins. My grandmother was Flora Meehan Oskolkoff." It was cool to meet some cousins of mine.

**Larry:** While at the Tribal Youth Leadership Summit, we were meeting in the morning for breakfast, and I overheard Tayler and Cody talking about tattoos.

**Tayler:** We were talking about traditional tattoos. I've been wanting one so bad, and I was like, "Oh, my gosh, this is the conversation for me right now!"

**Cody:** I was telling Tayler I think I'm going to get some traditional tattoos—kind of trying to get her to share this excitement with me. And she was like, "Oh, I really want to do that with you." And I was like, "That would be a great experience!" And then Larry popped in and said, "I don't know what it is, but I'm down!"

*It didn't take long for it to become official: Larry and Tayler piggybacked on Cody's tattoo appointment with traditional Inuit tattoo artist Holly Mititquq Nordlum and the three started planning their designs. The tattoos took on meanings that go far beyond what meets the eye.*

**Larry:** I never really felt that deep connection to my culture. I almost had imposter syndrome. As a kid, I would go to Ninilchik at least once a year in the summer. And then last year I got to take my kids down there. To go there and do that, then do the tattoo thing with family and embrace the culture that I never really had a connection with, and to wipe away a lot of that imposter syndrome in the process, was big for me.

**Cody:** I grew up always being told I was Native. I knew I was Native, but kind of not, in a way. When I met Larry and he had talked to me about not always feeling the most centered in his culture, I was like, "Oh, I know 100% what you mean and what you feel. I feel like I fight for it every day."

**Tayler:** I relate to Cody and Larry. I'm a light-skinned girl with blonde hair and blue eyes. People used to try to take away my identity, who I was, and really try to count me out. Growing up, I had to always defend my Native culture. We're living representations of our ancestors and those before us, embracing their strength and resiliency. It was such an honor and privilege to be with loved ones getting these tattoos.

**Cody:** It is amazing and heartwarming and the whole process was just filled with laughter and joy. You look at those photos and we're all smiling so big the whole time, sharing memories and learning about our connections with each other. Those memories and experiences also mark our bodies—maybe not in the most visible ways, but it is still something we carry with us in everything we do. ♪



**What inspired you to pursue a career with CIRI:** I jumped at the opportunity to work with current CIRI President and CEO Sophie Minich. She has an incredible reputation as an executive in the Alaska business community. What's more, as an Alaska Native woman, I was doubly thrilled to learn from someone who has had such a significant long-lasting impact not only on CIRI, its values and team, but also in the greater community. I have been incredibly blessed to be mentored by Sophie since joining the CIRI family in 2021.

**What is your most memorable Alaska experience:** My husband and I packed everything we would need into our two kayaks. We were dropped at the head of Harris Bay in southcentral Alaska and spent the next five days circumnavigating the bay, kayaking among calving glaciers, whale-watching, fishing, camping, and avoiding the black and brown bears walking through our camp.

**What causes/organizations are closest to your heart:** I am passionate about educational and culture-focused programs for Alaska Native youth.

**What is something that had a profound impact on your career or life:** My junior year of high school, while helping my dad chop wood for our banya (traditional Alutiiq steam bath in our village), he looked at me and said, "You will get an education and come back and help our people." No one had ever graduated from college before in our family. I didn't know how to apply for college, where to attend or how to pay for it. But I always listened to my Elders and when my dad gave me a directive, I did it.

**Favorite pastimes and hobbies:** Fishing, gardening, and preserving and sharing what we grow and harvest

**Is there a skill you're currently developing or have always wanted to learn:** Our 2023 CIRI summer interns were taught to bead Alaska Native earrings by a fellow CIRI employee. I was so inspired by their creativity and talent that I recently started to learn. It is fun, relaxing, good for my soul, and at times a little frustrating!

**Fun fact:** I am an identical twin. My twin sister, Shauna Hegna, is the president of Koniag, Inc., the Alaska Native regional corporation for Kodiak Island. 🗡️



CIRI RAVEN'S CIRCLE • NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2023



# CIRI ADVOCATES FOR EXPEDITED ALASKA NATIVE VIETNAM VETERANS ALLOTMENT PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

## LAND ALLOTMENTS REPRESENT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S OBLIGATION TO NATIVE VETERANS, BUT PROGRESS IS SLOW

The Alaska Native Vietnam Veterans Allotment Program of 2019 permits eligible Vietnam-era veterans or their heirs to apply for up to 160 acres of federal land in Alaska. The program is designed to compensate Vietnam veterans or their heirs who, because of their active-duty service, were unable to file a land claim under the Alaska Native Allotment Act.

Unfortunately, drawn-out and confusing processes, combined with limited lands made available by the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM), have presented barriers to successful land transfers. Many of the parcels listed as "potentially available" on BLM's selection website are not available without additional and onerous steps required by the State of Alaska or an Alaska Native corporation.

Currently, it takes approximately two years for a transfer to occur once an application is received. As of Oct. 10, approximately 330 applications had been received by BLM statewide and only 14 had been certified.

The bureaucratic challenges delaying land transfers do not fulfill the promise made to Alaska Native veterans by the federal government. CIRI is working in partnership with the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), ANCSA Regional Association and our sister

Alaska Native regional corporations to advocate for the fulfillment of these transfers.

The AFN Board of Directors has established a statewide Alaska Native Veterans Committee focused on developing solutions to this issue. We will continue to work in partnership with other Alaska Native organizations to advocate for the proper implementation of the Alaska Native Vietnam Veterans Allotment Program.

If you or a family member is having challenges with your Alaska Native Vietnam Veterans Allotment, more information is available from BLM's local representative:

**Candy A. Grimes**  
 Land Transfer Resolution Specialist  
 Chief, Section of Adjudication Services  
 Division of Lands and Cadastral Survey  
 BLM - Alaska State Office  
 Phone: (907) 271-5998  
 Email: cgrimes@blm.gov

Visit [blm.gov/alaska/2019AKNativeVetsLand](https://blm.gov/alaska/2019AKNativeVetsLand) for the latest updates, a map of lands available for selection and answers to frequently asked questions.

If you are eligible for an allotment under this program, the deadline for submission is Dec. 29, 2025. 🗡️



# CONDOLENCES

ANNIE A. AHGUPUK, 73  
 PAULINE ALLOWAN, 83  
 MARY LOUISE ASPELUND, 88  
 EARL GORDON BAILEY, 103  
 MISTI LYNN BARRICKMAN, 42  
 RAYMOND VERNON BICKFORD, 83  
 LAWRENCE KEITH BRIGHT, 71  
 GLENN MARK BROWN, 54  
 ROSALIND CLARA CARTEETI, 79  
 ROSE ANNIE CHILLIGAN, 40  
 SOPHIE CRAIN, 85  
 PAMELA VIRGINIA EASTMAN, 48  
 THOMAS JAMES ELLANNA, 79  
 MARY ELLAN GUERRERO, 67  
 REEVE TALON HALL, 33  
 THERESA JUNE HARTMAN, 71  
 FREDDIE RAY HAWES, 66  
 ALBERT RAY JORGENSEN, 60  
 ROBERT WILLIAM LARSON, 82  
 ELSIE THERESA LUKE, 77  
 SUE ANNE MAY, 67  
 LINDA MARIE MERCULIEFF, 69  
 DANIEL WILLIAM MURPHY, 75  
 DEBRALEE NAYOKPUK, 63  
 FORREST JAMES NAYUKOK, 58  
 AARON HANS PANEOK JR., 64  
 CORRIE LYNNE PLAYER, 80  
 CINDY LEE PRETER, 60  
 TRACY ANN REEDY, 42  
 CYNTHIA JANE SABON, 55  
 JAMES SANDERS, 82  
 WILLIAM FRANK SERRADELL, 60  
 JAMES HARRY SHIPPEY, 61  
 JAMES LEWIS SIMPSON, 98  
 MIRIAM RITA STEDMAN, 91  
 GEORGE SCOTT SUTTON, 37  
 BILL HAROLD WALLNER JR., 69  
 ROBERT WESTCOAST, 73

# IN MEMORY



## BERNICE ADA (GYPSY) ADAMS, 67

Bernice Ada (Gypsy) Adams passed away March 19. Ms. Adams was born Aug. 22, 1955, in St. Michael, Alaska. She is survived by her husband, Pat Adams; children, Johnny, Starla and Tessa; grandchildren, Tommy, Shantel, Tyson, Taylor, Jordon, Arriana, Aurora and Talon; and many nephews, nieces, family and friends.



## RICHARD LEE PEDERSEN, 60

Richard Lee Pedersen passed away July 20 in Tucson, Ariz. Mr. Pedersen was born Sept. 6, 1963, in Anchorage. He is survived by his son, Cody Pedersen; and brothers, William "Bill" Pedersen, Elliot Dale Bradley and Arnold Thomas Milligrock.



## RAYMOND BENJAMIN TEPP, 39

Raymond Benjamin Tepp passed away April 22. Mr. Tepp was born Dec. 1, 1983, in Soldotna, Alaska. He worked as a carpenter and fisherman and was an avid outdoorsman. He won first place at the Homer Winter King Salmon Tournament in 2014 and second place the following year. He received his Open Water Diver scuba certification in 2021. Mr. Tepp is survived by his children, Talia Tepp, Aliisia Rose Tepp, Karina Brence, Mason Robert Tepp and Spencer Mark Tepp; parents, Robert and Rose Tepp; brother, Darrell Tepp; and grandson, Axel Raymond Gaul.



## SHERLYN MICHELLE MULLINS, 55

Sherlyn Michelle Mullins passed away Oct. 15 in Fairbanks, Alaska. Ms. Mullins was born May 13, 1968, in Anchorage. Her family remembers her as someone who loved fishing, the outdoors, fast cars, cooking and spending time with her grandchildren. She is survived by her four children, five grandchildren and nieces, nephews and cousins.

# IMPORTANT DATES

<b>Nov. 27, 2023</b>	Board candidate nominee applications available at <a href="http://ciri.com">ciri.com</a> , via mail or in person from CIRI's Anchorage office	<b>Jan. 5, 2024</b>	Deadline to apply to CIRI Next Gen Day
<b>Dec. 8, 2023</b>	Quarterly CIRI Settlement Trust (CST) Elders distribution	<b>Jan. 8, 2024</b>	CIRI Board-recommended slate application deadline: 3 p.m. AKST
<b>Dec. 11, 2023</b>	Quarterly CST Distribution	<b>Jan. 15, 2024</b>	CIRI Next Gen Day
<b>Dec. 25, 2023 - Jan. 1, 2024</b>	CIRI holiday office closure	<b>Jan. 26, 2024</b>	CIRI Board candidate write-in packets available no later than today ( <a href="http://ciri.com">ciri.com</a> /board-election)
<b>Dec. 31, 2023</b>	Quarterly participation prize-drawing deadlines: confirmed Descendant, direct deposit, eNewsletter, GreenLink, Qenek	<b>Jan. 31, 2024</b>	Youth Education Incentives drawing deadline: 3 p.m. AKST; IRS Forms 1099 mailed to Shareholders no later than today (available in Qenek sooner)



# CIRI IN THE COMMUNITY

## DENEŁCHIN 'SUPER FAB' LAB

“Denelchin” means “to make something” in the Dena’ina language—and in August, Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) made a big move to its new Denelchin Super Fab Lab!

Denelchin Super Fab Lab is a state-of-the-art creative space where students use high-tech design programs, industrial-grade machines and programming tools to dream, play, create and innovate. Programs include open-access classes for artists, entrepreneurs and community members. The lab is also

the home base for Indigenous Peoples Set Up Shop, a business-training program administered by CITC and the Anchorage Community Land Trust.

“CIRI is honored to walk hand in hand with CITC in its vision of building opportunities for our Native youth,” CIRI President and CEO Sophie Minich said. “Together, we’re making a lasting and meaningful difference in their lives and providing building blocks for future opportunities.”

When CIRI received its allocation of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding in 2021, it committed to working with its family of designated Tribal organizations to identify programs and projects best suited to receive and deploy funding in compliance with federal law. In all, CIRI directed more than \$7 million in CARES Act funds to make the dream of the Denelchin Lab a reality.

For more information, visit [denelchinlab.com](https://denelchinlab.com)



Photo courtesy of Cook Inlet Tribal Council.

## HOLIDAY CLOSURE

**CIRI OFFICES CLOSED  
DEC. 25, 2023, THROUGH  
JAN. 1, 2024**

In observance of the Christmas and New Year’s holidays, CIRI will be closed Monday, Dec. 25, 2023, through Monday, Jan. 1, 2024. Staff will return to CIRI offices on Tuesday, Jan. 2. During the closure, Shareholders and Descendants may continue to access the Qenek portal ([qenek.ciri.com](https://qenek.ciri.com)).



### BOARD CORNER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

As we continue to grow and evolve, we recognize the need to adapt to the changing landscape. We are excited about these changes and the opportunities they will bring. I look forward to sharing more with you in the months ahead.

Warm regards,

Doug Fifer  
Chair, CIRI Board of Directors

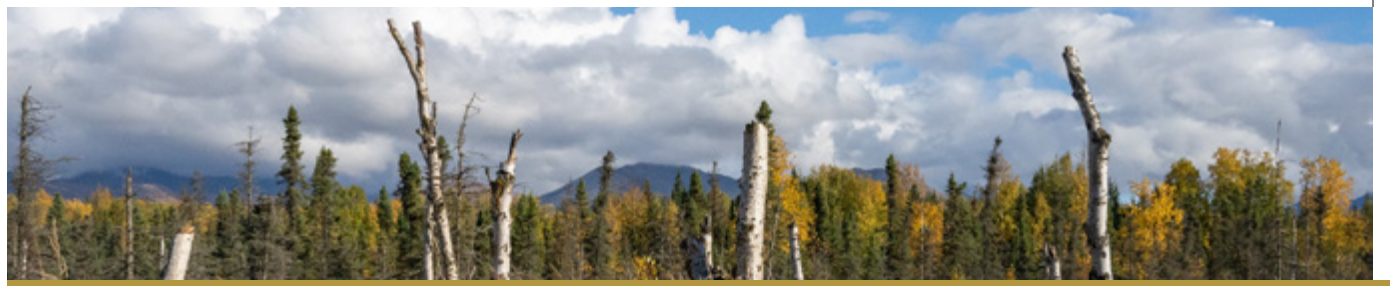
## SHAREHOLDERS WITH RETURNED MAIL

The following CIRI Shareholders do not have a current mailing address on record. When CIRI mail is returned as undeliverable, the distributions are held, and the Shareholder does not qualify to participate in any prize drawings until the address is updated. Shareholders with Qenek accounts may update their addresses via the portal. Alternatively, Shareholders may visit CIRI's website or call Shareholder Relations at (907) 263-5191 or (800) 764-2474 for address change forms and information.

(As of 11/16/2023)

Jason Ray Agli  
Marnie Taneya Anderson  
Nadia Erin Anderson  
Brigitte Luan Armstrong  
Sheri Delin Armstrong  
Kristopher James Bayes  
Thomas Michael Bellinger  
Phillip Jay Black  
Elliott Dale Bradley Jr.  
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Randy Stephan Cain  
Daniel Forrest Call  
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Michael James Cooper  
Christine C. Cox  
Bryan Jack-Ross Crow  
Kippy Maurice Culpepper  
Kamakana Charles-Nukapigak  
Danner  
Samuel P. Davic  
Marcia K. Denison  
Mario Lanza Dyer  
Lorraine Max Edenfield  
David Andrew Endresen  
Drake Edward Frostad  
Anthony Lane Fry  
Carlos Jaime Garcia  
Rose Marie Garcia  
Ricole Maria Garcia-Olivera  
Joshua Allen Gosser  
Tylor William Graves  
Richard David Grossl  
Jade Ariane Grunert  
Carmelita S. Gutierrez  
Lori Ann Hallstead  
Steven Richard Hallstead  
Trevor Alexander Hallstead  
Jason David Harrington  
Jimmie D. Hartley  
James Douglas Hatten  
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Wanda Lynn Isaac  
Leonard Joe Jr.  
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Jacen Lee Kallner  
Glenn John Kalmakoff Jr.  
Marie Bertha Kaloa  
Courtney Deann Sophie Kayouktuk  
Gwynydd Electra Lamborn  
Vernon Louis Koksugnik Lane  
Isaiah Zephyr Langsdale

Matthew Taylor Langsdale  
Paul Matthew Larson  
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Michael Lee Leonard Jr.  
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Mark Todd Lyle  
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Frankie Lincoln Martin III  
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Lucy Jean Mogg  
Burl Frank Mosquito Jr.  
Godfrey Nicolie  
Nicholas Gabriel Odonnell  
Nolan Ryan Ogle-Endresen  
Florence Helen Okpealuk  
Brandon Kelly O'neill  
Beverly Ann Oskolkoff  
Donald Norman Outwater II  
Gary Woodrow Petersen II  
Jerry Shane Phillips  
Juan Darrell Pitcher  
Jordynn Marie Rehnberg  
Cassie Marie Richards  
Patrick Ryan Robinson  
Sean Eric Rodland  
Norman Wayne Sandstol  
Charlein Terese Sanford  
Christian Michael Shaffer  
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Steven Shuravloff  
Tony James Smart Jr.  
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Robert Lee Smith  
Theresa Dodson Smith  
Viola M. Soxie  
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Paul Robert Standifer Jr.  
Denise Karen Steve  
Juanita Leah Stucker  
Charles O. Swanson  
Corey Stanley Sylva  
Veronica Ann Takeuchi  
Carl Gustav Thiele III  
Echo Rayne Lee Thiele  
Karl Lee Thiele  
Sandra Ann Townsend  
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Teresa Yvette Walters  
Abraham Aaron Weideman  
Melford E. Wesley Sr.  
Jenell Ski Westcoast  
Patrick James Westdahl  
Douglas Randall Williams  
Nicholas Carroll Wilson  
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\* Denotes a member of the Board of Trustees of the CIRI Settlement Trust



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Anchorage, Alaska 99509-3330

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Fax (907) 263-5186  
Email [shareholderrecords@ciri.com](mailto:shareholderrecords@ciri.com)

**For estates/wills, contact Probate at:**  
Tel. (907) 263-55540 or (833) 263-5136  
Fax (907) 263-5186

**Submit ideas, stories & recipes to** [info@ciri.com](mailto:info@ciri.com)



NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2023 // CIRI RAVEN'S CIRCLE NEWSLETTER

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- APRIL KYLE

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