

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CDQ Group Partners with Seattle Non-Profit and Maritime Academy to Chart Maritime Career Paths for Young Alaskans

Seattle, WA- Coastal Villages Region Fund (CVRF) is gearing up for a second year of its popular tenth-grade Ciuneq program with two sessions focused on member-community tenth-graders scheduled to take place in Seattle this month. Ciuneq, which refers to “the future” in Yupik, is designed to provide an opportunity for youth from rural Alaska to explore the educational destinations that may be available to them if they continue to work hard in high school.

The tenth-grade Ciuneq program was designed to expand students’ knowledge about careers and educational opportunities in the maritime industry and ways to prepare for college and trade school while still enrolled in high school. CVRF is partnering with Seattle Maritime Academy (SMA), Ocean Inquiry Project (OIP), and Coastal Alaska Premier Seafoods (CAPS), a subsidiary of CVRF, to offer qualified applicants a learning experience that will take place over six days in Seattle.

Over the course of two, week-long sessions, SMA will host students and adult mentors from Alaska communities along the Bering Sea coast to participate in SMA’s Experience Maritime Program. While at SMA, students will receive first-hand experience in all things maritime, including pathways to the deck or engineering side of vessel operations, as well as manufacturing, repair, and marine science.

“The students that completed the Ciuneq program last year were already familiar with fishing but expanded that knowledge and learned a lot more about other career opportunities in the industry”, said SMA’s Director, Sarah Scherer. “After completing Ciuneq, many of the students stated they see working in the Maritime Industry as not only viable, but interesting and enjoyable.”

Oceanographers from OIP help create ‘light bulb’ moments for students in the program by engaging them in hands-on lab exercises and boat-based science. Students spend a half day in the laboratory conducting water density experiments, constructing boats of clay to learn about buoyancy, and becoming their own human tidal model. The following day, students relate their lab-based knowledge to physical, chemical, and biological data they collect while aboard the SMA vessel ‘Maritime Instructor’ in Puget Sound.

“This is a great program, not only for students, but also for OIP instructors who benefit from the experience too”, said OIP Oceanographer Liz Ewings. “Describing the interconnected systems of the ocean with students of varying ages, backgrounds, and interests helps us hone our science communications skills. In addition, students bring with them their own understanding of the ocean, which provides valuable perspective to scientists.”

Last October, 40 participants from 16 different communities in the CVRF region participated in the first two sessions of the new tenth-grade focused program. The average GPA of participating students was 3.479, and youth came from the Lower Kuskokwim, Lower Yukon, and Kashunamiut School Districts. Out

of the 40 youth that participated, 24 had participated in the ninth-grade focused Ciuneq program the previous year, and 38 had participated in CVRF's popular Youth to Work Program.

"We are excited to continue to offer programs that support and inspire the youth in Western Alaska," said CVRF's Community Benefits Manager, Nathaniel Betz. "Offering the tenth-grade Ciuneq program allows us to better support a cohort of hard-working youth who are investing in their future."

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Coastal Villages Region Fund (CVRF) uses Bering Sea fishing rights granted to it by the Community Development Quota (CDQ) program to foster sustainable and diversified local economies in western Alaska. CVRF is organized as a 501(c)(4) Alaska non-profit corporation and operates in 20 member communities located along the west coast of Alaska, from Scammon Bay to Platinum. CVRF generates the money to fund its programs by harvesting fish in the Bering Sea with its own fleet of vessels.

CVRF is dedicated to creating sensible, tangible, and long-term economic development opportunities that generate hope for the more than 9,300 residents of its communities. It is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of one member democratically elected from each community. CVRF is the largest Alaskan-owned seafood company in history and the first CDQ group to own and control the vessels that harvest the vast majority of its CDQ allocations.

For more information,

Visit www.CoastalVillages.org and www.facebook.com/CoastalVillagesRegionFund.

The Ocean Inquiry Project (OIP) is a Seattle-based non-profit whose mission is to educate students, teachers, and community members of all ages through boat-based scientific inquiry on Puget Sound, making them partners in estuarine research by contributing data to current projects and long-term databases.

For more information,

Visit www.oceaninquiry.org

The Seattle Maritime Academy (SMA) offers a variety of programs to train students for positions in commercial and passenger transportation, commercial fishing, deep sea sailing and the workboat industry. It is part of Seattle Central College (SCC), one of the Seattle Colleges. SCC serves 16,000 students annually and supports two bachelor's degree programs, 32 associates' degree programs, and 45 professional certificates in 28 fields of study.

The maritime industry is a major contributor to Washington State's economy, directly employing 69,500 people and contributing \$17.1 billion in gross business income. It continues to grow at an average annual rate of 2.4%. The average maritime worker earns \$67,000 per year, compared with the overall state average of \$56,700.1 As the industry is growing, the workforce is aging more quickly than other industries. 53% of transportation workers are over the age of 45.2. The net result is an increasing need

for skilled maritime workers. Experience Maritime is an important feeder program to help grow this workforce.

For more information,

Visit <https://maritime.seattlecentral.edu/>