

# PRESS RELEASE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Rachel Saylor, TCC Communications

907-452-8251 ext. 3218

[rachel.saylor@tananachiefs.org](mailto:rachel.saylor@tananachiefs.org)

## Galena Solar Farm

*Galena, Alaska*--- Galena, Alaska, a village of about 470 full time residents, lies approximately 270 air miles west of Fairbanks on the Yukon River. For the past decade, this first class city has been struggling to transition its utilities and services, originally built to support a 500+ person Air Force base, into a new era of high energy costs and lower populations.

In early November, this search for lower utility costs led the local city, tribe and school district to come together to install, what the community hopes will be the first stages of an eventual solar farm on an old brownfield site left behind by the Air Force. The project was funded by the City of Galena and the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council, who organized a Solar Energy International (SEI) training class for residents of the rural community. The course was made possible through a training grant provided by the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

In addition to the 9 Galena students and residents who participated in the training, a handful of Alaskans from Anchorage, Fairbanks and Valdez also came together in Galena to learn about solar energy and complete the installation. The 6.7 kW fixed axis solar array was installed using local labor and resources for approximately \$3.50/watt and will provide electricity into a maintenance garage currently used by the School District. Any excess electricity will flow seamlessly into the Galena Electric grid and supply power to adjacent buildings. Average seasonal production from the array is expected to exceed 6500 kWh's, which should offset about 500 gallons of diesel each year from being burned in the Galena generators. The simplicity of the array makes any future maintenance minimal and today's solar panels are warrantied to last more than 20 years. This means the array should be able to provide reliable electricity to the school and community at a rate of 17.5 cents/kWh – far less than the \$.67/kWh the school currently pays for electricity produced from diesel.

“I had always viewed the old fuel depot field as an insignificant resource; after this project I see it as an opportunity. If we can build a solar farm on that site it will help make this community more sustainable and we’ll be able to teach that to our students”  
- Chris Reitan, Superintendent of Galena Schools.

Real time electrical production from the solar array will be available on the Galena School District web-site so that students will be able to use the project as a tool to enhance their education. Using the skills provided from the SEI training, the community hopes to install an additional 3.3 kW of solar during the summer of 2012 to maximize the capacity of the system’s 10kW inverter.

“This is just the start of something that we hope will be much bigger and really put Galena on the map to show people that with the right help WE can do something for ourselves out here” – Greg Moyer, City Manager, Galena, AK

Galena has shown a true commitment toward tackling their energy crisis head on. In 2009, the community organized an Interior Regional Rural Energy Fair that brought state-wide attention to rural energy needs. Louden Tribal Council is currently progressing forward rapidly with a wood biomass heating project and the recently opened Yukon Koyukuk Elders Assisted Living Facility will be utilizing cord wood boilers as the primary heating source. Residents of the community have also come together to form FORGE - “Finding Other Resources for Galena’s Energy” - a grassroots group consisting of community members that include representatives from Fish and Wildlife Services, Louden Tribal Council, City of Galena and the Galena School District.

The school would like to thank the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council and Tanana Chiefs Conference Rural Energy staff for their key support with the solar project and their continued support on other energy challenges the community faces.

*About Tanana Chiefs Conference: TCC is a non-profit organization that works toward meeting the health and social service challenges for more than 10,000 Alaska Natives spread across a region of 235,000 square miles in Interior Alaska.*

**Available on The Web:**

[www.tanachiefs.org](http://www.tanachiefs.org)

[http://blog.tanachiefs.org/council\\_online/](http://blog.tanachiefs.org/council_online/)

<http://www.facebook.com/TheCouncilNewsletter>