

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Tuesday, October 25, 2016

**Media Contact:** Taylor Bickford  
907-227-9718, [taylorb@strategies360.com](mailto:taylorb@strategies360.com)

**Coastal Villages Launches New “Ciuneq” Education Pathways Program**

Anchorage, AK – Coastal Villages Region Fund (CVRF) has launched a new program designed to give high-achieving students in Western Alaska an opportunity to explore educational pathways and careers that will be available to them if they continue to work hard in high school.

In October, 39 ninth graders from the CVRF region participated in the first ever “Ciuneq” program, which is a Yupik word meaning “a path or way forward.” Ciuneq is a partnership between CVRF and the Take Wing program managed by the Alaska Humanities Forum. The students who participated in this initial installment of the program were invited because they have already proven that they are willing to work hard in school and have high GPAs which reflect that.

“Ciuneq is a program Coastal created to show our youth the world of opportunities available to them,” said CVRF’s Programs Operations Coordinator, Beatrice Olrun-Kiokun. “We want our youth to be successful and to know that they can achieve great things!”

During their time in Anchorage, the participants visited Alaska Pacific University (APU) and the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA). Evening sessions included meetings with John Pingayak, an elder from Chevak, and previous CVRF interns who are attending college at UAF and UAA.

“The opportunity to spend time with elder John Pingayak was a great benefit to me and the rest of my Ciuneq group,” said Iris Paul of Kipnuk. “We learned a lot about our culture and were inspired by the stories and history he shared with us.”

After the sessions in Anchorage, students traveled to Seward to visit AVTEC where they met program leaders and instructors in all departments. They participated in activities with the AVTEC Maritime Department, where students learned what it takes to work on one of CVRF’s Bering Sea vessels. This included time in ship simulators operating a factory trawler like the Northern Hawk, the largest boat in CVRF’s fleet.

“The time we spent on the trawler simulator was so realistic and made us feel like we were actually riding on a boat in the Bering Sea,” said Chelsea Pleasant of Quinhagak.

On the final day, students interviewed each other and created videos to share the highlights of the program, then packed up to head back to their communities in Western Alaska.

The next round of the Ciuneq program will take place in Fall 2017 and high-achieving students from the region will be asked to submit applications beginning in August of next year.

Pictures of the Ciuneq program activities are available on [CVRF's Facebook page](#). For more information about Ciuneq, please contact CVRF's Community Benefits Manager, Nathaniel Betz, at (907) 644-6517 or [nathaniel\\_b@coastalvillages.org](mailto:nathaniel_b@coastalvillages.org).

###

*CVRF is a 501(c)(4) Alaska non-profit corporation whose 20 member villages are along the west coast of Alaska from Scammon Bay to Platinum. CVRF is believed to be the largest Alaskan-owned seafood company in history and is governed by a 20-member Board of Directors elected by the residents of its 20 member communities. CVRF is dedicated to providing economic development in its 20 member communities by creating sensible, tangible and long-term opportunities that generate Hope for residents who want to Fish and Work. CVRF is the largest jobs provider in its member villages and is the first CDQ group to own and control the vessels that harvest its CDQ allocations. For more information, visit [www.CoastalVillages.org](http://www.CoastalVillages.org).*