

# With a facade that resembles salmon skin, the Kenaitze Indian Tribe welcomes a new education center in Alaska

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October 14, 2022



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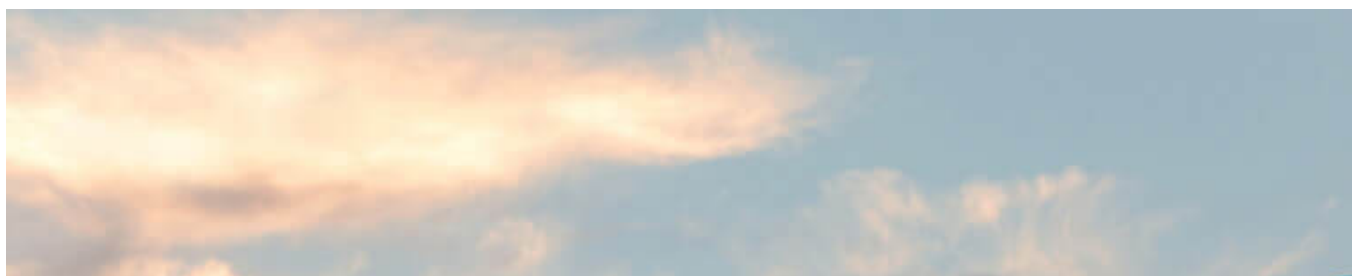
**Architect:** [Stantec](#)

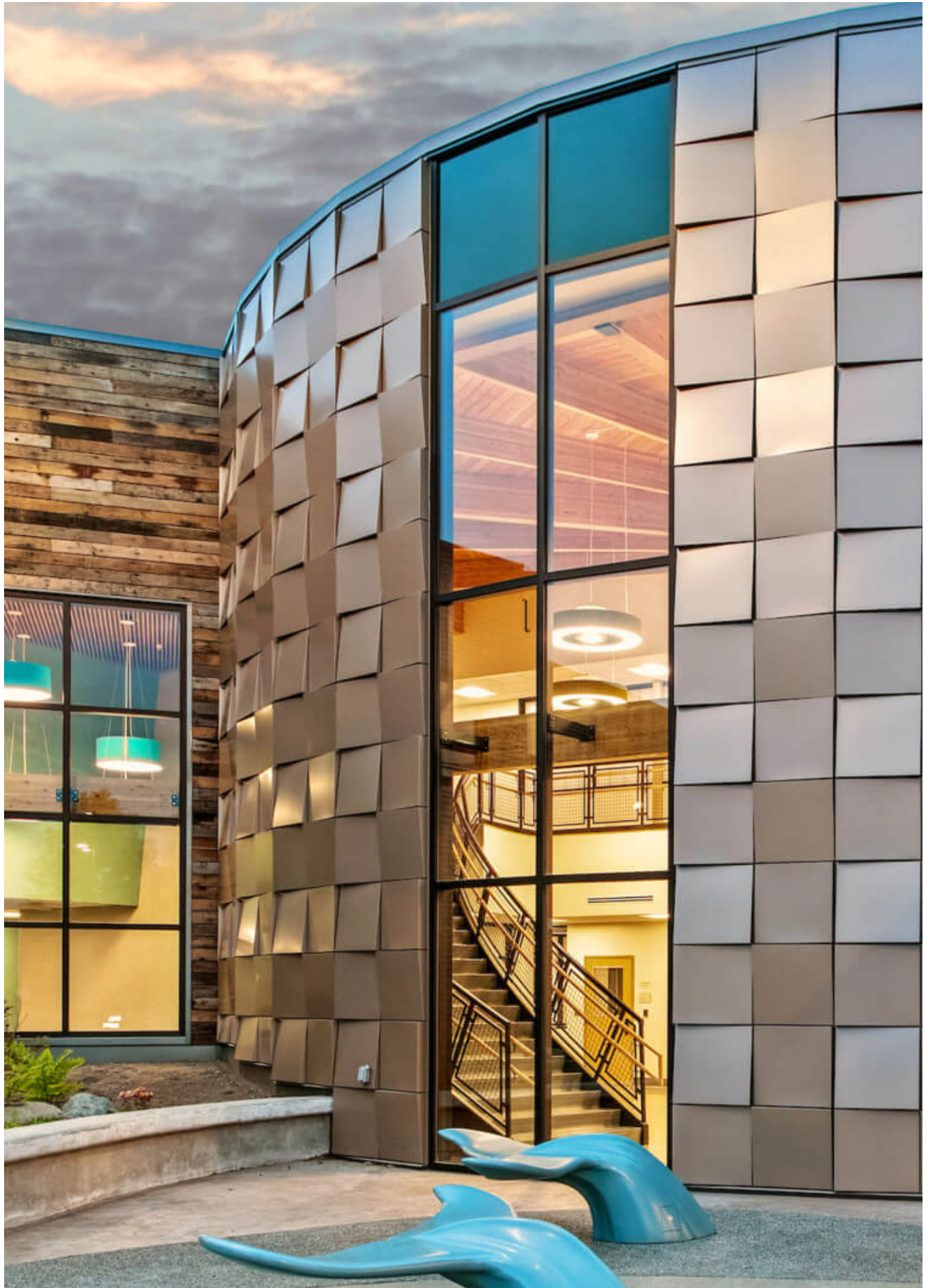
**Location:** Kenai, Alaska

**Completion Date:** June, 2022

Sustainable design strategies and Kenaitze tribal values have come to fruition in the Kahtnuht'ana Duhdeldiht Educational Campus in Kenai, [Alaska](#). The 67,000-square-foot building, designed by [Stantec](#), includes education and other community spaces. Designed for the Kenaitze Indian Tribe, a federally-recognized tribe in Alaska's South-Central Kenai Peninsula, the building is tribally-owned.

The building is laid out in two wings connected by an interior plaza; the educational wing contains a preschool, library, Yaghanen Youth Language and Culture Programs for students K-12, a career training center, and the Dena'ina Language Institute, while the other wing contains a multipurpose room with a track and a cultural room for tribal activities.







The circular central plaza was designed to evoke a sense of community. (Wayde Carroll)

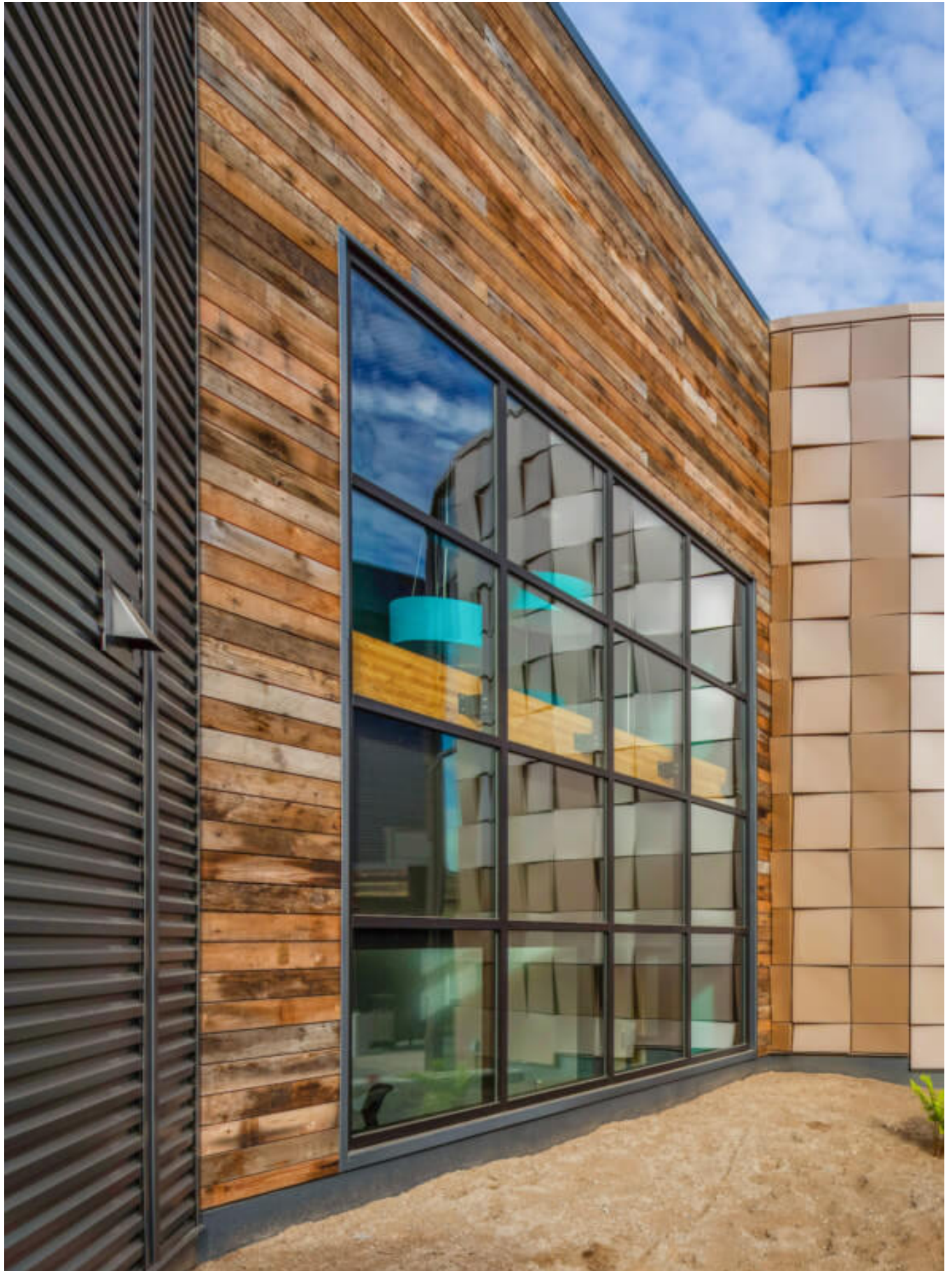
Giovanna Gambardella, an architectural services manager in Stantec's Anchorage office, said that "the design team conducted multiple workshops with the tribe and the education director Rachel Gilbert to learn about cultural elements and priorities that would be represented through the building's architecture." Incorporating space for educational programming outside of classroom space, the design team sought to incorporate literal touch points that linked to the tribe's culture. A tribal seal, 16-feet in diameter, was embedded into the lobby's floor, and an image of the tribe's Traditional Values Wheel, 20-feet in diameter, was embedded into the multipurpose room floor. The landscaping and playground areas were designed to educate children on the surrounding natural environment, while "a natural palette" and ample lighting shaped the interior design.





Stantec's interior design emphasized a natural palette and well-lit spaces. (Wayde Carroll)

The exterior of the building's entry was clad with copper-colored aluminum panels, intended to reflect the color of salmon skin. The curved central plaza "mimics a circular sense of community," Gambardella told *AN*. The design team opted for customized NorthClad AL Series Panels as their surface could be adjusted to appear like salmon skin and be installed in a pinwheel pattern. The rest of the installation was completed with a standard rainscreen system, maintaining cost efficiency and straightforward assembly. Construction was completed by Soldotna, Alaska-based Blazy Construction.



The panels had a custom finish and were arranged to represent salmon skin. (Wayde Carroll)

Apart from the aluminum paneling, the building's entry, plaza, and library facade were built with reclaimed wood salvaged from from a 100-year-old local fish cannery. The design team began by "identifying meaningful elements of the design where the wood could be applied," said Gambardella. Blazy Construction and the Kenaitze Indian Tribe then worked in collaboration to inventory how much wood could be salvaged from the structure, tailoring the design and detailing to incorporate wood based on product availability during the design process.



The combination of metal paneling and wood can be seen in contrast on the facade. (Wayde Carroll)

While using reclaimed material, and detailing in the earlier stages of the design process, leads to less material waste, Stantec's team based further environmental considerations on the 2012 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC). The City of Kenai does not have its own energy code, but it was important for the design team to create a robust thermal envelope for Kenai's climate. To this end, the roof was designed to meet R-35 continuous insulation, and specified Hunter Xci Ply insulation panels for the walls, which have a high thermal rigidity. Gambardella explained that panels comprise a closed cell polyisocyanurate foam core fixed to a glass facer on one side and 5/8-inch plywood on the other.





The corners where metal paneling comes together was design with ease of constructibility in mind. (Wayde Carroll)

For all exterior considerations, Stantec worked very closely with the Kenaitze Indian Tribe and Exterior Technology Systems, ensuring that product and design choices would be “durable, easy to maintain, and work in [Kenai’s] climate,” which sees chilly summers and long, very cold winter months. Stantec specified additional facade panels with Centria Concept Series CS-260 steel panels as they had proven to be long-lasting in existing Alaskan projects. As Gambardella told AN, “our team specified 2’x2’ manufacturer’s corners, which made the installation easier for the contractor and achieved a “cleaner” aesthetic.

### **Project Specifications**

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**Architect:** [Stantec](#)

**Location:** Kenai, Alaska

**Completion Date:** June 2022

**Client:** [The Kenaitze Indian Tribe](#)

**Contractor:** [Blazy Construction](#)

**Civil Engineer:** Stantec

**Interior Design:** Stantec

**Head Start Consultant:** [RuralCAP](#)

**Landscape Architect:** Nancy Casey Planning and Design

**Geotechnical Engineering:** Shannon & Wilson

**Facade Design Consulting:** The Kenaitze Indian Tribe; [Exterior Technology Systems](#)

**Insulation Panels:** [Hunter Xci Ply](#)

**Exterior Panels:** [Centria Concept Series CS-260](#); [North Clad AL Series Panels](#)

**Storefront and Curtain Wall:** [Kawneer Trifab](#)

**Wood:** Reclaimed (Local)

[AlaskaAluminumStantecWood](#)