



## Bering Sea Elders Group

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For Immediate Release

### **BERING SEA ELDER GROUP RECOGNIZES YOUNG PROVIDER & CULTURE BEARERS**

(Anchorage, Alaska)—The Bering Sea Elders Group (BSEG) is excited to announce the recipients of BSEG’s inaugural Young Provider and Young Culture Bearer Awards. This honor was established by BSEG to recognize two young people under the age of 25 who perpetuate their Alaska Native culture and contribute to the health and well-being of their community.

“The Bering Sea Elders Group is proud that we have many young people who are living examples of our culture and values,” said BSEG Executive Director Jaylene Wheeler. “This acknowledgement is in recognition of these incredible role models who serve their communities in many ways, including in activities that are grounded in Indigenous knowledge, responsible stewardship, and caring for others.”

To be considered for an award, a recipient had to be nominated by a family or community member, board member, or their school’s teacher or administrator. They were also required to be affiliated with one of BSEG’s Member Tribes or reside in a Northern Bering Sea Climate Resilience Area NBSCRA community.

This year, Dezmond Tokeinna, who was nominated by the Native Village of Wales, was selected as an award recipient. In their nomination statement, his Tribe stated that Dezmond “exceeds in his school studies and loves to Eskimo dance. He dances and celebrates his culture throughout the year, including on the Fourth of July, Thanksgiving and Christmas. He has traveled with the Kingikmiut Dance Group to other dance festivals. Also, Dezmond participates in the family-owned reindeer corral each year. There is a lot of work that happens during the annual corral from rounding them up to branding fawns.”

Charitie Ropati, a Tribal Citizen of the Native Village of Kongiganak, was nominated by her family. “Charitie has participated in the United Nations and addresses the struggles and issues relating to climate change that is affecting rural communities across Alaska.” Her research examines the ways that the climate crisis affects plant ecology in Alaska and how this relates to cultural resilience. She has also been recognized as an Arctic Youth Ambassador, Arctic Resilient Communities Youth Fellow, and is the World Wildlife Fund-United States Conservation Leadership Award winner for 2023. Currently, Charitie is attending the University of Columbia and will graduate in May with a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering.

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BSEG is an association of Elders appointed by 38 Tribes in the Yukon-Kuskokwim and Bering Strait regions of Alaska. For more information about BSEG, visit: <http://www.beringseaelders.org/about-us/>.