

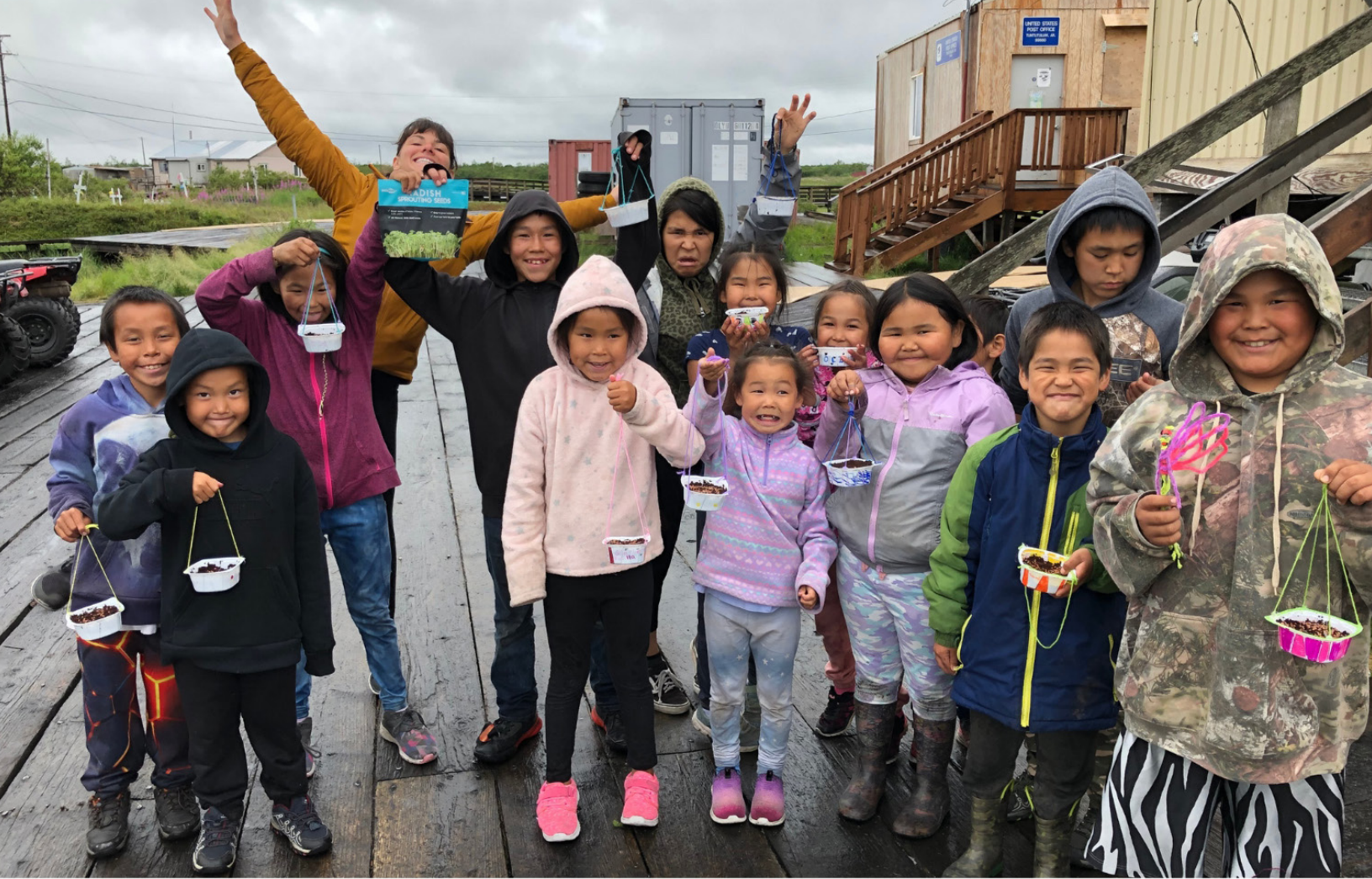


*Community
Connections*



2022

Rural Alaska Program Report



WELCOME

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Our Mission

To give every child the opportunity to find the best in themselves and others in a fun, safe, learning environment.



Dear Friends and Families,

A return to in-person programs brought a new level of joy and connection time to youth and families. The past two years of delivering activity kits was born out of necessity, as a way to engage youth and Elders in the best way Camp Fire knew how. We knew things would be different than before the pandemic, adjusting to staffing challenges, supply and shipping delays, and that needs of the communities would be changed in ways we might not know until staff arrived.

When reflecting back on the 2022 season, the word that comes to mind is resiliency—in each community, in every child, in our staff and our volunteers. We saw local AC stores support supply shipments, Tribal Councils and schools open up spaces for program to run while construction projects took place, and Elders and teens join to share stories and lead traditional activities together. All of these connection points remind us of the importance of relationships.

This summer was a spark for many of us, something that helped us reconnect to one another. We know what an honor it is to be invited into a community and spend time listening to the stories shared while becoming a part of the story. We want to thank each community, including those in the Tribal and City Council offices, the families that joined us for program, and to everyone in each community that welcomed Camp Fire back making the season possible. We could not have done it without you.

Marnie Stewart

Marnie Stewart,
Rural Alaska Program Operations Director

- ▶▶ Returned to in-person camp programming after two summers of an activity kit delivery model.
- ▶▶ Communities who were still experiencing high COVID concerns were able to opt into the activity kit delivery model.
- ▶▶ 29 communities served; 23 in-person and 6 through activity kit delivery model.
- ▶▶ Elders, adults, and youth connected through Native Youth Olympics activities and meal deliveries.
- ▶▶ Invited to support two culture camps in Afognak.



Youth were very excited to have Camp Fire staff back in their communities.



Staff and youth identify native plants while hiking and exploring the outdoors.



Youth of all ages came together to share connection time at programs.



We love sharing our culture with visitors and it's so great for the kids to have Camp Fire.

— Kwigillingok Community Member

OUR STORY



Berry picking is always a favorite with kids and reinforces traditional foods.



Continued encouragement and support of swimming and water safety for the whole community.



Inspiring creativity is an integral part of our wellness model.



Camp Fire has served more than 100 communities across rural Alaska in 57 years of programs.

Camp Fire's relationship with rural Alaska began in 1964, in response to a massive earthquake. With the support of the national Camp Fire Fund, volunteers delivered the first Camp Fire youth programming in impacted communities, freeing local adults to devote their full energy to cleanup and reconstruction.

Following this initial outreach, Camp Fire's Rural Alaska Program quickly expanded to address the high drowning rates in Alaska by offering swimming lessons and teaching children about cold-water safety. Our program has now grown to include wellness, cultural activities, intergenerational connections, cooperative games, outdoor recreation, teen activities, and community events. Camp Fire Programs strive to emphasize the importance of wellness, reduce high-risk behaviors, and encourage youth and community engagement wherever we go.



You fill a gap in the community and provide the kids with something to do. You're always welcome here.

— Chevak Community Member

Communities

Afognak
Akiachak
Akiak
Alakanuk
Aniak
Atmautluak
Chevak
Chuathbaluk
Crooked Creek
Hooper Bay
Kongiganak
Kotlik
Kwigillingok
Lower Kalskag
Pitkas Point
Russian Mission
Scammon Bay
St. Marys
Toksook Bay
Tuluksak
Tuntuntuliak
Tununak
Upper Kalskag



23 Communities

92 Weeks of programs

1,614 Youth Participants

2,390 Adult Participants

52 Community Events

19,863 Meals Served

10,060 Lbs of Produce



“

There was nothing fun to do until Camp Fire came. Wish you could stay all summer!

— St. Mary's youth



Camp Fire promises to provide safe, fun learning environments for ALL youth to thrive.

Communities

Kwethluk
Marshall
Mountain Village
Napakiak
Napaskiak
Newtok



6 Communities

32,663 Activity Kits*

2,235 Lbs of Produce

* Youth Activities: 25,320
Teen Activities: 1,740
Family Activities: 1,840
Elder Activities: 3,652



The food was extremely beneficial. I received much feedback saying it saved them money - especially with the village store prices.

— Native Village of Hooper Bay



Camp Fire programs are designed to bring all age groups together in the communities we serve.



Youth using their homemade journals for a nature observation activity.



Youth making jam with freshly picked wild berries.



After a day of berry picking, youth made gifts of wild berry jam for Elders.

This summer, there was lots of excitement to learn and share about indigenous foods: where, when, how they are gathered and also how they are prepared! Camp Fire staff helped youth gather fireweed or seasonal berries to make jam as gifts for Elders.

A favorite activity this summer was making journals. The journals were used by youth in a variety of ways throughout the summer; they were a place for youth to explore their emotions, feelings, and character strengths, to track the growth of their microgreens and their daily healthy habits, such as brushing their teeth, drinking water and strength building workouts. Youth also used their homemade journals to draw the different edible plants they could identify and enjoy eating.



Camp Fire Alaska engages with Alaska Native youth, their families and communities in a culturally sensitive way. This has made them a strong partner for supporting wellness and diabetes prevention through Strong Kids activities.

— Luz Smeenk, MS, RD, Community Educator, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium Diabetes Program



Children enjoying Native Youth Olympics games.

Native Youth Olympics (NYO) was the highlight across all programs. Youth and families engaged in NYO games for hours on several program days. NYO games are a strong connection activity across multiple age groups.

Our staff had the opportunity to learn from NYO professional, Kyle Worl, who currently works for Central Council Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska as the Wellness Coordinator, overseeing a region-wide Traditional Games program. Worl provided an opportunity for our staff to expand their knowledge about Alaska Native cultures.

Incorporating the NYO games into our activities allowed us to support traditional values and promote holistic health and wellness through Alaskan Native traditions. The NYO kits also created an opportunity for an Elder NYO coach to work with the youth at Camp Fire programs.



Activities that are done with families are one of the highlights that I noticed. Parents working with their children created more togetherness in families in our community.

— Community Member



Winners of the trash pick-up competition keeping the community and the outdoors clean.



Youth getting creative with natural materials to make small-scale models of their family fish camps.

CAMP FIRE STAFF



Excitement and Gratitude

This summer we returned to in-person staff training after two years! Staff from near and far joined us for two weeks of intensive training that included sessions at the Alaska Native Heritage Center with Yaari Walker. The trainings taught our staff cultural competency and helped them gain a deeper understanding of the community history that they would be working and living in. Youth were excited to take staff on tours through their communities and share stories about the people, places, and what their culture means to them.



Staff Highlight

One of our staff, Shani Reis, who ran Camp Fire program in Kongiganak was hired by the local school to teach during the 2023-24 school year. When she told us the news, she said, “Going back to Kongiganak is a dream come true!” We are so proud that the strong, positive connections she made with the community could continue beyond the summer with Camp Fire. After teaching in Kongiganak over the past four months, Shani shared with us, “The longer I’ve been out here, the more I believe in the intent and mission of Camp Fire and see how impactful it can be to the kids and communities.”



I live in the Southwestern part of Alaska in two connecting communities – Saint Marys/Pitkas Point. I met two of your staff, Olivia and Natalie, at Pitkas Point. I invited both of them over for dinner on their last night here. It was so good to enjoy their company. Both of them did a spectacular job with Camp Fire this year here in Pitkas Point. Camp Fire Alaska, you are so very awesome, keep up the spectacular job!

— Pitka’s Point Community Member



Our staff were incredibly thankful to the communities for welcoming them in like family.



Elder teaches youth how to prepare traditional foods.

Returning to communities in-person brought a fresh opportunity to explore wellness through activities that honor Alaska Native cultural values and practices. Youth helped deliver care packages to Elders in their communities. Teens in Atmautluak took lead in facilitating a Story Knife activity with youth and staff.

Community events provided opportunities for families, Elders, and youth to connect with one another. During these events, a range of cultural activities were hosted by Elders or adults from within the community, including beading, skin sewing, and preparing traditional Native foods. Community members were excited to bring traditional dances and food to program.

With funding from AVCP, we were able to return to many communities that we have served only once or twice historically. Some of those, like Russian Mission, we hadn't been able to serve in over 30 years!



I love that the whole family from young to old would benefit from the food and activities your program has provided.

— Native Village of Hooper Bay Tribal Council



This Elder participated in Camp Fire program every single day!



Youth learned from Elders how to bead jewelry.

CULTURE CAMP SUPPORT



Youth participating in a Strong Lungs activity.



Staff and youth participate in a zipline across the camp pond.

Kodiak Alutiq Cultural Values

We are the descendants of the Sugpiaq, the Real People. Understanding our environment and events that have shaped our lives and created the culture of our ancestors is vital for our children's cultural survival. The history of our people and our place in the world is a part of who we are today. Kodiak Alutit must learn and pass on to younger generations our understanding of our natural world: the sky, land, water and the animals. As we meet the challenge of living in the 21st century, we must continue to live in honor of those things we value:

Our Elders

Our heritage language

Family and the kinship of our ancestors and living relatives

Ties to our homeland

A subsistence lifestyle, respectful of and sustained by the natural world

Traditional arts, skills and ingenuity

Sharing: we welcome everyone

Sense of humor

Learning by doing, observing and listening

Stewardship of the animals, land, sky and waters

Trust

Our people: we are responsible for each other and ourselves

Respect for self, others and our environment is inherent in all of these values.

*Native Educators of the Alutiq Region * Ahitq Elder's Council * The Alutiq Academy of Elders
Provided by the Native Village of Afognak*

Learning cultural values from the Native Village of Afognak.

Camp Fire's Rural Alaska Program started working with Afognak in 2017 after we met through the American Camp Association Alaska Group. We discovered the opportunity to support their amazing programs. Since then, we have been invited to attend their camps to facilitate cold water safety and wellness programming. This summer was our first time attending their Family Camp.

Staff flew into Kodiak and were taken by boat across the bay to a remote part of Afognak where The Native Village of Afognak has established facilities and grounds called "DIG Afognak" for kids, families, Elders and stakeholders to spend a week or so at a time and connect deeper with their culture. Staff met with Elders and leaders of the camp to talk about the goals of each week and plan the daily activities.

Kids learned how to build shelters with Camp Fire staff under the guidance of Elders. Teens attending the camp as interns talked with campers about hunting octopus and how to clean and cook and eat! Campers spent time talking about cold water safety; how to boat and swim safely, techniques to keep afloat and what types of clothing to wear to keep warm when traveling by boat.



2022 Highlights

- ▶▶ Alaska Commercial supported the shipment of program supplies and Elder meal kits. They also provided flashlights and reusable bags for community members.
- ▶▶ Meyers Farm, a locally owned farm in Bethel, partnered to send fresh produce to communities in the Y-K Delta from June through December.
- ▶▶ AVCP has been instrumental in our program's continued growth and our return to communities this year. They are great supporters of the Elder Care component of program.
- ▶▶ YKHC helps to align the program with wellness best practices and Native values, helping us navigate the health and safety needs of rural communities.
- ▶▶ ANTHC has continued their unwavering support. Luz Smeenk, Dietician and Community Educator was instrumental in helping adapt wellness activities to increase cultural relevancy while maintaining youth interest and engagement, as well as helping train our staff on facilitating activities related to traditional foods, diet and nutrition.
- ▶▶ Air and Land Transport partnered to support shipping logistics, ensuring that Camp Fire resources reached youth and communities this season.
- ▶▶ Pacific Alaska Wholesale coordinated with us to acquire and ship food items for Elder care packages.

Thank You
to our generous donors and partners!

Air and Land Transport
Alaska Afterschool Network
Alaska Cargo Port, LLC
Alaska Commercial Company
Alaska Community Foundation
Alaska Dept. Health and Social Services
Alaska Native Heritage Center
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
Alaska Office of Boating Safety
Association of Village Council Presidents
Birchwood Camp
BSA Great Alaska Council
Donlin Gold
First Alaskans Institute
First Student, Inc.
Food Bank of Alaska
GCI
Kuspuk School District
Kyle Worl
Lower Kuskokwim School District
Lu Young Children's Fund
Meyers Farm
Northern Air Cargo
Pacific Alaska Wholesale
Red Cross of Alaska
RurAL CAP
Saltchuk
State of Alaska Department of Health
Taiga Mining Co
UAA CHD - The Alaska Training Cooperative
United Parcel Service
Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation
Yukon Kuskokwim School District
Yupit School District



Camp Fire
Alaska

*Young people want to
shape the world.*

Camp Fire provides the opportunity to find their spark, lift their voice,
and discover who they are.





Join us — Rural Alaska Is Waiting

Thanks to the generous support from contributors and partners, the Rural Alaska Program has now visited thousands of Alaskans in over 100 communities — and our program continues to grow.

We thank our partners, donors, staff, community contacts, and others who provided meaningful programs across rural Alaska.

Become a partner

Melissa Webber, Senior Director of Development
(907) 257-8820 or mwebber@campfireak.org

Bring our program to your community

Anne Geuss, Rural Program Director
(907) 257-8839 or ageuss@campfireak.org

Join our team and work with us

(907) 257-8816 or jobs@campfireak.org
<https://www.campfireak.org/jobs/>




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