



Expanding Horizons



2019 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.



Expanding Horizons

“ *My eyes are opening. By delivering meals, I’m learning who my Elders are.*

– Sophie, Youth Participant

Dear Friends,

This summer overflowed with new enrichment opportunities, many of which came from building intergenerational connections. We are increasingly focused on fostering connection between Elders and youth. We launched our new Elder Meal Program, a dream realized by our generous partners. Together, we created opportunities for youth to revisit traditional values and serve their Elders.

New opportunities sprouted, and our meal program evolved to include subsistence fishing trips, afternoons spent picking berries and processing warm jars of fireweed jelly. Local partners hosted community events and contributed new perspectives on our Wellness Curriculum. Between Elder meals, workforce development, and our partnership with Behavioral Health Aides, we finished the summer energized and eager to continue.

We are grateful and fortunate for the many partners that contribute to the development and evolution of our program. These partnerships support, strengthen, and guide the long-term impact this program makes.

Warm Regards,

Stacie Baker

Stacie Baker
Interim Manager, Rural Alaska Program



Across all our programs, space was reserved for Elders and youth to spend time together.

“*Camp Fire did an amazing job. They give a tremendous amount and release positive vibes every day.*”
—Roberta in Chevak

The Elder Meal Program was born when a diabetes specialist from Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC) strongly advocated for the restructuring of our meal delivery to include—and prioritize—serving Elders. This small adjustment would dramatically realign Camp Fire programming to the traditional values observed within the communities we serve.

The Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) immediately leaned in to provide the financial backing needed to launch the program. Within six months, our pilot meal program rolled out.

The result wasn't perfect—it was human, and it was spectacular. The meal program started as regular meals within program space, but rapidly changed to a meal delivery program. Camp Fire staff and youth would pack up meals and go door-to-door, delivering meals and visiting Elders.

Unexpected, wonderful things began to happen. Program space evolved, as more Elders and adults visited these gathering places to teach youth and staff about traditional activities, subsistence living, cultural histories, and more.



Youth knocked on doors and got excited about connecting with their own grandparents.



Elders and youth connect and play games during program time.

OUR STORY



In 56 years, Camp Fire has served over 90 communities in rural Alaska.



Camp Fire delivers fresh produce as part of our meal program.



Local musicians from *Young Native Fiddlers* partnered with us to offer music classes.



Swimming and cold water safety remain important components of our program.

“*Camp Fire values keeping the environment clean and picking up trash in groups and with kids. I enjoy watching the events they host in the community.*

— Williann in Tuntutuliak

In 1964, the Great Alaskan Earthquake scrambled communities across the state. The national Camp Fire Fund provided free childcare to Alaska’s rural communities as a crisis support initiative, freeing local adults to concentrate on recovery. As communities rebuilt, Camp Fire’s Rural Alaska Program continued. Our program first evolved to introduce cold-water safety programs in response to rural Alaska’s elevated drowning rate, and then expanded into a touring summer camp that delivers groundbreaking holistic wellness programs to youth of all ages.

This year’s program launched progressive new elements into our Wellness Curriculum through the addition of an Elder Meal Program, ongoing workforce development, and the invaluable input of local Behavioral Health Aides.

For more information on any of Camp Fire Alaska’s programs, visit www.campfireak.org

2019 Communities

Akiak
Alakanuk
Aniak
Atmautluak
Chevak
Chuathbaluk
Hooper Bay
Kongiganak
Kotlik
Kwigillingok
Lower Kalskag
Marshall
Napakiak
Napaskiak
Pitkas Point
St. Mary's
Tuntutuliak
Tununak



“Together we taught kids to make fireweed jelly and where to pick the best berries.”

– Tracy in Chuathbaluk



Youth learning to prepare fireweed jelly from Elders and community members.

Program Highlights

28 Communities

47 Community Events

93 Weeks


4,466 Participants*

4,062 Lbs. of Fresh Produce


24,126 Youth Meals Served

1,958 Elder Meals Served

*Youth: 1,815 | Teens: 663 | Adults: 1,988

 Thanks to the support of AVCP, we served **13% more meals** than the previous year, with nearly 2,000 meals served to Elders.

✳ Event attendance increased by 46% overall, with a **314% increase in Elder and adult attendance.**

 We experienced an **increase in local hires** this year, thanks to collaborative efforts of partners on Workforce Development we had 5 Alaska Native staff join our team.

WELLNESS



Practicing mental and physical flexibility with yoga challenges.



Nurturing plants connects the human spirit and natural world.



Showing off smiles promotes positivity and good dental health.



Youth power up their jumps and stay tobacco-free during Strong Lungs curriculum.

“ Youth were asked about their dreams. They answered that they want to be astronauts, artists, and physicists. I’ve never heard them talk about their future that way.

—Community Member, Akiak

The Wellness Curriculum is a monument to thoughtful design. Now several years into delivery, the curriculum marries Western medicine to the holistic wellness doctrines observed by Alaska Natives, where health is defined as the sum of four quadrants: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Program activities range from silly, active games to introspective, guided workshops.

As Camp Fire continues to deliver lessons on holistic wellness and cold-water safety, we are thrilled by the support received from both corporations and individual community members. Every element of program and interaction is informed by the concepts of wellness—now a framework and a guiding foundation for how we approach our work. A youth’s wellness is connected to their family, their community, their Elders, and ultimately their culture—one cannot be separated from the other.

TRADITIONAL VALUES



Staff joined a team of sisters at their fish camp in Napakiak, where they learned to process fish.

“We make a space for Elders and youth to share. Elders pass on their knowledge and feel valued. They are loved and important.”

– Melanie Hooper, Interim Director of Programs

As a way of strengthening wellness for youth and communities, we constantly explore methods of unifying our program with traditional Alaska Native values. Our program matured this year through the guidance provided by local Behavioral Health Aides (BHAs). Working alongside Camp Fire staff, BHAs provided a traditional healing framework to activities in nearly every community.

Community members made it possible to deepen our program impact through a focus on traditional values and intergenerational connections. Working in conjunction with our staff, these individuals offered youth traditional activities, further reinforcing traditional values, culture, and intergenerational connection. Activities ranged from fish processing, foraging, traditional games, and Native arts such as beading and sewing.

The key to wellness is to provide the space for youth and community to define it for themselves—that is what we have created through partnerships.



Harvesting fireweed to process for jelly and meal delivery.



BHAs guided youth with empathy, compassion, and wisdom.



Staff and youth in Atmautluak go fishing for natural bounty.

CAMP FIRE STAFF



Rural Alaska Program staff train on cultural awareness with Yaari Walker (far left) of the Alaska Native Heritage Center.



Our staff are dedicated supporters, advocates, and mentors for youth.

“Prior experience taught me to establish boundaries. This was the opposite of what I learned here—I was taught vulnerability and to share myself with the people I met.”

—Taylor, Camp Fire Staff

Training this year included a trip to Bethel for a workshop on reinforcing cultural practices and individual identity as a method for developing resilience, good health, and the strength to face historic and generational trauma. During this emotional workshop, local Behavioral Health Aides (BHAs) helped staff acknowledge their own families' historic traumas, while showing resilience strategies available through developing cultural connection.

In addition to this valuable training and partnership, Camp Fire Staff also learned:

- Lifeguard training and certification
- Youth Mental Health First Aid training and certification
- Cold Water and Boating Safety training
- Cultural Competency and Alaska Native Culture

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



Amy (left) was able to act as an interpreter between Elders and youth in communities she visited.

“ I am Yup’ik and my culture has lost a lot. To protect and restore our heritage, we must observe tradition. We must respect our Elders and the knowledge they guard.

– Martha, Camp Fire Staff

Investing in the workforce development of Alaska Natives is an on-going driver of our program. In partnership with the Association of Village Council Presidents’ Tribal Workforce Development Program, we welcomed Alaska Native hires at a rate exceeding the previous year’s representation.

The benefits of increasing Alaska Native employment are threefold: they become role-models and advocates for youth in their communities, they provide Camp Fire with cultural competency and insights, and they provide a natural generational bridge between Elders and youth.



Martha shows a sunny smile as she works to keep Alaska clean and beautiful during spring clean up.



Lewis, joining us from Kwigillingok, returned for his second summer with Camp Fire.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Beading at program and events remains very popular.



The hot summer allowed for extra community swim time.



Seven communities participated in the *Green Up, Clean Up* initiative.



Youth charge forward as families cheer during a race in Akiak.

“Having Camp Fire visit with fresh produce impacts the entire community. People adapt traditional dishes like moose stew to include vegetables.

– Elizabeth in Hooper Bay

Adult and Elder attendance at community events skyrocketed over the last three years.

Year	2017	2018	2019
Attendance #s	300	1,000	3,000

Events included barbeques, sobriety walks, three-day basketball tournaments, concerts, ladies' nights, dances, meals, traditional healing workshops, and more. Beyond event attendance, there has also been a noted uptick in program visitors and volunteers.

Each community shone with its own stars. Local librarians visited program almost every day to host story time. Elders and parents pitched in to supervise while youth were swimming, thereby increasing time spent on cold-water safety. Community members facilitated trips to take youth setnetting, canning salmon, or led workshops on cultural projects.



Partner Highlights

“Partnerships make our programs stronger and allow for deeper connections in the community.

– Stacie Baker, Program Manager

✧ The **Alaska Commercial Company** shipped and stored supplies for programs as an in-kind donation.

✧ We are eternally grateful to **Luz Smeenk**, Dietician and Community Educator with **ANTHC**, for her leadership and continued development of the wellness curriculum, as well as the guidance received from the **YKHC’s Diabetes Prevention and Behavioral Health Programs**.

✧ **AVCP** has been crucial to the success of our workforce development plan. Financial support for our Elder programs was key to success this summer.

✧ **RurAL CAP** continues to support our program and offered staff housing in several communities this year.

✧ **School Districts** continue to support our program, including those in the Lower- Kuskokwim, Lower-Yukon, Yukon-Koyukuk, Kuspuk, and Bering Strait districts.

✧ Thank you to the individuals who contributed supplies and in-kind donations: **Allison Smith, Carla Beam, Cheryl Frasca, Kim Kovol, and Liza Hozapfel**.

Thank You!

ABC Motorhome and Car Rentals, Inc
Alaska Bead Company
Alaska CargoPort/ Lynxs Group
Alaska Commercial Company
Alaska Native Heritage Center
Alaska Northern Courier
Alaska Office of Boating Safety
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
Alaska Pacific University
Association of Village Council Presidents
Bering Strait School District
Bent Prop Inn
Chugach School District
DHL Express
Donlin Gold
Doyon LTD
First Alaskans Institute
Food Bank of Alaska
GCI
Home Depot
Kaladi Brothers Coffee
Kuspuk School District
Lower-Kuskokwim School District
Lower-Yukon School District
Lu Young Children’s Fund
Matt Hirshfield
Meyers Farm
Northrim Bank
Rasmuson Foundation
RurAL CAP
Southcentral Foundation
Sysco’s Produce
Taiga Mining Company
UAA Center for Human Development
Ultra Dent
Wells Fargo
Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation



Join Us — Rural Alaska Is Waiting

Thanks to generous support from contributors and partners, the Rural Alaska Program has now visited thousands of Alaskans in over 90 communities — and our program continues to grow.

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

To become a partner

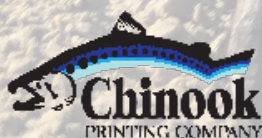
Joanne Phillips-Nutter, Director of Development and Marketing
(907) 257-8819 or jphillips-nutter@campfireak.org

To bring our Program to your community

Stacie Baker, Interim Manager of Rural Alaska Program
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Join our team and work with us

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<https://www.campfireak.org/jobs/>



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