



Camp Fire
Alaska

2023

Rural Alaska Program Report

WELCOME

- 2 Highlights
- 3 Our Story
- 4 Impact
- 5 Pop Up Camps & Community Events
- 6 Supporting Communities & Our Programs
- 7 Wellness
- 8 Elder Engagement & Traditional Values
- 9 Workforce Development
- 10 Camp Fire Staff
- 11 Teens & Our Program
- 12 Culture Camp Support
- 13 Our Partners



Greetings Friends,

From increasing the number of communities served to creating opportunities for more local employment, we have so much to celebrate this year! Though the weather was chilly, this season warmed our hearts with many meaningful connections, like intergenerational engagement between Elders and youth, local community members supporting Camp Fire programs, teens from Rural Alaska joining our Leader in Training Program at Camp K in Cooper Landing, and Camp Fire partners visiting program to see it in action.

We created a new position for local hires and put on spring pop-up camps. These are two new things we tried that built and strengthened relationships with youth, families, and partners. We are excited to continue and grow them in the future!

Some of these highlights were outcomes of collaborative planning with our partners that took place before the pandemic. Seeing these plans gain momentum again and come to fruition was incredible! We are so grateful for the many Alaska Native organizations, healthcare professionals, and partners who've thoughtfully contributed over the years to help align our program with Alaska Native cultural values and practices. The success we had this summer was made possible because of their meaningful support.

It's an honor to work together to support healthy, thriving Alaska Native communities.

2023 Rural Leadership Team

Anne Geuss, Marnie Stewart, and Crystal Zook

- ▶▶ 32 communities served in-person this year with the support of 36 staff.
- ▶▶ Launched the Leader in Training (LIT) program for Rural Alaskan teens ages 16 and up.
- ▶▶ New Community Support Specialist position encouraged local workforce development.
- ▶▶ Brought important Cold Water Safety information to youth through fun activities.
- ▶▶ Invited to support Dig Afognak Culture Camp in the village of Afognak and Quk'Taz'un, the Nondalton Tribal Council's Culture Camp at Lake Clark.
- ▶▶ Partners joined us to visit communities and see Camp Fire's Rural Alaska Program in action.

“It was so valuable to be able to visit Kongiginak—not only to see Camp Fire in action with youth who helped serve their community through litter clean up and visiting Elders, but also to see and learn how our statewide program quality initiative can occur in rural contexts.

— ERIN MORIEARTY,
AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM SPECIALIST
ALASKA AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK



Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium visiting with youth and staff during program.



Youth enjoying a Cold Water Safety activity.

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 and teaching children about cold-water safety. Our program has now grown to include holistic wellbeing, intergenerational connections, Elder engagement, community events, boating safety, cooperative games, outdoor recreation, and more. Camp Fire Programs strive to emphasize the importance of wellness, reduce high-risk behaviors, and encourage youth and community engagement wherever we go.

Scan the QR code below for a full timeline of Camp Fire's Rural Alaska Program.

Rural Alaska Timeline



Teachers learn own lessons

Camp Fire program
brings together
counselors and kids



Children of Alaska and some of those who lived and learned with them. Tuesday, the first Camp Fire Summer Day.

Bush kids learn water safety Camp Fire program tries to keep its lifesaving lessons fun

By ANITA CORLEY
Bush kids learn water safety lessons from Camp Fire counselors and volunteers. The program is designed to teach children about water safety in a fun and engaging way. The program is designed to teach children about water safety in a fun and engaging way. The program is designed to teach children about water safety in a fun and engaging way.

28 The Anchorage Times, Thursday June 22, 1978

Camp Fire To Take

This summer young residents of 24 Alaska villages will receive training in swimming, water safety, first aid, recreation, nutrition and village safety from the Chugach Council of Camp Fire.

Since the summer of 1966, the council has taken similar training to 80 different native villages throughout the state.

The program began with the realization of the problems of water safety — Alaska has the highest drowning rate among the 48 states — and the isolation of many villages



Skill Programs To

80 children from 24 villages passed their American Red Cross swimming and water safety tests.

Hundreds of others learned enough to be able to help themselves or others in case of accidents, according to the Camp Fire Council. Some adults also joined in.

Each four-week session is taught by a team of two or three staff members, assisted by a native youth.

To help youths develop interests and skills which will make positive use of leisure time, the program also includes handicrafts, games, music, dance, movies, cookouts, overnight outings, nature hikes, fishing and boating trips and quiet times to sit and talk.

Narrational cook-outs and dinners are planned throughout, and fresh fruit is flown in as a special treat.

Camp Fire hopes to eventually develop a program to qualify older village youths to teach swimming, water safety and first aid.



Native Villages



Our Mission

Every child will have the opportunity to discover the best in themselves and others in a fun, safe learning environment.

Afognak
Akiachak
Akiak
Alakanuk
Aniak
Atmautluak
Chefornak
Chevak
Chuathbaluk
Hooper Bay
Kiana
Kipnuk
Kongiganak
Kotlik
Kwethluk
Kwigillingok
Lake Clark

Lower Kalskag
Marshall
Mekoryuk
Mountain Village
Napakiak
Napaskiak
Newhalen/Iliamna
Nulato
Russian Mission
Scammon Bay
St. Mary's
Pitka's Point
Port Heiden
Toksook Bay
Tununak
Tuntutuliak
Upper Kalskag



34

Communities Served

91

Weeks of Camp Fire Program

4,381

Participants

2,445 Youth and 1,936 Community Members

43

Community Events

31,250

Meals Distributed



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

“

Thank you for all you do with the kids. It doesn't go unnoticed.
Camp Fire really makes a difference here.

— ATMAUTLUAK COMMUNITY MEMBER



Camp Fire programs encourage youth to connect with one another.

POP UP CAMPS & COMMUNITY EVENTS

Pop Up Camps

In the spring of 2023, Camp Fire hosted pop-up camps for the first time! Pop-up camps provide a sneak peak of summer programming and create opportunities for engagement with rural Alaska throughout the year. This year we visited Tununak and Chefnak. Camp Fire hosted spaghetti dinners, which included arts and crafts, as well as cultural activities such as beading and Native Youth Olympic (NYO) games. We hope to expand pop-up camps to additional communities in 2024.



Age-inclusive activities promote connection for all.



Blowing bubbles with homemade bubble wands.



Community events are a great way to connect Elders and youth.

Community Events

Camp Fire held several community events each week. These events are a great opportunity for community members of all ages to come together for food and activities. Below are just a couple of exciting highlights from a total of 43 community events this season:

- ▶▶ In Chevak, the team worked with a local DJ to offer a dance event for all to come and join!
- ▶▶ Hooper Bay staff hosted a Native Youth Olympics (NYO) night with four NYO events: Indian Stick Pull, Scissor Broad Jump, One-foot and Two-foot High Kick. The night had over 300 attendees, many who took fresh produce home from Meyers Farm.

“

It was meaningful to see the community enjoying the different events together where they were able to be social after the pandemic kept people apart for so long.

— KOTLIK COMMUNITY MEMBER

SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES & OUR PROGRAMS

To support both rural Alaskan communities and Camp Fire's Rural Alaska Program, Camp Fire developed the Community Support Specialist position. These positions are meant to be filled by community members while providing the flexibility that a subsistence lifestyle depends on. Our Community Support Specialists connected Camp Fire travel staff to resources in their communities.

"Having a Community Support Specialist was a game changer!" said one travel staff. Not only did the staff appreciate this support, but the kids also enjoyed seeing a familiar face. In the future, we hope to employ a Community Support Specialist in every community we serve.



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



Enjoying a ride with friends!

“

You [Camp Fire Staff] don't need to worry too much; just being here for our kids is more than enough. Because of you, these kids have a place to be that they enjoy.

— MOUNTAIN VILLAGE COMMUNITY MEMBER

WELLNESS

The Strong Kids Wellness Curriculum was designed in partnership with healthcare professionals from Alaska Native Health Consortium and Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation. With this curriculum, our staff support youth with fun, creative activities to help them practice making healthy choices for their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. Activities range from physical challenges and games to creative, introspective crafts. This year we emphasized the importance of caring for and respecting others by creating opportunities for youth to care for their families, Elders, and community.

“

This partnership provides so many opportunities for kids to be physically active each day. Camp Fire sent out equipment to play Native Youth Olympic games. In one village, rural staff and teens taught these skills to younger kids. What a confidence booster! They never got tired of trying. The games bring lots of joys and the relationships are forever treasured.

– LUZ SMEENK, MS, RD, COMMUNITY EDUCATOR
ALASKA NATIVE TRIBAL HEALTH CONSORTIUM DIABETES PROGRAM



Youth learning about healthy habits during a dental hygiene activity.



Yoga is always a big hit, especially Alaskan animal yoga!



The Wellness Curriculum keeps the youth active and thinking creatively.



Emotional and mental health activities are included.

ELDER ENGAGEMENT & TRADITIONAL VALUES



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



Intergenerational connection is celebrated during program.

Elders teach important cultural lessons, empowering youth to take pride in where they come from. Creating opportunities for Elders and youth to connect is so important, whether it's through a meal delivery, storytelling or through a conversation.

Rural Travel Staff compensated Elders for contributing their time, knowledge and care with kids and teens during Camp Fire programs and community events.

“

“Witnessing a well-respected Elder use his sense of humor, life experience, and cultural knowledge to connect with kids and share traditional values and lessons on how to live a long, happy life together was such a gift and an honor!”

— ANNE GEUSS, RURAL PROGRAM DIRECTOR
CAMP FIRE ALASKA



Youth delivered food to Elders' homes during program.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

In partnership with Camp Fire Alaska's overnight camp in Cooper Landing, Camp K, the Leader in Training (LIT) program was launched for Rural Alaskan teens ages 16 and up. All LITs receive a stipend for their participation and travel costs are covered by Camp Fire through scholarships.

Three teens from Kongiginak joined the LIT program alongside 11 other teens from Anchorage, Eagle River, and the Kenai Peninsula for the four-week session at Camp K. The first week they experienced camp as a camper, the second week they transitioned to working with younger campers, and the final two weeks they were assisting with group management and conflict-resolution.

They enjoyed making connections with everyone at Camp K and exploring the Kenai Peninsula during their time off. LIT participants were excited to be able to teach one another and share about their cultural heritage with campers and staff through Native Youth Olympic games, as well as traditional drumming, songs, and dances.



Leaders in Training (LIT) formed a bond with one another, the camp staff, and the campers. At the end of the session, saying goodbye was a challenge.

“

It's a really great experience and you won't regret it. You get to make friends that feel like family. It teaches you leadership skills and is a great opportunity to grow your resumé.”

— 2023 LEADER IN TRAINING



We had a total of 36 staff supporting Camp Fire programs in Rural Alaska this summer. We had returning staff from previous years who helped support new hires. We saw an increase in local hires due to the additional Community Support Specialist position, as well as the LIT program for teens. We also hired two international staff who came from England and India.

Camp Fire Alaska supports and empowers staff to deliver a program that is relevant and supportive to the people in communities they serve. We access resources from across the state to provide a rigorous and comprehensive training for our Rural Alaska Travel Staff. This year included:

- Indigenous Awareness Workshop with Alaska Native Heritage Center
- Native Youth Olympic (NYO) games training led by Kyle Kaayák'w Worl, award-winning Arctic Sports athlete and coach
- Youth Mental Health First Aid training and certification
- Cold Water and Boating Safety training from the Alaska Office of Boating Safety
- Red Cross lifeguard training and certification



In collaboration with YKHC Dentists, Behavioral Health Aides, and Claricaraq Traditional Counselors, Camp Fire staff in some communities were able to support preventative healthcare community outreach. They planned field trips and invited in special guests, which was a highlight for youth and families.

“

The experiences I have gained from working with the kids in rural are ones that changed my life permanently, and I'll look back on my times here as being some of the best I've ever had.

— CAMP FIRE ALASKA TRAVEL STAFF



TEENS & OUR PROGRAM



Youth and teens were very excited to participate in Native Youth Olympic (NYO) activities.



Teens had a blast trying new recipes and cooking with our staff.

Camp Fire's Rural Alaska Program is committed to serving youth of all age groups, including teens. A key component of summer programming is hosting teen nights during the week in each community. Teen Nights provide an opportunity for Camp Fire staff and teens to engage in healthy activities together in a safe space dedicated to teens.

312

▶▶ TEEN NIGHTS HELD

696

▶▶ TEEN ATTENDEES

Teen Night activities in each community are based on the interests of the teens and tailored with their input and suggestions. Camp Fire staff are also dedicated to promoting intergenerational connections between teens and Elders. This is accomplished through the facilitation of projects, such as making cards, delivering meals and tea, or inviting Elders into program to share stories or teach skills.

“

The teens came in and played card games, made friendship bracelets, and practiced Native Youth Olympics activities — there was something to do for every interest.

— CAMP FIRE ALASKA TRAVEL STAFF



Tanning fish skins at Culture Camp in Lake Clark.

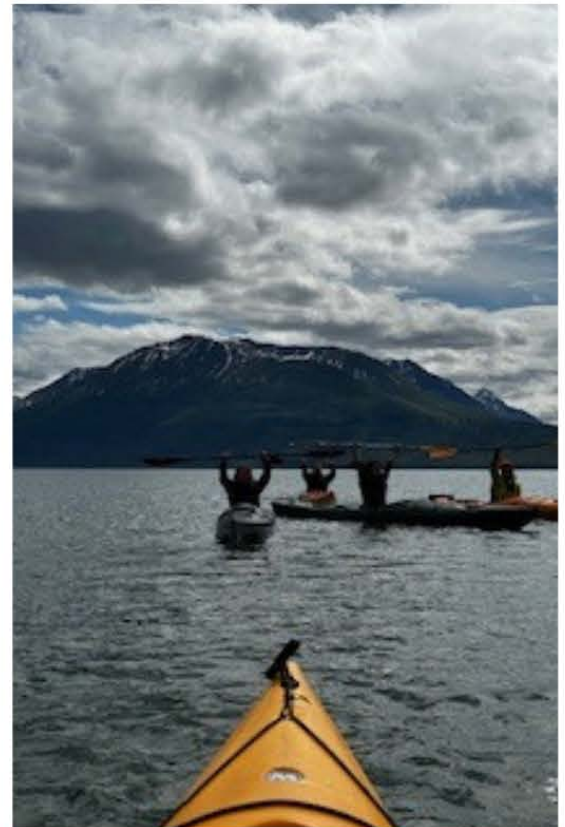


Taking in the beauty of Lake Clark National Park was enjoyed by all.

Camp Fire was invited to support annual culture camps in Lake Clark and Afognak this summer. Being held in the same place each year, youth and Elders connect to their ancestral lands, celebrating and embracing cultural knowledge and ways of being. Camp leaders coordinate special guest visits to work with teens on traditional skills like language learning, fish skin tanning, fish net making, and more.

Camp Fire supported the Nondalton Tribal Council's Culture Camp, Quk'Taz'un, in Lake Clark by running cold water safety and kayak training. In Afognak, Camp Fire supported Dig Afognak's Harvesting and Survival Camp, as well as their Language and Music Camp.

Camp Fire staff led team-building games at the beach each night and shared the Wellness Curriculum during the day. Youth learned how to build shelters and fires, how to administer basic first aid, and were introduced to different tools for managing stress.



Kayaking and boating safety looks stunning out at Lake Clark National Park.

OUR PARTNERS

Thank You

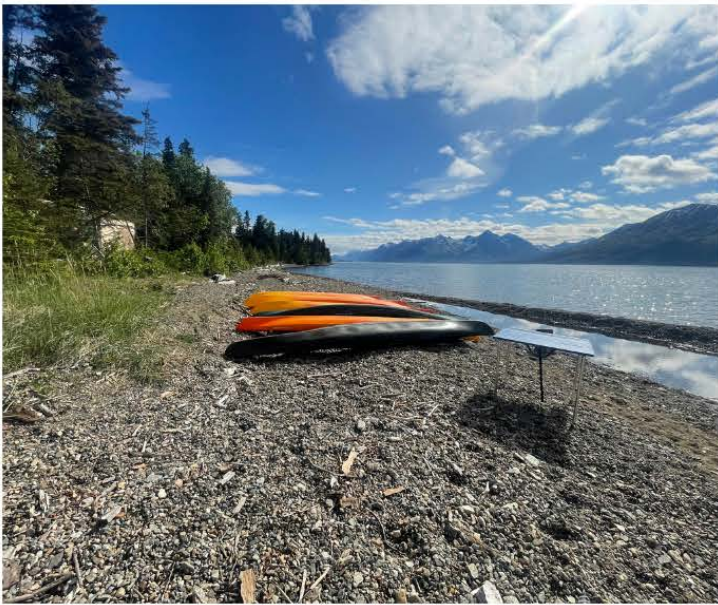
to our generous donors and partners!

- Air and Land Transport
- Alaska Afterschool Network
- Alaska Cargo Port, LLC
- Alaska Commercial Company
- Alaska Community Foundation
- Alaska Native Heritage Center
- Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
- Alaska Office of Boating Safety
- Association of Village Council Presidents
- Birchwood Camp
- Donlin Gold
- First Alaskans Institute
- First Student, Inc.
- Food Bank of Alaska
- GCI
- Grant Aviation
- Healthy Alaska Natives Foundation
- Kashunamiut School District
- Kuspuk School District
- Kyle Kaayák'w Worl
- Lower Kuskokwim School District
- Lower Yukon School District
- Lu Young Children's Fund
- Meyers Farm
- Northrim Bank
- Pacific Alaska Wholesale
- RurAL CAP
- Saltchuk
- State of Alaska Department of Health
- Taiga Mining Co
- UAA CHD - The Alaska Training Cooperative
- Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation



2023 Highlights

- ▶▶ Donlin Gold donated lifejackets in both youth and adult sizes to support Cold Water Safety and swimming opportunities.
- ▶▶ YKHC Behavioral Health Aides and Dentists partnered with staff to provide educational outreach, donating over 3,000 toothbrushes with covers, toothpastes, floss, and floss picks for kids and their families.
- ▶▶ Alaska Commercial Company supported the shipment of program supplies and Elder meal kits.
- ▶▶ Meyers Farm partnered to send fresh produce to communities in the Y-K Delta region.
- ▶▶ AVCP continues to support our growing efforts to engage Elders and youth in meaningful ways.
- ▶▶ ANTHC has continued their unwavering support and collaboration in aligning activities with traditional ways of knowing and being.



Join us - Rural Alaska is Waiting

Thanks to the support from contributors and partners,
the Rural Alaska Program has visited over 100 communities.

BECOME A PARTNER

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

OUR PROGRAM

Bring Camp Fire to your community.
Anne Geuss
Rural Program Director
(907) 257-8839 or
ageuss@campfireak.org

JOIN OUR TEAM

(907) 257-8816 or
jobs@campfireak.org
www.campfireak.org/jobs



Keep us with us!

www.campfireak.org

@campfireak

