



Urban Traditional Foods Security in Anchorage, Alaska

Findings from planning discussions

February 12, 2024



INTRODUCTION

As part of a research and programming planning process led by researchers from University of Alaska Anchorage, Southcentral Foundation, and Penn State University, two discussion groups were held, in fall 2023, in Anchorage, Alaska to understand issues related to traditional foods access and consumption in Anchorage. Group discussions were held at the Southcentral Foundation Traditional Foods Gathering (September 28, 2023) and at the Alaska Food Policy Council Festival and Conference (November 11, 2023). We also engaged in informal conversations at events like the Intertribal Agriculture Council Alaska Regional Summit (November 8-9, 2023) and the Native American Nutrition Conference (September 10-12, 2023). Discussion groups included approximately 80 people total, with well over half Alaska Native participants or non-Alaska Native people working for an Alaska Native serving organization.

CHALLENGES TO TRADITIONAL FOODS ACCESS IN URBAN ALASKA

1. Competition for resources (dipnetting on the Kenai, Kasilof, and/or Copper rivers, guide services, picking berries) and the economic and time commitments to get enough.
2. Regulations on harvesting and land use, including private lands, or general concerns about getting a citation.
3. Lack of community ethical harvesting, like not picking all of the berries in an area or not using the whole animal.
4. Regional differences in food gathering (having help or the actual method), new methods in processing, or taste difference.
5. Fragmented family networks, less access to shared foods and traditional and family knowledge.
6. Economic burden of having to travel back and forth from urban and rural Alaska



YOUTH SUPPORT

- Youth-Elder network that includes cooking classes, regalia making, or Alaska Native names
- Integrating traditional foods into school nutrition programs (like classroom activities and tastings, school gardens, Elder guest cooks)
- Surround youth with culture in education system from an early age and scaffold over time through high school and beyond
- Involving and empowering parents to provide at home
- Build off the existing Indigenous Training Program
- Opportunities with credit or stipend through schools or other institutions like hospitals, gardens, or Boys & Girls Clubs

PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS

Improve access and availability

- Transplanting and tending plants in backyard settings
- Take and bake traditional foods kits with instructions
- Saturday market for traditional foods
- Connect with APU land and extension/experimental farm in the Mat-SU Valley for tending and gathering

Support Elders, limited mobility and low-income individuals, and new-comers

- Berry and plant proxy program for Elders
- Information on accessible places for gathering, hunting, fishing for people with mobility limitations
- Support traditional foods access through food pantries or banks
- Mentorship program for Alaska Native people new to Anchorage on harvesting in urban spaces

Ethical harvesting and capacity for producers and processors

- Cold storage for institutional level subsistence food programs and distribution as well as emergency response
- Building capacity for Tribal food producers
- Certificate program and public information on ethical harvesting in urban spaces