

WE ARE OCEAN PEOPLE: INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP IN MARINE CONSERVATION  
CINDY BOYKO & 'AULANI WILHELM, GUEST EDITORS

# Traditional Foods of Southcentral Alaska

## Chugach Regional Resources Commission

**Chugach Regional Resources Commission (CRRC)** is a non-profit, intertribal consortium formed by seven Tribes' in the Chugach Region of Alaska to protect the subsistence lifestyle through the development and implementation of natural resource management programs to assure the conservation, sound economic development, and stewardship of natural resources in the traditional use areas.

In 2016, CRRC initiated a traditional foods program to conduct a baseline assessment of food consumption, use, and harvest patterns to develop wellness strategies in the face of a changing environment. Through this endeavor, a traditional foods poster (below) was created that portrays subsistence foods in southcentral Alaska. This poster serves as a window into the lives of the people of the Chugach, a glimpse of the traditional foods that are important to their cultural identity, and a stepping stone to protect a subsistence way of life that desperately needs to be preserved.

### Suumacirpet asirpiartuq Our way of living is the best



To the Alutiiq people, subsistence is life. There is no easy way to translate the word subsistence - suumacirpet - into the Alutiiq language. Westerners often think of subsistence as the process of obtaining and eating wild foods, an alternative to buying groceries. This definition, however, fails to capture the complexities of living off the land.

Collecting wild foods is not simply an economic act, but a central component of social and spiritual life. Through hunting, fishing, and gathering, Alutiiq people experience and express Native identity. They explore their deep and enduring connection to the land. They care for their families and communities. They celebrate and sustain life.

Subsistence is also a birthright, a way of living passed down from ancestors that has sustained generations. While not a literal translation of the word subsistence, suugicirpet asirpiartuq, "our way of living is best," expresses these many connections.

The Gulf of Alaska, including Prince William Sound and Lower Cook Inlet is one of the richest and biologically productive ecosystems on the planet. A local saying is: When the tide is out, the table is set.



ALL SEASONS	4 Pink Salmon	7 Sea Lions
1 Silver Salmon	8 Pink Salmon	8 Octopus (Spring, Winter)
2 Blue Salmon	9 Chin Salmon	9 Sitka Crab
3 Red Salmon	10 Chin Salmon	10 Landlocked Cordovay
4 King Salmon	11 Dungeness	11 Highbush Cordovay
5 King Salmon	12 Dungeness	12 Seal (Spring, Summer, Winter)
6 King Salmon	13 Dungeness	

SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	WINTER
13 Spruce Tip	20 Flounder	28 Menne	32 Herringbone
14 Flounder	21 Flounder	29 Menne	33 Herringbone
15 Flounder	22 Salmonberry	30 Highbush Cordovay	34 Lingcod
16 Flounder	23 Salmonberry	31 Highbush Cordovay	
17 Herring	24 Soft Shell Clams	32 Herringbone	
18 Herring Eggs	25 Clams	33 Herringbone	
19 Herring Eggs	26 Clams	34 Herringbone	
20 Herring	27 Clams	35 Herringbone	
21 Herring	28 Clams	36 Herringbone	
22 Herring	29 Clams	37 Herringbone	
23 Herring	30 Clams	38 Herringbone	
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25 Herring	32 Clams	40 Herringbone	
26 Herring	33 Clams	41 Herringbone	
27 Herring	34 Clams	42 Herringbone	
28 Herring	35 Clams	43 Herringbone	
29 Herring	36 Clams	44 Herringbone	
30 Herring	37 Clams	45 Herringbone	
31 Herring	38 Clams	46 Herringbone	
32 Herring	39 Clams	47 Herringbone	
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46 Herring	53 Clams	61 Herringbone	
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52 Herring	59 Clams	67 Herringbone	
53 Herring	60 Clams	68 Herringbone	
54 Herring	61 Clams	69 Herringbone	
55 Herring	62 Clams	70 Herringbone	
56 Herring	63 Clams	71 Herringbone	
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85 Herring	92 Clams	100 Herringbone	



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▲ Poster excerpt: the main panel.

We realized that, for many people of the region, connections and memories to traditional foods are intertwined with the stories of their lives. The primary food sources have changed dramatically and foods gathered in the wilderness are no longer available. While traditional foods restore physical health, they are also central to cultural and spiritual traditions. These foods strengthen communities and support the unique culture of the region and are often the center of special occasions such as family gatherings and holidays. The intrinsic value of harvesting foods in traditional ways cannot be overstated. A local statement is, “When the tide is out, the table is set.”

Traditional foods are more than just commodities; they are gifts that help us to always remember who we are and where we come from because foods weave together the very social fabric that makes a community. When people are actively pursuing wild game or fishing sacred waters, they are gifted with new memories and those of a distant past that bring a sense of belonging while promoting balance and generosity.

This creation serves as a legacy to the people of Alaska. Alaskans have great potential to shape a food system that feeds the future in a way that

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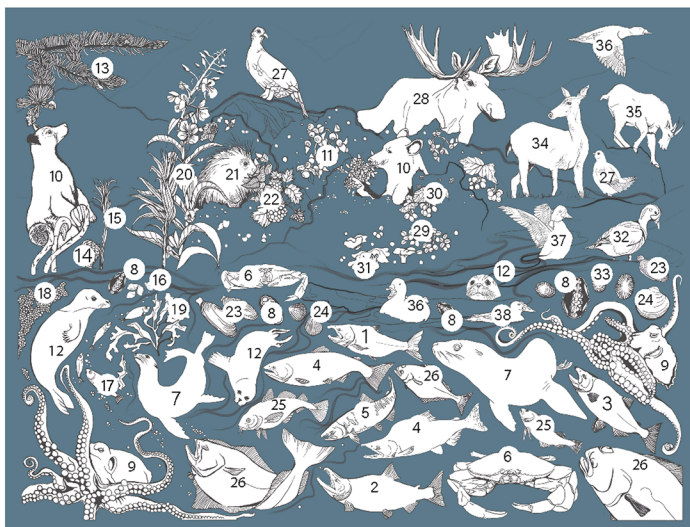
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◀ Poster excerpt: the side panel.

strengthens relationships with all living things and promotes cultural continuity. This can be done by becoming more than just consumers of foods but advocating for ancient foods. We are thrilled to have the opportunity to share a part of the culture with Alaska. Healthy and productive people are the cornerstone of healthy communities.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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<p><b>ALL SEASONS</b></p> <p>1. <b>Qakiiyaq</b> <i>Silver Salmon</i></p> <p>2. <b>Nikliq</b> <i>Red Salmon</i></p> <p>3. <b>Iluq'akaaq</b> <i>King Salmon</i></p> <p>4. <b>Amartuq</b> <i>Pink Salmon</i></p> <p>5. <b>Alimaq</b> <i>Chum Salmon</i></p> <p>6. <b>Yulayak</b> <i>Dungeness</i></p> <p>7. <b>Wiinat</b> <i>Sea Lions</i></p> <p>8. <b>Urriitaaq</b> <i>Bidarki</i></p> <p>9. <b>Amikug</b> (Spring, Winter) <i>Octopus</i></p> <p>10. <b>Tan'erliq</b> (Spring, Fall) <i>Black Bear</i></p> <p>11. <b>Atsaq, curaq</b> (Summer, Fall) <i>Blueberry</i></p> <p>12. <b>Quigyaq</b> (Spring, Summer, Winter) <i>Seal</i></p>	<p><b>SPRING</b></p> <p>13. <b>Napat kakngiat</b> <i>Spruce tips</i></p> <p>14. <b>Kun'aqutaq</b> <i>Fiddleheads</i></p> <p>15. <b>Cilqat kakngiat</b> <i>Fireweed Shoots</i></p> <p>16. <b>Ipuk*</b> <i>Snail (Sitka periwinkle)</i></p> <p>17. <b>Iqalluarpiit</b> <i>Herring</i></p> <p>18. <b>Iqalluarpiit qurait</b> <i>Herring eggs</i></p> <p>19. <b>Elkuaq</b> <i>Seaweed</i></p> <p>20. <b>Cilqaaq</b> <i>Fireweed</i></p> <p>21. <b>Qangataaq</b> <i>Porcupine</i></p> <p>22. <b>Alagnaq</b> <i>Salmonberry</i></p> <p>23. <b>Cingtaataq</b> <i>Razor clams</i></p> <p>24. <b>Taugtat</b> <i>Cockle</i></p> <p>25. <b>Atgiq</b> <i>Cod</i></p> <p>26. <b>Sagip</b> <i>Halibut</i></p> <p>27. <b>Egtugtuliq</b> <i>Grouse</i></p>	<p><b>FALL</b></p> <p>28. <b>Teglliq</b> <i>Moose</i></p> <p>29. <b>Inaq'amciit</b> <i>Lowbush Cranberry</i></p> <p>30. <b>Qalakuat</b> <i>Highbush Cranberry</i></p> <p>31. <b>Aningua'armaq</b> <i>Mushrooms</i></p> <p><b>FALL &amp; WINTER</b></p> <p>34. <b>Tun'tuq</b> <i>Deer</i></p> <p>35. <b>Penaiq</b> <i>Mountain Goat</i></p>	<p><b>WINTER</b></p> <p>32. <b>Nilqitaq</b> <i>Harlequin</i></p> <p>33. <b>Melungkucaq</b> <i>Limpits</i></p> <p>36. <b>Saqulek*</b> <i>Duck (Black scoter)</i></p> <p>37. <b>Saqulek*</b> <i>Duck (Barrow's goldeneye)</i></p> <p>38. <b>Saqulek*</b> <i>Duck (Surf scoter)</i></p>
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\*Where direct translation was impossible, we have provided the closest family name.





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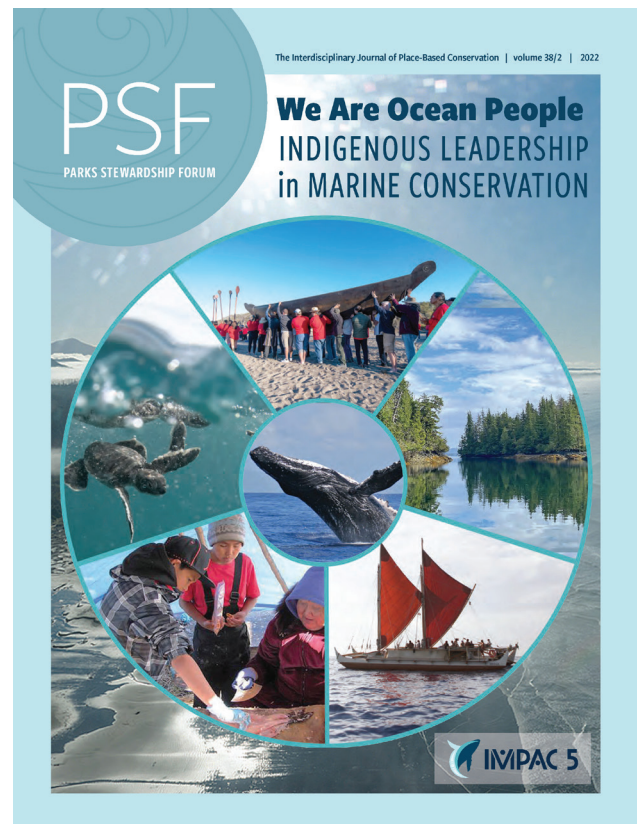
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### On the cover of this issue

CIRCLE DESIGN, clockwise from top:

- Northern Chumash ceremony | [ROBERT SCHWEMMER](#)
- Haida Gwaii | [CINDY BOYKO](#)
- The Polynesian Voyaging Society's voyaging canoe Hōkūle'a | [NOAA](#)
- Elder teaching youths, northern Alaska | [US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE](#)
- Baby Honu (sea turtles), Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument | [NOAA](#)
- Center: Humpback whale, Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument | [NOAA](#)

Background: Pacific Rim National Park Reserve | [PARKS CANADA](#)