

# ALASKA



## FOOD COALITION

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### Local Resources, Local Partnerships (Part I)

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“Community food security is a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice.”

*Hamm, M. and A. Bellows. 2002, Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior.*

*NOTE: Alaska faces community food security challenges unlike those in most areas of the United States. Within Alaska, the issues faced by communities off the road system are significantly different than those on the roads. This paper is the first of a two-part series in which these challenges will be addressed.*

#### Local Resources, Local Partnerships

As advocates seek to address a range of interconnected food system problems, many find that building partnerships and coordinating efforts is essential to developing effective and lasting solutions. Community food security strives to link and integrate diverse fields, including community economic development, anti-hunger, social justice, local and sustainable agriculture, public health, nutrition, and environmentalism. The movement encompasses a broad range of participants working on many different issues. While they may not agree on every issue, increasingly they are working toward similar goals:

- Support access to food as a basic human right for all
- Eliminate hunger and food insecurity
- Build more local and regional food self-reliance, and thriving local economies
- Create a more democratic food system that gives communities a greater role in deciding how their food is produced and distributed
- Make the food system more equitable and socially just
- Develop environmentally sustainable food production and distribution systems
- Teach young people skills in food production and preparation, and to connect them to other community issues through food
- Preserve and celebrate diverse cultures through food

*“What’s Cooking in Your Food System? A Guide to Community Food Assessment*

<http://www.foodsecurity.org/pubs.html>

Resources and partnerships differ across Alaska. Communities off the road system face numerous challenges accessing food. Villages across Alaska are starting to look at how food is produced, delivered and distributed in their communities, and what they can do to become more sustainable. Your local food pantry can be a part of this.

Collaborations between village councils, local businesses, schools, regional corporations, senior centers, state agencies and local community organizations have resulted in innovative partnerships throughout Alaska.

## **Part 1: Off Road Community Projects in Alaska**

### Naknek – Alaska Bounty

This local farm was formed in 2009 to meet the rising consumer interest in all things organic. Their interest is in growing food with local materials to ensure long-term sustainability and serve as a demonstration project for the entire Bristol Bay region. To ensure local and regional food security, they offer technical assistance and advice to others who wish to grow their own food.

<http://www.alaskabounty.com>

### Igiugig Greenhouse

Through a series of private, federal and state grants, Igiugig is building a large, wind powered greenhouse. Village leaders hope the greenhouse and two outdoor acres will produce enough vegetables for consumption all year long not only in the village, but also for sale to neighboring lodges in the Bristol Bay region. The greenhouse has an underground heating system to compensate for the short Alaska growing season. They hope to become a model for other villages interested in starting a similar project.

[http://www.igiugig.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=77&Itemid=111](http://www.igiugig.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=77&Itemid=111)

### Akiak – Community Greenhouse

With grants from the Diabetes Foundation and Learn and Serve America, students and community members joined together to build a greenhouse. Flooding caused some damage last year but repairs were made in time for the 2010 planting season. This year's harvest, planted by students, is just about ready for distribution to village members. There are plans to grow vegetables year round.

[www.thetundradrums.com/article/1010grassroots\\_gardening\\_recycling\\_blooms](http://www.thetundradrums.com/article/1010grassroots_gardening_recycling_blooms)

### Klukwan - Wise Guys Potato Patch

Community members wanted to provide a sustainable subsistence based crop that could supply every house in Klukwan with potatoes. This community potato garden created time to get together with kids, exercise and do something for the community. With land donated by the Chilkat Indian Village and funds to buy seeds from the Wisewoman program, 1500 pounds of potatoes were harvested in 2009. A small grant from Rural Cap helped purchase supplies and equipment.

<http://chilkatindianvillage.org/events-potato.php>

### Bethel Community Garden

The mission of the Bethel Community Garden is to enhance quality of life for the people of Bethel through the provision of arable land for the purpose of local horticulture. Members are Bethel residents who enjoy the outdoors and literally reaping the rewards of their efforts. They are sponsored by the City of Bethel and the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), Cooperative Extension Program. The local hospital chef uses his rows to feed hungry patients.

[http://bethelcommunitygarden.org./](http://bethelcommunitygarden.org/)

## **STATEWIDE RESOURCES**

Community Food Projects Training and Technical Assistance for Interior Alaska Villages is a pilot project designed to help Interior Alaska communities plan and apply for funding through the USDA's Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program. Funds may be available to assist other rural communities. Through the spring of 2011, CES is

offering technical assistance in community food projects. For more information, contact Mara Bacsujlaky, Project Coordinator, at [mara.bacsujlaky@alaska.edu](mailto:mara.bacsujlaky@alaska.edu) or (907) 474-5741

[www.uaf.edu.ces/nrcd/village-food-systems/village-food-projects/community-food-project](http://www.uaf.edu.ces/nrcd/village-food-systems/village-food-projects/community-food-project)

The Alaska Food Policy Council held its inaugural meeting in Anchorage in May. Committees were formed to focus on specific issues. The Traditional and Cultural Foods for Health and Food Security Committee met to discuss the challenges of accessing food in indigenous Alaska communities. This committee identified two priority issues in terms of getting healthy food to rural Alaskans:

- Improve access to indigenous traditional and cultural foods for health and community wellness. Integrate healthy local production.
- Promote and recognize importance of indigenous knowledge for health and food security.

For more information on the Alaska Food Policy Council, contact Diane Peck, Alaska DHSS Obesity Prevention and Control Program, 907-269-8447 [diane.peck@alaska.gov](mailto:diane.peck@alaska.gov)

*The Alaska Food Coalition is here to help. Copies of Alaska Food Coalition White Papers are available online: <http://www.alaskafood.org/whitepapers.shtml> For additional information, contact Vanessa Salinas, Alaska Food Coalition Manager: [afc@foodbankofalaska.org](mailto:afc@foodbankofalaska.org)*

**NEXT MONTH: Local Resources, Local Partnerships – Part II**