



# Alaska Conservation Foundation

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## \$250,000 Awarded for Indigenous Conservation Efforts

**Anchorage, Alaska** – Now entering its fourth year of grantmaking to support indigenous conservation efforts, the Alaska Native Fund distributed \$249,965 in grants to fund projects that address the critical conservation issues affecting Alaska Native cultures, communities and economic opportunities. This year, grants were awarded across the state to 13 Alaska Native organizations and 1 Alaska Native individual.

The Alaska Native Fund is an innovative grant program that supports integrating indigenous knowledge into projects addressing food security, climate change, sustainable economic development, energy solutions, and environmental and human health issues. In a partnership with Alaska Conservation Foundation (ACF), the all-indigenous Alaska Native Fund Steering Committee has awarded approximately \$665,449 from requests totaling more than \$2.6 million since its inception in 2011.

Among the groups receiving an Alaska Native Fund grant this year is Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA), a non-profit association of subsistence and commercial Alaska Native fishermen who work to protect and maintain healthy fisheries and cultures along the Yukon River. This is the third year their project has received funding. The Yukon River flows from Canada through the heart of Alaska to the Bering Sea supporting the longest wild Chinook salmon migration in the world. These Chinook salmon have sustained the cultural, spiritual and nutritional needs of the 42 predominantly Alaska Native communities along the river for millennia - however this critical resource has been in great decline, and in recent years even subsistence fisheries have been closed. One of the contributors to the mortality of the salmon is the industrial-scale Bering Sea pollock fishery which catches and discards significant amounts of salmon as bycatch, preventing them from returning to their spawning grounds along the Yukon River. With support from the Alaska Native Fund, YRDFA has been successful in efforts to reduce the limit on pollock fishery Chinook salmon bycatch by 25% in years of low salmon abundance in Western Alaska.

“The success of the Alaska Native Fund is due in large part to the all-indigenous Steering Committee, representing diverse geographic, organizational and generational perspectives,” says ACF Executive Director, Ann Rothe. “The Steering Committee created and regularly evaluates the grantmaking guidelines based on community needs, recommends grant funding and helps to promote the Fund to both funding partners as well as to Alaska Native communities. ACF has made a long-term commitment to supporting this unique and effective grantmaking program and many other funders around the country are taking notice of this innovative model.”

For a complete list of 2015 Alaska Native Fund Grant Awards, go to:

[www.alaskaconservation.org/grant-opportunities/alaska-native-fund/alaska-native-fund-2015-grantees](http://www.alaskaconservation.org/grant-opportunities/alaska-native-fund/alaska-native-fund-2015-grantees)

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