A subsistence lifestyle frequently involves many family members and multiple generations participating in the taking and processing of natural resources.

When you step in tandem with nature’s cycles of abundance and scarcity, you gain respect for and oneness with the land.

—Penny Green

Subsistence is the one thread that ties all Athabaskan people together.

—Wilson Justin

Once Nick had the flat-bottomed boat purring down the South Fork of the Kuskokwim away from Nikolai, his family knew they were really going to fish camp. They had been looking forward to fish camp all year. They would stay there as long as the fish were running. While they would catch fish with nets and floats set in the river, the July journey to fish camp also allows them to visit with other family members, recount stories of previous summers at camp, and gather around the campfire where Olene cooks the freshly-filleted fish and the gathered wild greens.

At fish camp, they live mostly outside, practicing a subsistence lifestyle away from the stresses of the village. Young grandson Josh learns that fish camp is a source of pride and enjoyment. Helping with the fish rack or playing with a bow and arrow at fish camp helps reinforce his Native identity. Tradition is being passed to the next generation.

For many rural residents, such as Nick and his family, but also for many rural non-Natives utilizing natural resources in and near Denali National Park and Preserve, subsistence ensures more than survival. It sustains a way of life.

Subsistence and land conservation in Alaska

On December 2, 1980, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) was signed into law. This sweeping legislation was significant for Alaska because it provided for the “enduring protection” of 100 million acres in Alaska, by adding them to the public lands managed by federal land agencies across the state. Thus, ANILCA added “new park” and “preserve” areas to the former Mt. McKinley National Park, tripling the size of what the National Park Service manages at Denali National Park and Preserve.

ANILCA ensured that local rural residents who had engaged in a subsistence way of life would be provided the opportunity to continue to do so. Thus, rural residents continue to have priority opportunities for subsistence activities in Denali’s new park and preserve lands.

Subsistence activities in Alaska parks

The National Park Service recognizes the important connection between people and the land in Alaska and make provision for its continuance. Once ANILCA was enacted, NPS established a Subsistence Resource Commission for each Alaska park to
Subsistence activities include:
(from top to bottom) hunting,
catching and preparing fish,
trapping, berrypicking, and
cutting timbers for cabin
construction for subsistence
use.

encourage local involvement and participation
associated with subsistence management.

A key component of subsistence management in
national parks is to ensure the conservation of
natural and healthy populations of fish and wildlife. NPS recognizes that natural systems can be different
on ANILCA lands—people can be part of the
ecosystem.

The goal is to incorporate scientific data and
principles, together with traditional knowledge and
cultural values, to keep these life-giving ecosystems
unimpaired. In this way, traditional subsistence
activities such as hunting, fishing, trapping, timber
use for cabin construction can be perpetuated.

Denali's 1980 enabling legislation specifies how
opportunities for subsistence activities will be
recognized and provided for in Denali's new park
and preserve areas, but such activities are not
allowed in the "old park" wilderness.

Who is eligible to practice subsistence in Denali?
To obtain a subsistence hunting permit for Denali
(new park and preserve), one must be a rural
Alaska resident within a designated resident zone
community or have a special subsistence use
permit. The resident must demonstrate that
subsistence activities have been customary and
traditional for the family.

Denali has four designated
resident zone communities:
the villages of Cantwell,
Lake Minchumina, Nikolai,
and Telida (see table
based on the State of Alaska community database). Residents of these communities are eligible as
subsistence users of Denali without a special
subsistence use permit. No permit is required for the
subsistence gathering of fruit, berries, mushrooms,
and other plant materials in the ANILCA additions.

Access for subsistence in Denali
ANILCA authorizes use of some motorized
surface transportation methods (e.g., motorboats,
snowmobiles) for subsistence activities in the new
park and preserve—if these methods have been
traditionally employed. In Denali, off-highway
vehicles (OHVs) can be used in those areas where
they have been traditionally used for subsistence
purposes, and only on designated trails where it has
been determined that such use will not adversely
affect the natural or scenic values of the park.

Denali's Subsistence Resource Commission
The Subsistence Resource Commission (SRC) for
Denali meets twice a year and is made up of nine
local people who have been active subsistence
users of the park. The purpose of the SRC is to
recommend to the Governor of Alaska and the
Secretary of the Interior a program of subsistence in
Denali. Recommendations are developed to address
such issues as access, customary and traditional
determinations, seasonal harvest limits, eligibility
for subsistence activities, cabin use, needed research,
and how to reduce or avoid user conflicts.

Fish camp is an example of how subsistence
is more than an activity (e.g., fishing), in that
it combines an outdoor lifestyle with family
traditions and cultural values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>2009 Population</th>
<th>% Native Alaskan</th>
<th>Primary Subsistence Activities</th>
<th>Special Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cantwell</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>hunting</td>
<td>must live within 3 miles of post office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Minchumina</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>&lt;5%</td>
<td>trapping, hunting, fishing</td>
<td>residents also garden and work part time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikolai</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>fishing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telida (one family)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>trapping</td>
<td>some now live in Nikolai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The SRC also prepares proposals to change federal
subsistence regulations and comments on other
proposals that affect Denali. Denali's SRC wants
to uphold ANILCA's provisions for subsistence to
ensure that subsistence activities will continue to be
available to rural residents like Nick and his family,
for as long as Kuskokwim flows and boats can skim
the river waters toward fish camp.

For more information
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http://www.nps.gov/dena/pkmgmt/subsistence
or
http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/index.cfml