

## Subsistence — Suumacirpet

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### SUUMACIRPET ASIRPIARTUQ. – OUR WAY OF LIVING IS THE BEST.

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Photo: Collecting chitons along the shores of Mission Bay, Kodiak Island, 2012.

There is no easy way to translate the word subsistence 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.

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

To Alutiiq people, subsistence is also a birthright, a way of living passed down from ancestors that has sustained countless generations. As one Alutiiq leader puts it, “it’s being who you are.” While not a literal translation of the word subsistence, *suumacirpet*, “our way of living,” expresses these many connections.