

Olivia Henaayee Irwin

BIOGRAPHY

"When you take the time to listen to our story, you learn the story of the salmon."

North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, 2024



Iñupiaq/Koyukon

(907) 750-4857

olivia@yukonsalmon.org

[REDACTED], Nenana,
Alaska 99760

Olivia Henaayee Irwin (Iñupiaq/Koyukon) is the daughter of the late James Timony Irwin of Nenana, Alaska and the late Gretchen Sumpter Irwin of Missouri. Olivia spent her early childhood in Nenana, later years in her mother's home of Missouri, and her college years at Pomona College in Claremont, California. Following college she moved home to Interior Alaska, beginning her career in policy and regulation and resuming her family's traditional practices.

Olivia answered the call from her Elders, to step into stewardship of sustainable Alaskan fisheries for future generations. She has demonstrated her commitment to: building an understanding with all who engage in fisheries management, increasing access for public participation, reducing regulatory barriers, and decriminalizing subsistence practices. Olivia has committed herself to deepening her knowledge of fisheries law, regulation, and policy.

Olivia has directly participated in: the Board of Fisheries, Board of Game, North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, Yukon River Panel, Federal Subsistence Board, Regional Advisory Councils, Local Advisory Committees, Federal Consultations, and legislative hearings. She currently serves on the Eastern Interior Regional Advisory Council and the Minto-Nenana Fish and Game Advisory Committee. In doing so, she has expanded her knowledge of the complex set of fisheries issues Alaskans face across the state.

Olivia's relationship with fishing includes; childhood experiences hook and line fishing for catfish and trout in Missouri; sport fishing salmon on the Russian River; and watching elders check the fishwheel for fall chum and whitefish on the Tanana River. Olivia has an intergenerational relationship to traditional fishing practices, greatly shaping her work and life.

Olivia enjoys processing fish, moose hunting, tanning moose hides, working at summer culture camps, beading, berry picking, creating digital art, and memorizing hunting and fishing regulations. Her passion is to encourage youth to actively participate in the public process.

Olivia Henaayee Irwin

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Natural Resources Policy Advocacy

Dedicated advocate committed to increased public participation in natural resources management and stewardship.

Natural Resources Regulation

Regulatory specialist supporting and mentoring diverse Alaskan communities in natural resources management and stewardship.

Communication | Public Relations | Relationship Building

Proven resource in fostering communication, relationships, and education across all Alaskan stakeholders, organizations, committees, agencies and Tribes.

EDUCATION

Pomona College, Claremont, California

2020

Bachelors of Arts, Indigenous Studies: Public Health Concentration

Dean of Students, Senior Service Award

"Given to those who have shown leadership in social, political, and humanistic endeavors"

University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Tribal Governance

2023

Related Coursework

Tribal Participation in State Fish and Game Mgmt Systems

Tribal Participation in Federal Fish and Wildlife Mgmt Systems

BOARDS/COMMITTEES SERVED

Minto-Nenana Fish & Game Advisory Committee

2023-Current

Co-Chair

Eastern Interior Regional Advisory Council

2024-Current

Public Member



Iñupiaq/Koyukon
Athabascan

(907) 750-4857

olivia@yukonsalmon.org

[REDACTED], Nenana,
Alaska 99760

REFERENCES

Jim Simon

Consultant, AITRC

(907) 687-9100

jjksimon@yahoo.com

Charlie Wright

Secretary, TCC
Executive Director, YRITFC

(907) 366-1087

charles_wright767@yahoo.com

Gale Vick

Fairbanks Advisory
Committee

(907) 227-7442

gkvons@alaska.net

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association

Policy Coordinator

2024-Present

- Analyze state and federal policies and regulations related to Yukon River fisheries.
- Represent all Yukon River fishermen interests at management bodies including: Yukon River Panel, North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, Alaska Board of Fisheries, the Federal Subsistence Board, and Regional Advisory Councils.
- Promote and protect wild Alaskan Yukon River fisheries and cultures.

Tanana Chiefs Conference

Natural Resource Policy Contractor

February 2024-August 2024

- Researched complex fish and wildlife management processes, policies, and regulations to ensure Alaska Native food security.
- Provided technical expertise to Tribal Governments and citizens on hunting and fishing policy and regulation.
- Participated in management meetings, prepared testimony for Tribal Governments and citizens.

First Alaskans Institute

Indigenous Knowledge Advocate

July 2021-July 2023

- Facilitated Alaska Native Dialogues on Racial Equity and Alaska Native Governance and Protocols trainings, leading critical conversations necessary for positive working relationships and outcomes amongst all Alaskans.
- Translated socio, political, and cultural issues into accessible formats for rural communities, encouraging effective engagement in public forums and processes.
- Promoted Alaska Native story telling for increased understanding of Alaska Native worldviews and ways of life.

“Olivia quickly distinguished herself as a deeply empathetic, creative, hard-working person who is committed to serving Alaskan communities.”

Kacey Qunmigu Hopson, First Alaskans Institute

INTEREST IN BOARD OF FISHERIES

My first experience at the Board of Fisheries in 2023 sparked my passion for the public process and providing access to fisheries for all Alaskans. As a member of the public I had the opportunity to work closely with Board Members and ADF&G staff to successfully expand the definition of legal subsistence gear to include hook-and-line throughout the Yukon River. This effort not only reduced regulatory complexity but also helped bridge long-standing inconsistencies between state and federal fishing regulations in the Yukon drainage. I had no prior regulation or management experience, yet I was able to impact regulations. That experience reinforced my belief that fisheries management is, and should continue to be, accessible, adaptable, and reflective of the needs of all Alaskans.

I have remained committed to: working with all user groups, reducing regulatory barriers, decriminalizing subsistence practices, understanding others who engage in fisheries management, and encouraging increased public participation. All fishermen should have a reasonable opportunity to comply with regulations. I have supported local and state efforts to formulate regulations that work for the people utilizing the resource, through my work as co-chair on the Minto-Nenana Fish & Game Advisory Committee.

Through my work at the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA) I have expanded my knowledge of the AYK region; deepened my understanding of statewide fisheries issues; and built a strong statewide network. This has provided me the opportunity to gain a greater breadth and depth of the complex set of fisheries issues our communities throughout Alaska face.

My privilege is the opportunity to have conversations with everyday fishermen, from a commercial fisherman from the lower Yukon to a subsistence fisherman of the middle Kuskokwim to a sport fisherman from the Kenai. My joy is learning, listening, and understanding those on the water.

I am committed to continue my work with all stakeholders to fully evaluate proposals, reach a mutual understanding, and ensure Alaska's fisheries are managed sustainably, and in the best interest of, all future Alaskans. I hope to empower young people to participate actively in the management and stewardship of Alaskan fisheries.

Olivia Henaayee Irwin (Iñupiaq/Koyukon Athabascan)