

Feeding Alaska

95% OF FOOD IN ALASKA IS IMPORTED
THESE ARE THE PEOPLE LOOKING TO CHANGE THAT

DODGE COLLEGE OF FILM AND MEDIA ARTS PRESENTS A COMMUNITY VOICE GLOBAL STORIES PRODUCTION

A FILM BY LIAM ABBOTT, COLLIN GAJA, CALISTA KIRK, AND ISABELLA MILLER

SOUND DESIGN BY COLLIN GAJA AND ISABELLA MILLER DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY COLLIN GAJA EDITED BY LIAM ABBOTT

DIRECTED BY LIAM ABBOTT, COLLIN GAJA, CALISTA KIRK, AND ISABELLA MILLER

About the Film

Logline

Alaska has always been called The Last Frontier, however it's unique terrain and isolation from the rest of the world force Alaskans to find innovative new ways to feed themselves and each other.

Synopsis

Unlike the rest of the United States, which has seen a steady decline in farming, Alaskan farming has almost doubled in the past decade in response to food insecurity. On the consumer side, food insecurity in Alaska raises grocery store prices to nearly double that of the rest of the United States. Ron Meeham, Policy and Advocacy Manager at the Food Bank of Alaska, and Ziona Brownlow, Founder of Food for Thought Alaska, introduce the issue and what limits their respective organizations have on creating systemwide change. Food insecurity is impacted by the heightened price of shipping coming from the "lower 48," all of which comes through the Port of Alaska as Jim Jager, its Director of Business and Continuity points out, and manifests on the pricetags of stores like Mark Bauer's New Sagaya Market.

At the Matanuska Experiment Farm, Director Jodie Anderson and Soil Researcher Bob Van Veldhuizen are looking into what can be grown in Alaska and how best to distribute it. Microgreens farmer Frank Enstice and Cattle farmer Heather are both individuals who have taken this research into their own hands, using their backyards to bring food to their families and neighbors. These individuals reveal that sharing with community members and becoming more connected to where food comes from, instead of relying on the unstable statewide food system, is the way to combat food insecurity. It's a lesson that is seeing practical application in Alaska but can also be applied around the world.



View of Palmer, Alaska.

The Team



CO-DIRECTOR, POST-PRODUCTION - LIAM ABBOTT

From Toronto, Canada, Liam is a senior completing his B.F.A in Film Production with an emphasis in editing and a minor in Entrepreneurship, currently studying at Chapman University in Orange, CA. His passion for both narrative and documentary storytelling have led him to be a part of numerous productions including directing the short documentaries Yama, Chipmunks, Lovesick, and Feeding Alaska. Lovesick was accepted into seven film festivals and was the finalist in Gulf Coast Film Festival while Chipmunks is a short documentary which has recieved over 50,000 views on YouTube. For short narrative pieces, Liam has run the post-production for Heaven's Waiting Room and Transient and is currently working on two other short films. By continuing to tirelessly pursue his passion, Liam aims to continue to produce content that will challenge and question traditional aspects of film and media.



CO-DIRECTOR, CINEMATOGRAPHER, SOUND DESIGNER - COLLIN GAJA

Collin is a senior finishing his B.F.A in Broadcast Journalism and Documentary Production, with a minor in Sound Design. His experience in documentary doesn't expand much beyond short profile pieces and mockumentaries like his work Brick Casissus: The Interview. Collin's field of expertise ranges from proficiencies in camera work and lighting to his work in live-sports production. Currently, Collin is working towards improving his skills in sound design and audio production and hopes that these skills will benefit all productions now and in the future. He hopes that he can work in a major production film in the future and is open to all opportunities wherever and whenever they are available.



CO-DIRECTOR - CALISTA KIRK

Calista is a senior pursuing her B.F.A. in Broadcast Journalism and Documentary Production, with minors in Law, Justice, and Social Control and German Studies. Her documentary experience includes comedic pieces like her short environmental film FELIDAE, and portrait films like the short she co-directed, BURP!. Calista's background is largely in live broadcast producing and directing. In the future, she hopes to promote accessibility across socio-economic and physical barriers by broadcasting live performances, sporting events, and more.



CO-DIRECTOR, SOUND DESIGNER - ISABELLA MILLER

Passionate about environmentalism, mental health, and feminism. When she's not doing creative work, she likes to spend time outdoors, practice martial arts, and listen to podcasts. Isabella is a documentary filmmaker, screenwriter, and sound mixer/designer.

Artistic Statement

When the filmmakers found out that they were going to Alaska, they were excited yet scared of the daunting task to make a documentary about something somewhere they had never been before and knew very little about. What they did know was that they wanted to make a documentary that challenged peoples traditional beliefs or perspective on a well known issue or common viewpoint. With Alaska being a place that most people assume is simply empty, cold tundra, the difficulty really became what story to choose, as the team quickly realized the abundance of fascinating and relevant subject matter in Alaska.

After researching, reading, and learning about a variety of issues and events unfolding in Alaska, they began to learn about the growing presence of agriculture in a state that so many people assume to simply be endless cold tundra. That idea, paired with the fact that food is so much more expensive in Alaska than most Americans are used to, and the shifting opinions and actions Alaskans continue to take when it comes to understanding and being connected with their food, made it a great topic for further exploration.

The filmmakers wanted to make a film that not only showcases the amazing work being done in Alaska, but how people from all around the world can learn from what is being done in there. They believe that is one of the best things documentary can provide - not only just entertainment but an educational experience for all.

- Liam, Collin, Calista, and Isabella



Production Notes

Feeding Alaska was a part of the inaugural year of Community Voices: Global Stories - a fully funded social issue documentary filmmaking program at Dodge College of Film and Media Arts at Chapman University in Orange, CA. The program aims to give selected students the opportunity to travel and film social issue documentaries, previously anywhere in the United States.

At the start of 2022, the program was set to expand to include a class that would travel abroad, but due to the unpredictability of the Covid-19 pandemic and the travel restrictions associated with it, it was decided that the first year of the program would travel to Alaska - one of the foreign places in the United States.

The team spent the spring semester researching, reaching out, and planning what they wanted to film when they went to Alaska in June. Four teams of three students then travelled together and spent ten days in Anchorage, Alaska, getting access and shooting their documentaries. While there, the Feeding Alaska team interviewed over fifteen different subjects in various areas of the food industry. Having the opportunity to meet so many people from a variety of backgrounds gave the team so many more angles to the issue than they expected going into production, which allowed the film to turn into the essay style documentary it is. The team then spent the following fall semester in post-production.



The Community Voices: Global Stories group in Alaska at the Alaska Native Heritage Center.

Stills



View of the Port of Alaska, just outside of Anchorage. Over 95% of Alaska's food is imported into the state, primarily by ships.



Jodie Anderson, Director of the Matanuska Experiment Farm & Extension Centre, talks about why food insecurity in Alaska really isn't that different from states in the US.



Ron Meeham, the Policy & Advocacy Manager at the Food Bank of Alaska, showing the Food Bank's facilities and empty shelves.

[Download Stills Here](#)

Behind the Scenes



Interview with Bob Van Veldhuizen at the Matanuska Farm & Extension Center.



Interview with Heather at her farm in Palmer, AK.



Filming shots of downtown Anchorage.

[Download BTS Here](#)

Facts Sheet

About the Film

Runtime: 14:06
Genres: Environmental Documentary, Essay Documentary
Completion Date: January 2023
Format: 3840x2160, 23.976 fps, 5.1 surround sound
Language: English
Shoot Location: Alaska, USA

About Food in Alaska

- 95% of food in Alaska is currently imported
- the food insecurity rate in Alaska is 13% (1 in 8 people)
- from 2007-2017, Alaska had a 44% increase in farms, the largest in the country
- 48% of new farmers in Alaska are women



View of people fishing on Ship Creek, just outside of downtown Anchorage.

Credits

Subjects:

Jodie Anderson..... Director of the Matanuska Farm & Extension Center
Heather.....Local Farmer in Palmer, Alaska
Mark Bauer..... Manager of New Sagaya City Market
Ziona Brownlow.....Founder of Food for Thought Alaska
Frank Enstice.....Founder/Owner of Thriving Greens
Jim Jager..... Director of Business Continuity at the Port of Alaska
Ron Meeham..... Policy & Advocacy Manager at the Food Bank of Alaska
Bob Van Veldhuizen.....Agronomy & Soil Rsearcher at the Matanuska Farm & Extension Center

Crew:

Liam Abbott..... Co-Director/Post Production
Collin Gaja..... Co-Director/Cinemtographer/
Sound Designer
Calista Kirk..... Co-Director/Assistant Editor
Isabella Miller.....Co-Director/Assistant Editor/
Sound Designer
Sâm Kashefi..... Sound Mixer
Andrew Barkan..... Music
Polly Hall..... Music
Sally Rubin..... Faculty Advisor
Yu Gu..... Faculty Advisor
Micahel Ross..... Faculty Advisor
Brenda Chavez..... Legal Services

Contact Info

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