



Summer 2026, Issue 2

IRHA

Community Newsletter

Interior Regional
Housing Authority
828 27th Ave.
Fairbanks, AK 99701
907-452-8315
www.irha.org

Mission

Provide tribal housing opportunities to positively impact housing needs.

Vision

Families with quality affordable housing.

Our Core Values

> **Innovation**

> **Respect**

> **Honesty**

> **Accountability**

> **Service**

IRHA Partners with U.S. Marine Corps Through Innovative Readiness Training Program

IRHA partnered with the United States Marine Corps Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) Program on community projects in Beaver and Allakaket. Through this collaboration, military service members gain valuable hands-on training while assisting with community-driven construction and housing initiatives in rural Alaska. The projects in Beaver and Allakaket are focused on improving housing infrastructure and

supporting local priorities identified by the communities and Tribal partners. By combining resources and expertise, the partnership will help deliver meaningful improvements that enhance the quality of life for residents while providing practical training opportunities for participating service members.

Looking ahead, proposed IRT projects for the next two years are expected to take place two additional

communities, continuing the partnership's commitment to supporting rural Alaska communities through infrastructure improvements and housing-related development.

IRHA will continue working closely with the Tribes, community members, and project partners throughout the planning and implementation process to ensure all projects meet local needs and contribute to long-term community well-being.



Marines and IRHA staff meeting before traveling to Beaver and Allakaket, July 15, 2026.

OFFICE HOURS:

Monday – Thursday 8:30 am – 4:30 pm
Closed to the public on Fridays.

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Eugene Paul, IRHA CEO

Letter from the Chief Executive Officer

As we move through another busy and rewarding year, I want to take a moment to share some of the work Interior Regional Housing Authority (IRHA) has been engaged in throughout our region. June was filled with opportunities to connect directly with communities, strengthen partnerships, and continue advancing housing and community development initiatives that support the well-being of our people.

One of the highlights of the month was attending the 2026 Elders and Youth Conference in Fort Yukon. During the conference, IRHA had the opportunity to provide a housing update, discuss services available to Elders, and answer questions from community members. A significant topic of discussion was the need for Elder housing and Elder care facilities in Fairbanks and throughout the region. The conference provided a valuable forum for listening to community concerns and sharing information about programs such as IRHA's housing assistance services and HOPE program.

IRHA also participated in collaborative discussions with Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) and the Fairbanks Native Association (FNA) regarding casket assistance resources for families experiencing the loss of a loved one. Through this partnership, organizations are working together to develop informational packets that will help families navigate available resources, vendors, and materials during difficult times.

Supporting community-driven housing projects remains one of IRHA's highest priorities. In June, IRHA staff traveled to Circle to meet with local leadership and continue planning efforts for new housing development projects supported through grant funding and rehabilitation projects with tribally owned and tribal member houses. These meetings are essential to ensuring that housing projects are guided by community priorities and designed to meet local needs.

Collaboration with fellow tribal housing organizations continues to strengthen our collective efforts across Alaska. IRHA hosted leadership and commissioners from the Association of Village Council Presidents Regional Housing Authority (AVCP-RHA) for discussions focused on program operations, service delivery, and opportunities for future collaboration. Staff from both organizations shared experiences and best practices, reinforcing the value of working together to address housing challenges across rural Alaska.



IRHA Acting COO, Lori Bishop,
Fairbanks City Mayor, Mindy O'Neill,
IRHA BOC Chair, Patricia MacDonald,
at the Elder's Day of Caring event
on July 13, 2026.



New Construction house in Beaver.
This project is a collaboration with
the U.S. Marine Corps IRT Program.

Throughout the month, IRHA also remained engaged in broader conversations affecting Alaska Native communities. Participation in the Alaska Native Roundtable with the Fairbanks City Mayor, Mindy O'Neill, and the Fairbanks North Star Borough Mayor, Grier Hopkins, allowed our organization to provide updates on housing construction, infrastructure development, and ongoing projects in both Fairbanks and the villages we serve. These discussions help ensure tribal voices are heard, and that regional priorities remain at the forefront of policy and planning conversations.

Another meaningful activity was participation in the Elder's Day of Caring initiative. This partnership effort supports Elders through volunteer service and home improvement projects, reflecting our commitment to honoring those who have contributed so much to our communities. Programs and events such as these represent the spirit of cooperation and service that strengthens our region.

Near the end of June, IRHA joined the TCC Subregional Boat Trip to communities in the Upper Kuskokwim area, including visits with tribal councils and local leadership. These visits provide invaluable opportunities to listen directly to community members, discuss housing needs, and strengthen relationships with the villages we serve. Staying connected to our communities remains central to our mission and helps guide our future planning efforts.

As we continue our work, IRHA remains committed to building strong partnerships, supporting tribal self-determination, expanding housing opportunities, and improving the quality of life throughout the Interior. We are grateful for the collaboration of tribal leaders, community members, partner organizations, and our dedicated staff who work every day to advance these shared goals.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership.

Dogi'dinh,



Eugene Paul
Chief Executive Officer

Below:

IRHA Acting Chief Operating Officer, Lori Bishop, and BOC Chair, Patricia MacDonald, speaking to Marines for the upcoming IRT projects in Beaver and Allakaket.



Below:

IRHA Chief Executive Officer, Eugene Paul and IRHA Construction staff, Carl Frank, Allen Sisto, Francis Sweetser, Vegaas Kruger and Freddie Matheson, completed a ramp at an Elder's house in Fairbanks for the Elder's Day of Caring event on July 13, 2026.





March 2026
Shane Derendoff and BOC Chair,
Patricia MacDonald pose for a picture
after IRHA elections.

Board of Commissioners

Patricia MacDonald

Chairperson

Dot Lake

Seat E – Exp. 3/2029

William Chaaiy Albert

Vice-Chairperson

Northway

Seat A – Exp. 3/2027

Alfred Joseph Demientieff

Secretary/Treasurer

Holy Cross

Seat B – Exp. 3/2027

Kimberly Carlo

Commissioner

Ft. Yukon

Seat C– Exp. 3/2028

Leah Woods

Commissioner

Manley

Seat D – Exp. 3/2028

IRHA Staff Going Above and Beyond for Allakaket

At IRHA, our employees consistently demonstrate a commitment to serving our communities, and recently Derek Derendoff and Earl Esmailka provided an outstanding example of that dedication.

Recognizing the need for improved access to the Allakaket Tribal Office, Derek and Earl took the initiative to build new stairs on their own time after work hours, ensuring the office remained safe and accessible for community members. Rather than waiting for the existing stairs to become a larger issue, they proactively addressed the need before it could impact residents, elders, staff, and visitors.

Their willingness to go above and beyond their daily responsibilities reflects the very best of IRHA's mission and values. This project was more than a construction task—it was an act of service to the community. By volunteering their time and effort after the workday was over, Derek and Earl

demonstrated pride in their work, genuine care for the people of Allakaket, and a commitment to making a positive difference wherever they can.

In rural Alaska, maintaining safe and reliable community infrastructure is essential. Small improvements can have a significant impact, and proactive efforts like this help ensure that important community facilities remain welcoming and accessible for everyone.

IRHA is proud to recognize Derek and Earl for their exceptional work ethic, teamwork, and dedication. Their actions serve as a reminder that strong communities are built by people who are willing to step forward, take initiative, and do what needs to be done—not because they have to, but because they care.

Thank you, Derek and Earl, for your hard work, generosity, and commitment to the Allakaket community. Your efforts truly exemplify what it means to go above and beyond.



Employee Highlight

Welcome Alyssa Briggs-Nash

Alyssa Briggs-Nash Handy is the newest addition to the Interior Regional Housing Authority team. She came onboard in early July as a Grant Writer, where she supports the development of competitive, non-competitive and foundation grant proposals that expand housing opportunities and strengthen tribal communities throughout

Interior Alaska. She brings a background in nonprofit leadership, fundraising, communications, and project management, with experience securing funding and building strategic partnerships.

Alyssa is passionate about helping communities access the resources they need to thrive and enjoys developing systems that make grant management

more efficient and effective. Outside of work, she enjoys traveling with her husband and four children, discovering new restaurants and destinations, and exploring her interests in fragrance and beauty.

"Strong communities are built through partnership, persistence, and a shared vision for the future."



Alyssa Briggs-Nash Handy
Grant Writer

2026 Construction Season Recruitment

INTERIOR REGIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY
Join our team for 2026
Find us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/interiorregionalhousing/>

The IRHA is now accepting applications for the upcoming 2026 construction season for the following positions:

- Carpenters
- Laborers
- Electricians

Applications are available at www.irha.org.

If you previously applied, you must submit a new application for 2026 to be considered for the current season employment opportunities.

Submit your application to vcruger@irha.org or drop off to our primary office located at 828 27th Avenue, Fairbanks.

Applications and job descriptions can be downloaded at www.irha.org under Careers.

Available Positions:

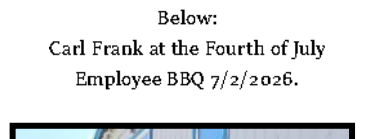
Carpenters
Laborers
Electricians

Contact information:

Phone: 907-452-8315
828 27th Avenue
Fairbanks AK 99701
Vcruger@irha.org



Above:
Vacant home rehab project in Stevens Village, Summer 2026



Below:
Carl Frank at the Fourth of July Employee BBQ 7/2/2026.



Above:

7/13/26-IRHA staff removed stairs and built a ramp for an Elder household.

Below:

7/13/26-IRHA Staff removed cottonwood trees from an Elder's property.



IRHA Lends a Hand During TCC Elder's Day of Caring

On July 13, IRHA proudly joined the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) Elder's Day of Caring alongside Fairbanks Native Association (FNA) and Denakkanaaga to support elders throughout the Fairbanks area. The 2nd annual event brought volunteers together to complete 20 service projects designed to help elders maintain safe, accessible, and comfortable homes.

IRHA crews completed two of the projects during the day. At one elder's residence, staff removed a set of aging stairs and constructed a new accessibility ramp, improving safe access to the home. At another property, the team removed several large cottonwood trees that posed maintenance and safety

concerns for the homeowner.

The Elder's Day of Caring is a meaningful opportunity for organizations and volunteers to give back to the community and honor the elders who have contributed so much to our region. IRHA was honored to participate in this collaborative effort and help make a positive difference in the lives of local elders.

We extend our appreciation to Tanana Chiefs Conference for organizing the event and to our partners at Fairbanks Native Association and Denakkanaaga for their shared commitment to serving elders in our communities. Through partnerships like these, we can continue strengthening the wellbeing, safety, and independence of Alaska Native elders.

IRHA Employees Celebrate Independence Day Together

IRHA staff gathered for the annual 4th of July Employee Barbecue, continuing a valued tradition that brings employees together to celebrate Independence Day and enjoy fellowship outside of the workplace. The event provided an opportunity for staff from across departments to connect, share a meal, and recognize the teamwork that supports IRHA's mission throughout the year.

Employees enjoyed an afternoon of food, laughter, and friendly conversation while celebrating the holiday. The barbecue served as a reminder of the strong sense of community within the organization and the importance of building relationships that contribute to a positive and supportive work environment.

Events like the annual employee barbecue help strengthen connections among staff members and provide an opportunity to recognize the dedication and hard work of employees who serve Tribal communities across the Interior. By coming together in a relaxed setting, staff are able to celebrate accomplishments, welcome newer team members, and reinforce the collaborative spirit that helps IRHA meet the housing and community development needs of the region.

IRHA extends its appreciation to everyone who helped organize and participate in this year's celebration. The annual 4th of July Employee Barbecue remains a favorite tradition and an opportunity to celebrate both the holiday and the people who make IRHA's work possible every day.

**IRHA is 94% Alaska
Native/American Indian Hire**

Could Your Community's Next Big Project Start with One Idea?

Every community has needs that people have talked about for years. Maybe homes need major repairs. Maybe families are living in overcrowded conditions. Maybe a community building is outdated, too small, or no longer safe. Roads, water systems, and other infrastructure may also need attention.

The Indian Community Development Block Grant, better known as ICDBG, may help turn some of those needs into real projects.

The next ICDBG Competitive Grant opportunity is expected to open in early September. That may sound like there is plenty of time, but the best time to begin planning is now.

ICDBG funding can be used for a wide range of projects that benefit low- and moderate-income tribal members. Depending on the funding announcement and the community's needs, projects may include new housing, housing rehabilitation, community facilities, infrastructure improvements, and some economic development activities.

A strong application usually starts with a simple question: What does our community need most?

From there, the community will need to show why the project is important, who it will help, and how it could be completed. Applications may also require photographs, cost estimates, tribal resolutions, land information, community data, and other supporting documents. Gathering all that information can take time, especially when several people or organizations are involved.

That is why communities should not wait until the grant announcement is released to start the conversation.

You also do not need to have every detail

figured out before contacting IRHA. A general idea is enough to get started. IRHA can help look at whether the project may be eligible, what information would be needed, and whether it could be a good fit for the upcoming competition.

It may help to think about a few questions: What is the most urgent housing or community development need? Who would benefit from the project? Is land available? Does the community support the idea? Are there photographs, inspections, waiting lists, surveys, or other records that help show the need?

Even if a project is not ready for this year's application, beginning the discussion now can help position the community for a future funding opportunity. Many successful projects start as a basic idea and become stronger over time as information, partnerships, and community support come together.

IRHA's new Grant Writer, Alyssa Briggs-Nash, will work with communities to identify needs, explore funding opportunities, and coordinate the information needed for applications.

Tribal leaders and community representatives with a potential ICDBG project are encouraged to contact Alyssa as soon as possible. The idea does not need to be perfect, and the whole project does not need to be planned out.

Sometimes the first step toward a major community project is simply saying, "Here is what we need. Can we find a way to make it happen?"

Contact information for Alyssa Briggs-Nash,
Grant Writer, is:
abriggs-nash@irha.org
907-452-8315 ext. 7161

Below:

IRHA staff celebrate Fourth of July with an employee BBQ



2027 Indian Housing Planning Underway

Below:

IRT Marines working in Allakaket



Below:

IRHA Acting COO, Lori Bishop,
speaking at the annual
Gathering of Remembrance
at the Golden Heart Plaza in
Fairbanks on
May 5, 2026.



IRHA has begun the planning process for the 2027 Indian Housing Plan (IHP) and is working with participating Tribes to identify housing priorities and eligible activities for the upcoming program year. As part of this process, each Tribal Council will be asked to provide a current resolution designating IRHA as the Tribe's Tribally Designated Housing Entity (TDHE), along with a completed IHP Tribal Certification form and selected housing activities for inclusion in the 2027 IHP.

The information provided by each Tribe is essential to ensuring that local housing needs and priorities are accurately reflected in the plan submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Eligible housing activities include housing rehabilitation, new construction, housing needs assessments and surveys, model activities, essential family assistance,

Title VI loan planning, and grant writing support.

Tribes may select one or more specific housing activities based on current community needs. If a Tribal Council is uncertain which activities to pursue at this time, the Tribe may choose "All Housing Activities" to maintain flexibility while continuing discussions with IRHA staff on future projects and funding opportunities.

IRHA encourages Tribal Councils to review the 2026 IHP as a reference and return all required documents as soon as possible. Early submission allows staff additional time to answer questions, confirm selected activities, and ensure each Tribe's priorities are incorporated into the 2027 IHP.

We also encourage community members to share with their local Tribal Council their needs so they can gather information to assess the needs of the community for planning future housing activities.

Gathering of Remembrance Brings Community Together in Honor and Healing

Each year, community members from across Interior Alaska gather in Fairbanks for the Gathering of Remembrance, a meaningful event dedicated to honoring loved ones who are no longer with us and supporting families on their healing journeys. The gathering provides a space for reflection, remembrance, and connection, bringing together elders, families, service providers, and community members in a spirit of unity and support.

The annual event includes cultural activities, memorial tributes, shared stories, and opportunities for participants to remember and celebrate the lives of family members

and friends who have passed on. Through these activities, attendees find comfort in community, strengthen cultural connections, and honor the lasting impact their loved ones have had on their families and communities.

The Gathering of Remembrance also highlights the importance of wellness, resilience, and mutual support. Organizations from throughout the region participate by providing resources, information, and services that help strengthen individuals and families facing loss and life's challenges.

IRHA was honored to participate in

Gathering of Remembrance Cont.

this year's event. IRHA Chief Operating Officer, Lori Bishop, attended the gathering, joining community members and partner organizations in recognizing the importance of remembrance, healing, and supporting one another. Her presence reflected IRHA's ongoing commitment to the well-being of the communities and families it serves throughout the Interior.

Events such as the Gathering of Remembrance help preserve cultural

traditions, foster healing, and reinforce the strong sense of community that continues to unite Interior Alaska. We thank the organizers, volunteers, and all those who shared their time, stories, and memories to make this year's Gathering of Remembrance a meaningful and memorable event. Through remembrance and community, we honor the past while supporting one another for the future.

Alaska Native Roundtable Discussions Foster Collaboration and Shared Solutions

Since the beginning of the year, Alaska Native leaders, Tribal representatives, organizations, and community partners have come together through a series of Alaska Native Roundtable Discussions at the invitation of Mindy O'Neill, Fairbanks City Mayor. The monthly in-person meetings with Alaska Native organization leaders, city and borough leaders meet to discuss several topics within our community and region. These gatherings have provided an opportunity to share perspectives, discuss challenges, and identify collaborative solutions.

The roundtable discussions covered a variety of topics, including housing, economic development, workforce development, public safety, healthcare, infrastructure, and other issues. Participants have engaged in meaningful dialogue, sharing local experiences and exploring ways to strengthen partnerships among Tribes, nonprofits, government agencies, and community organizations.

By bringing together leaders and stakeholders from diverse

backgrounds, the roundtables have created a forum where ideas can be exchanged openly, challenges can be better understood, and opportunities for coordinated action can be identified.

IRHA has appreciated the opportunity to participate in these ongoing conversations and learn from the experiences and priorities shared by local and Tribal leaders. The discussions have reinforced the importance of collaboration and the value of working together to address housing and community development needs.

As the Alaska Native Roundtable Discussions continue throughout the year, participants remain committed to strengthening relationships, promoting Tribal self-determination, and advancing initiatives that improve the quality of life for Alaska Native people and future generations. The ongoing dialogue serves as an important reminder that meaningful progress is achieved when communities come together to share knowledge, build partnerships, and work toward common goals.

Below:

New Construction house in Ruby



Marines working on a house in Beaver



2026 Deadline
Periods:
April 30
November 30

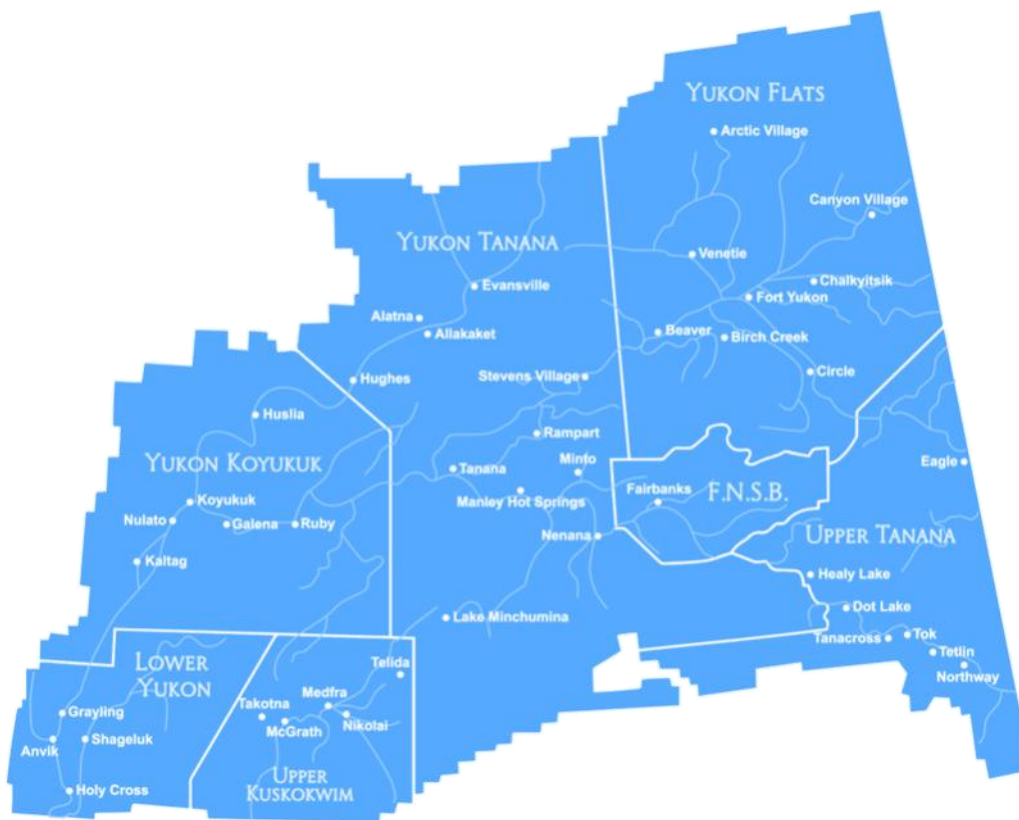
Apply for a grant

2026 RurAL CAP Foundation Grants

The RurAL CAP Foundation is offering small grants from \$500 to \$25,000 to support projects that strengthen and celebrate the culture, knowledge, and self-determination of rural Alaska communities. Open to tribal governments, nonprofits, and other eligible entities, these funds can help bring to life initiatives that honor traditional ways of life, support food sovereignty,

build community leadership, and protect the land and environment for future generations. This is an opportunity to invest in projects rooted in your community's values, stories, and vision—helping preserve cultural heritage while creating lasting local impact. Deadline is November 30.

[https://
www.ruralcapfoundation.org/](https://www.ruralcapfoundation.org/)



Communities We Serve

Alutna	Holy Cross	Shageluk
Allakaket	Huslia	Stevens Village
Anvik	Hughes	Takotna
Beaver	Kaltag	Tanacross
Birch Creek	Koyukuk	Telida
Chalkyitsik	Manley	Tetlin
Circle	Minto	Doyon:
Dot Lake	McGrath	Tok
Eagle	Nenana	Canyon Village
Evansville	Nikolai	Medfra
Grayling	Northway	Fairbanks
Healy Lake	Ruby	Lake Minchumina

Below:
Marines putting up wall studs in
newly constructed home in
Allakaket.



Joke Time:

Why did the house go
to the dance party?

*Because it heard they were
raising the roof!*

Thank you to our Community Partners

We thank all of these partners and the generous support they offer those we serve.



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Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
Main Phone: 907-452-8315
Toll Free: 1-800-478-4742
www.irha.org



Find us on Facebook at
<https://www.facebook.com/interiorregionalhousing>

Proudly Serving The Doyon/Tanana Chiefs Region