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## Introduction

Since 1992, the Native Village of Eklutna (NVE) has conducted several community surveys. Four surveys were considered in the development of this report, which is being compiled in preparation for economic development planning purposes. They provide a range of qualitative information concerning community visioning, planning and zoning, economic development and environmental issues (see attached). The sum knowledge they contain, captures something of the social, cultural, environmental, and economic well being of the community; from Tribal enrollment and income levels, job skills to natural resource and watershed restoration data. NVE has decided that they must first identify what they 'have' before they project future development opportunities.

An effort was made to scrutinize surveys, and where possible interview the originators of the surveys and/or summary authors. Demographic data from the 2000 NVE Tribal Member Survey was housed in Microsoft Access while economic related information was placed in a list format. Preliminary interpretation was based on a combination of feedback from CEO, Lee Stephan, and NVE Staff, individual interviews and the comments provided by survey respondents. Their critiques and commentary provide insight and clarity.

Although each survey has a different focus and they were conducted at different times, it is possible to highlight reoccurring themes and messages. The surveys are "snapshots" in time, but when placed together they help to capture where the community has been, where it is today, and where it would like to go tomorrow. We recognize that interpretations are just that – at best they are based upon ideas and thought processes founded in the community.

Finally, individual confidentiality is an issue that all parties took seriously. Great care was taken to make sure that surveys and comments remain with the Tribe.

## Community Visioning Surveys

### ▪ 1992 Survey

The intent of this survey was to begin a community visioning process designed to identify important issues of concern to residents. The Alaska Department of Community and Regional Affairs (now Alaska Department of Community and Economic Development, DCED) agreed to facilitate three community meetings, assist with a survey, and report back to the community. This was accomplished between December 1992 and January 1994. A mission statement was produced to help guide the future direction of Eklutna. Four main planning areas were identified to categorize issues: Community Development, Economic Development, Land, and Culture. This survey received twenty-five completed responses from NVE Tribal members and Village residents.

▪ **1999 Survey**

A copy of the 1992 Community Visioning Survey questions was distributed during a community planning retreat in February 1999. This survey provided an opportunity for the community to evaluate progress over the previous seven years (since the 1992-survey). The process was facilitated by The Growth Co., Inc. A new mission statement resulted and five broad goals were established: Education/Training, Community Development, Land, Economic Development, and Tribal Recognition. This survey received nineteen completed responses.

By using the same survey questions in 1992 and 1999 it makes it possible to compare results, highlight enduring messages and perhaps changing emphases among community and Tribal members. Questions asked individuals to rate the level of importance of a particular issue (“*Very important, Somewhat important, Not important*”). Although the survey included a closing section for written comments, the format did not encourage more detailed comment on individual topics.

Maria Coleman’s 1999 summaries captured information in two ways. The first table categorizes survey responses according to an approximate ranking (i.e. based on a “Very important...Not important” scores). A second grid grouped like-subjects, allowing for better cross-reference between the two survey periods and subject areas. For purposes of this report, we have chosen to use the same ranking process to graph and compare Tribal Member Survey data using Microsoft Excel (see Figures 1-7).

An interview with the summary author raised the concern that individuals might be wary of social-related questions – or that the survey suggested, “these are the problems, pick one.” Similarly, respondents may have felt that by emphasizing substance abuse or the need for improved parenting skills, they were admitting to having a problem. Questions were directed at individuals and nuclear families and not extended families and institutions. There was a concern that the 1999 Mission statement did not specifically address the needs of young people or children.

Surveys are not an exact science – but we feel that the visioning process and follow up work involving the Action Planning Team contribute to validity of the information and planning exercise.

**Enduring Messages**

Three enduring messages bridge the period 1992-1999 based on consistently high ranking across survey periods. They are:

- (1) Protect the land (see Figure 1)
- (2) Traditional hunting and fishing (see Figure 3)
- (3) Community Hall (see Figure 4)

Participants consistently rated these areas higher in both survey periods – in the case of “Protection of the land,” this topic scored a maximum in both years. These issues are of major importance to Tribal members as confirmed by later reference in the “Planning and

# Community Visioning Survey Results Comparison – 1992 and 1999

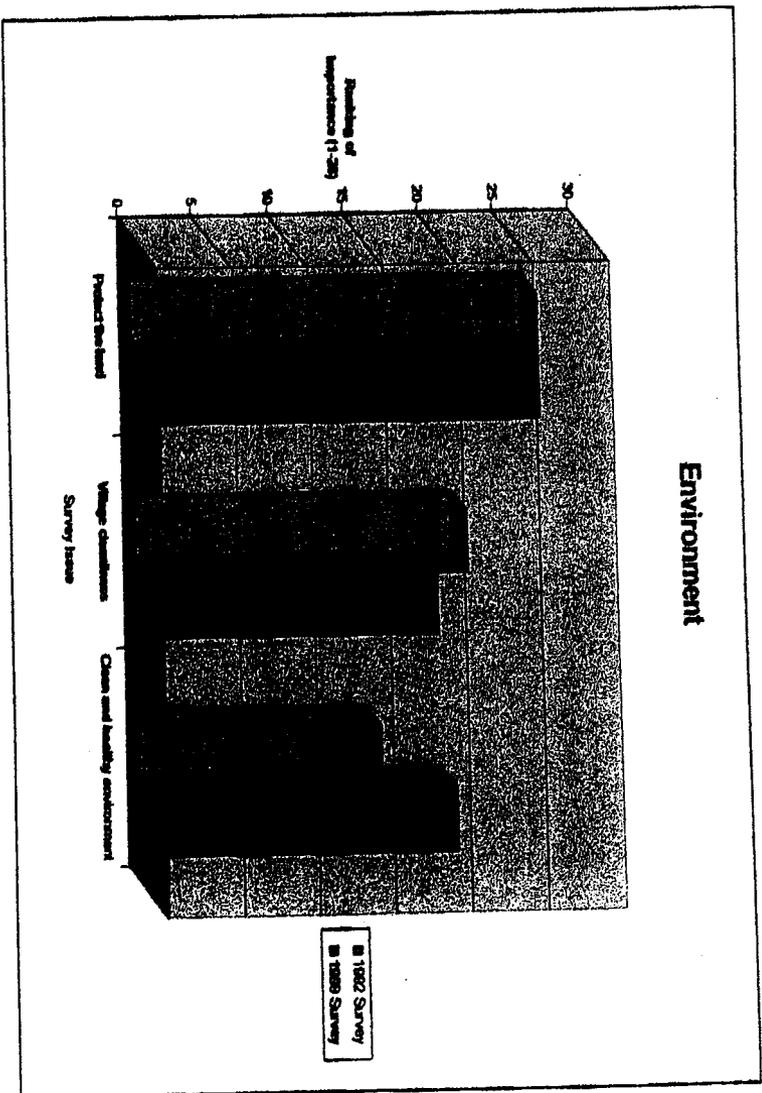


Figure 1

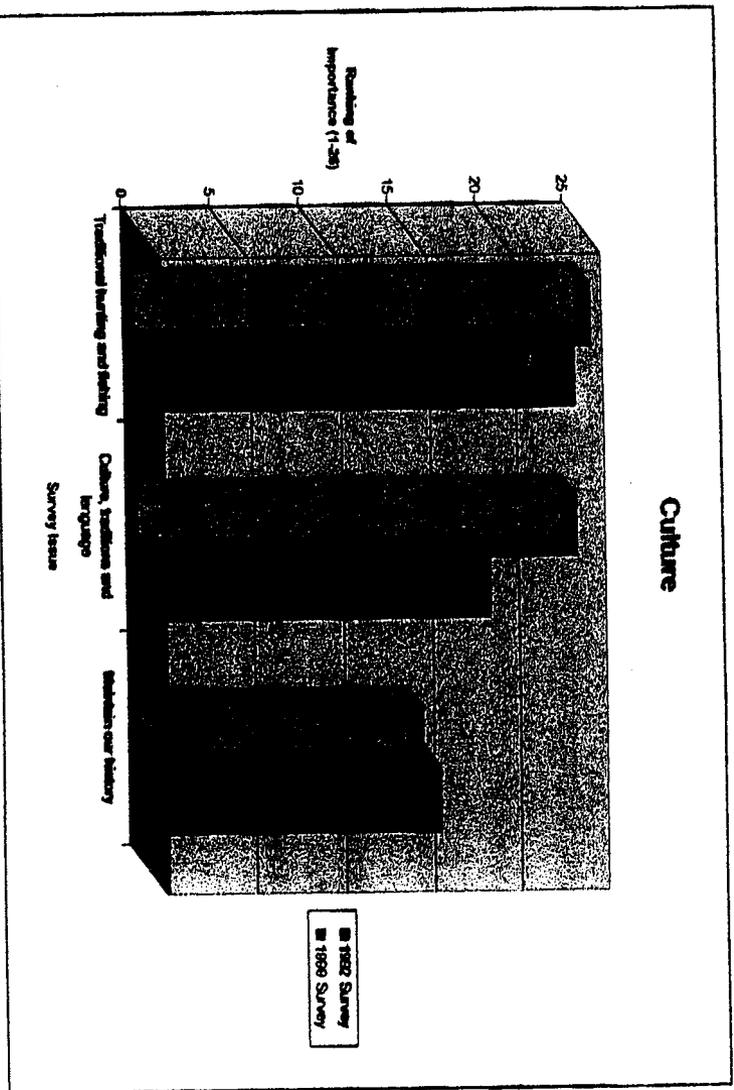


Figure 2

# Community Visioning Survey Results Comparison – 1992 and 1999

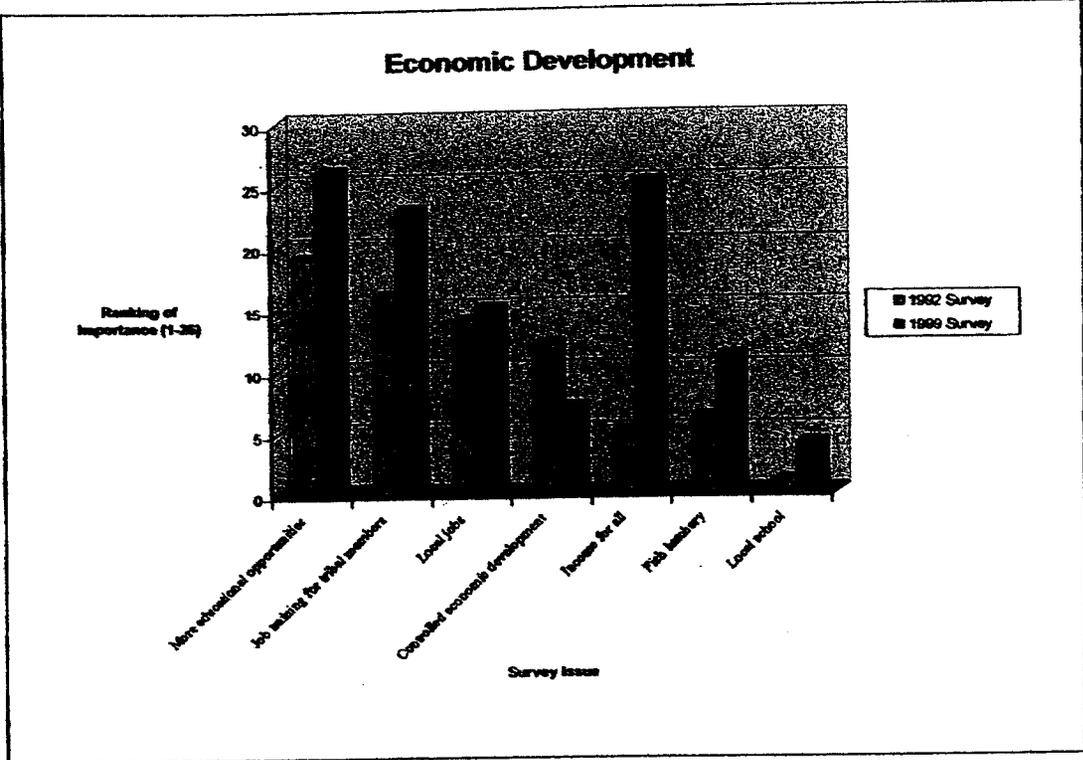


Figure 5

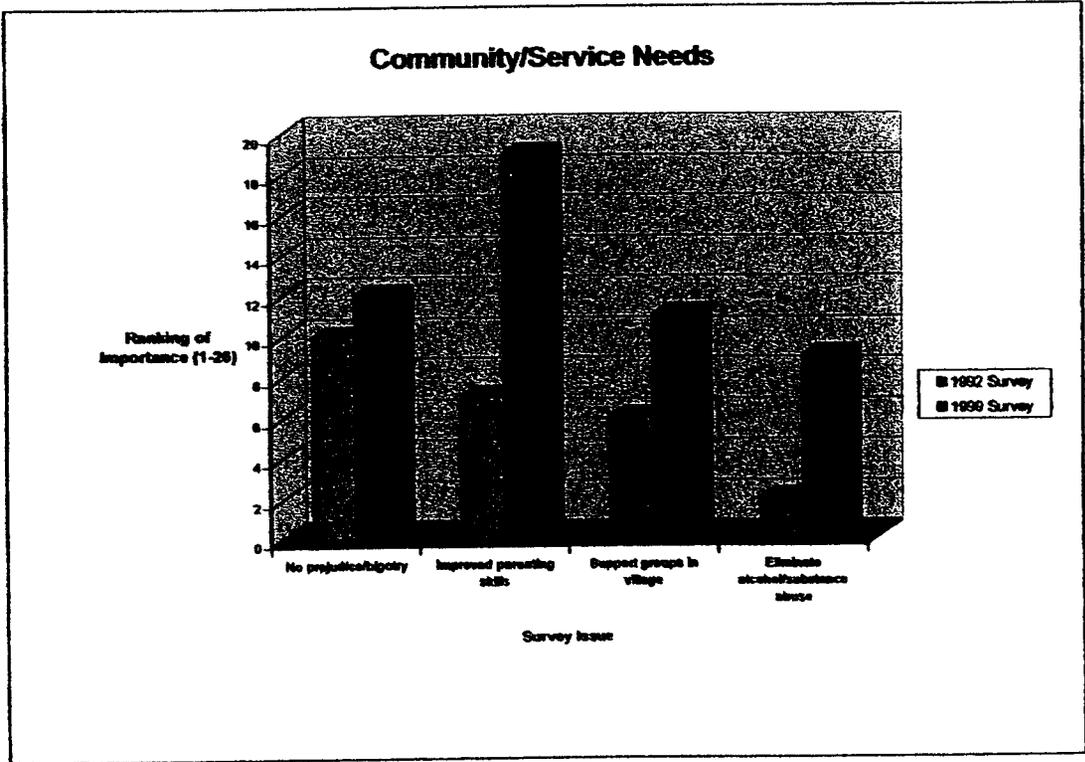


Figure 6

# Community Visioning Survey Results Comparison – 1992 and 1999

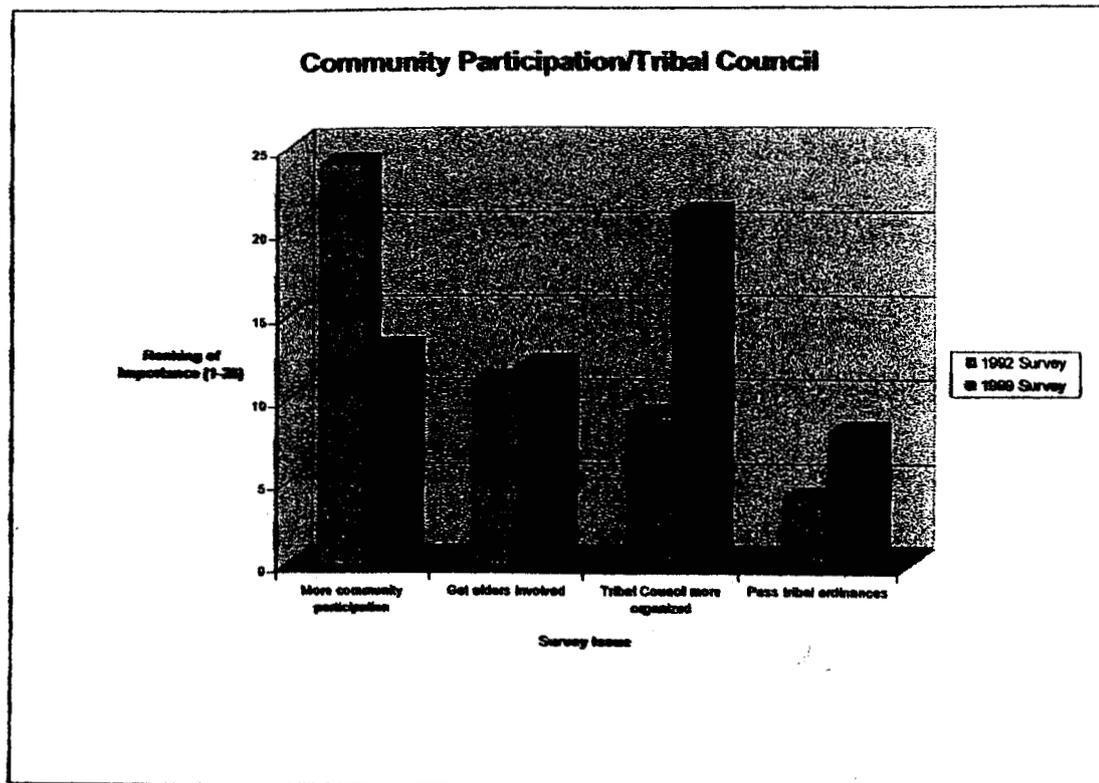


Figure 7

Zoning Survey.” The last item of the “Community Hall” is a discreet project, a partnership opportunity and a stepping stone for strengthening NVE’s relationship with Eklutna Inc. This is reflected in mission statements developed during the respective periods.

*“Need to establish a working relationship with Eklutna Inc. to acquire tribal sovereign lands for village facilities including a treatment center, school, health clinic, community hall and business purposes and to protect village lands and environment.” (1992 vision statement)*

*“By the year 2000, the Native Village of Eklutna will have regained control over its own community, ensuring a healthy environment, culturally appropriate education and training, economic development and employment opportunities, and the capacity to manage its traditional lands.” (1999 mission statement)*

If there were enduring community messages, there were also issues that ranked more highly in 1999. Changing emphases may indicate that these issues are of growing importance to Tribal members. We see them more fully represented in the later 1999 mission statement:

- (a) Land ownership within and adjacent to the Village of Eklutna (see Figure 3)
- (b) Economic Development issues including educational opportunity, job training, and income for all (see Figure 5)
- (c) Elder housing, parenting skills, group support, and efforts to address substance abuse (see Figure 6)

*(The list is not prioritized, but reflects the order in which issues appear in the Visioning Survey Table of Results)*

Last, but not least we listened with interest to the comment that the Growth Company Inc. may have added its own flavor to the 1999 visioning process. This is reminder that outside interpretation needs to be thoroughly grounded within the community.

### Planning and Zoning Survey

A Planning and Zoning questionnaire was distributed at the November 1997-Tribal Member Planning and Zoning meeting. Unlike the other surveys, this required written comments from the respondents. The intent was to find out what kinds of development people prefer to see (or not see) in and around the village. A third question asked for recommendations for people for an area planning and zoning committee. Seventeen of twenty-eight Tribal Members present responded to this survey. This survey format (requiring written responses) encouraged people to fully express their thoughts and feelings.

Below are some of the more common themes.

- Don't build out around the village – for the most part preserve those lands for subsistence and culturally related activities.
- Support improved community amenities including a community hall, community greenhouse, Post Office - school and improved facilities for young people.
- Housing for Tribal members and elders.
- A resounding “thumbs down” for “noisy, dirty, industrial activity.” Of those seven respondents who referred to the rock quarry, six were against it.

### **2000 NVE Tribal Member Survey**

In spring of 2000 a survey was distributed to begin collecting information for the Economic Development Plan. Many of the questions asked for personal information such as income levels, household expenses, marital status, number of people in the home, and budgeting. Other questions, which required written responses asked about job skills and experience, work history, work-preference as well as education and training goals. The survey sought to learn more about everyday needs such as hobby and recreational interests, diet and eating habits. It also explored what kinds of things motivated people and inquired about ways to help youth meet their educational and work related goals. There were twenty-three responses to this survey.

The survey was mailed to all NVE Tribal members with the majority of responses coming from resident adults. This was a thorough piece of work and with adaptation, the survey form offers a good template for long-term statistical information gathering. The most accessible demographic information has been housed in a Microsoft Access database. Valuable vocational, employment, skills, and training history/needs are currently recorded as lists, but eventually they should also be added to the database. The information helps to establish some baseline demographic data (see Figures 8 – 13) and a sense of current Tribal member job-related, vocational skills interests etc.

In addition, the survey and interviews provide a unique cross section of personal views and opinions relating to employment, unemployment, job preference, education, and job training. This is an area of growing interest to people – being fully prepared for the workplace. This also includes finding ways to juggle complex family and life issues, maintain the necessary energy and interest in a job in order to collect adequate income. Ideally, the picture allows for flexibility to continue to pursue – at least the idea of subsistence activity.

There was discussion about creating the steps to full-time employment. One suggestion was to allow individuals to “test the water” while working towards full-time positions.

Survey comments suggest several reasons why some adults find it difficult to manage full-time, 9-5 jobs. Comments included:

# Tribal Member Status and Residency – 2001

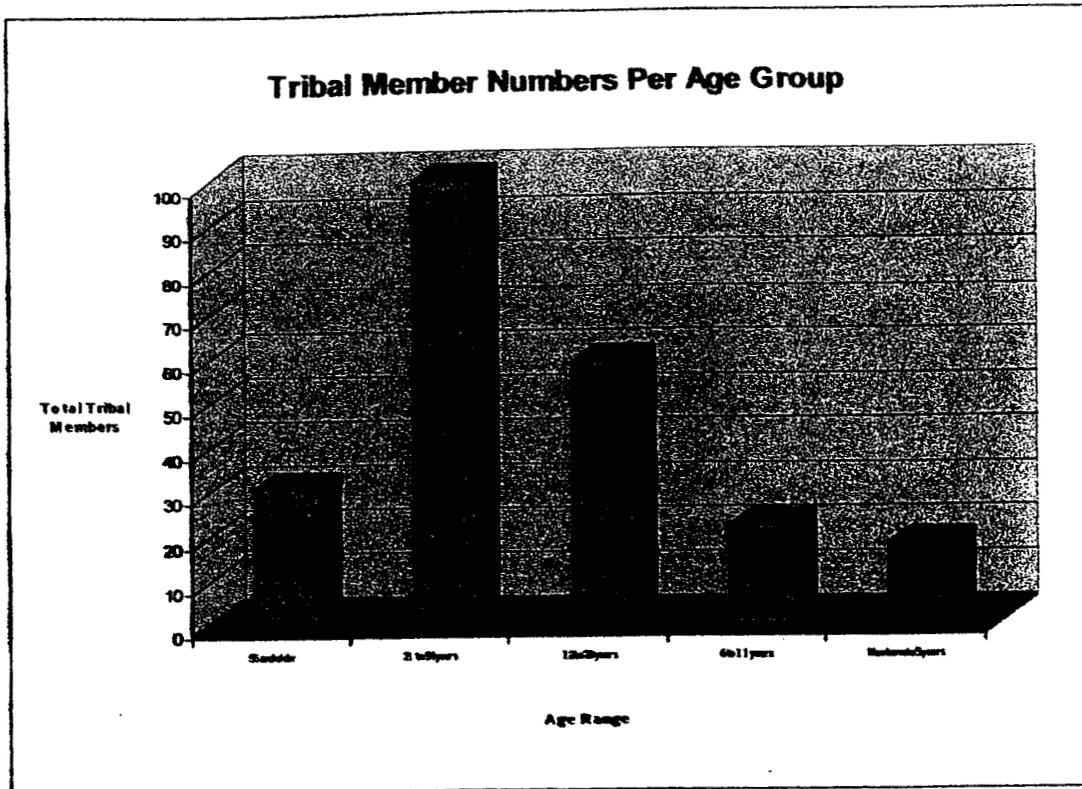


Figure 8

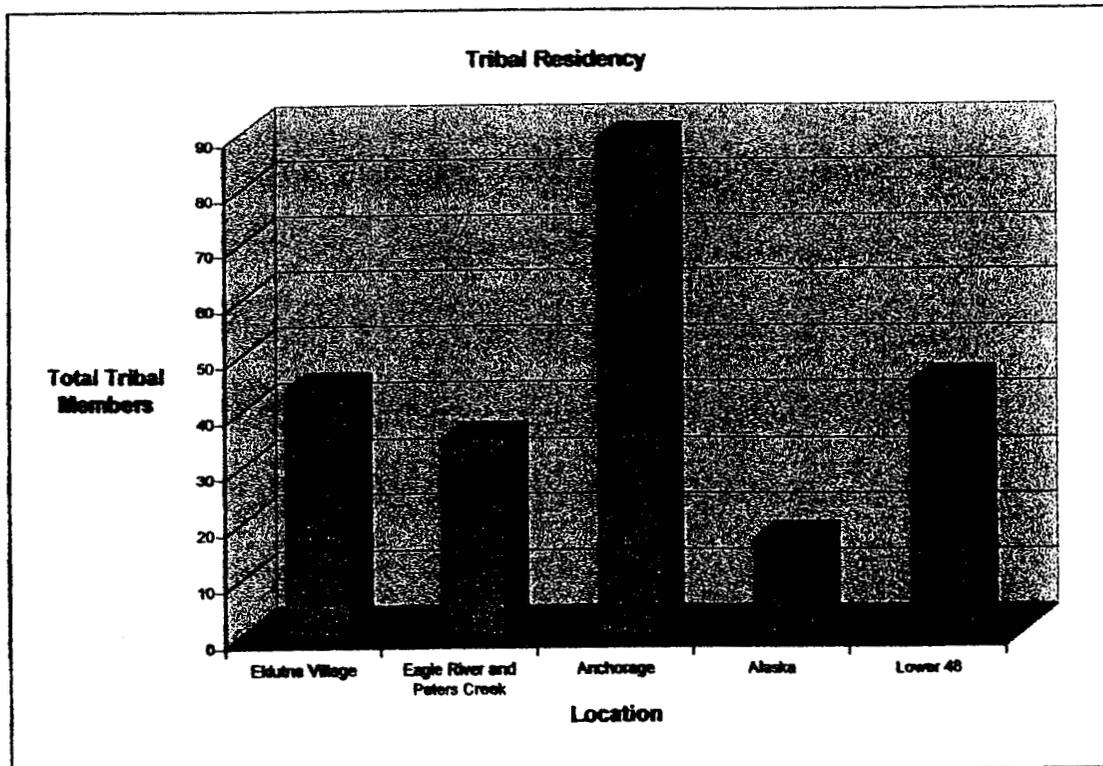


Figure 9

# Tribal Membership/Eklutna Inc. Shareholder Status – 2001

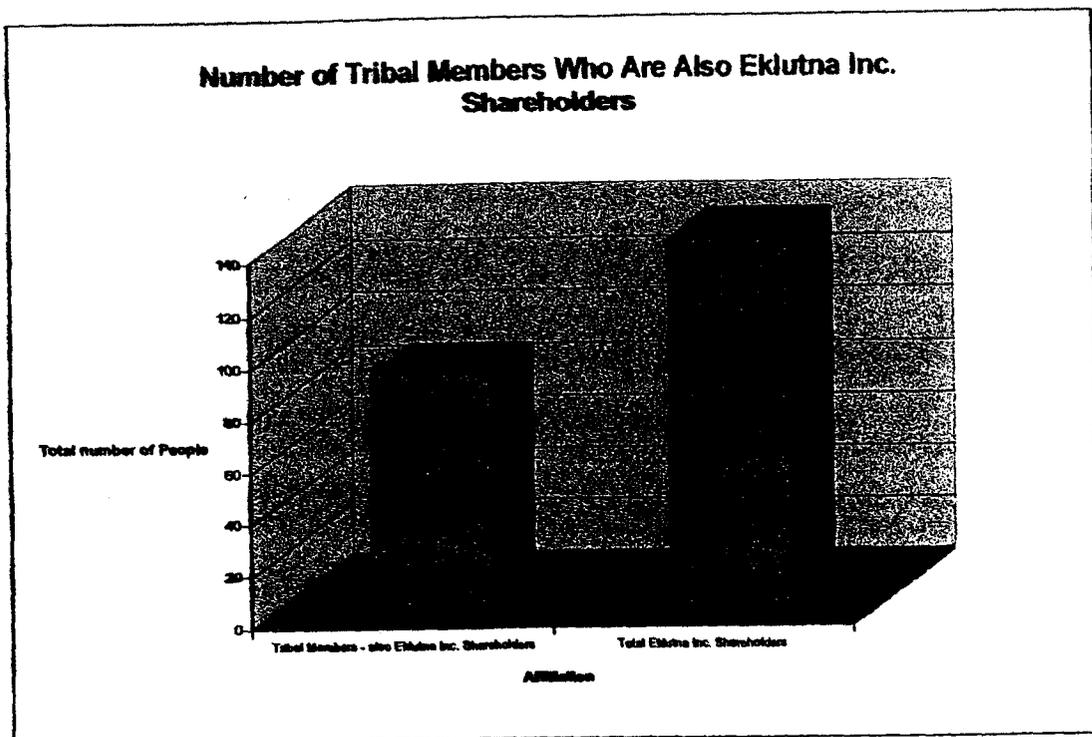


Figure 10

**2000 Tribal Member Survey  
Housing Situation**

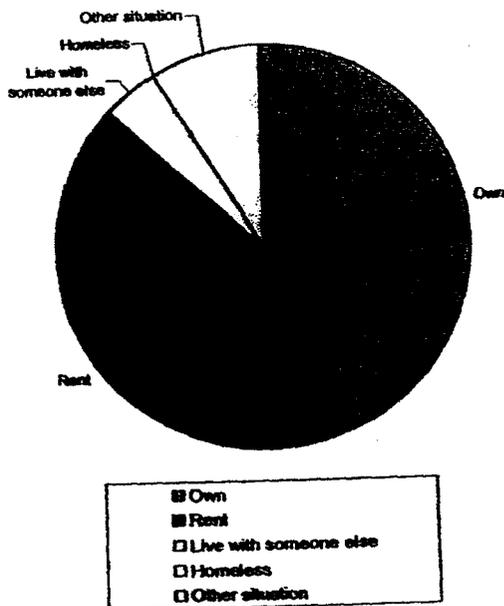


Figure 11

**2000 Tribal Member  
Survey:  
Housing/Payments**

**2000 Tribal Member Survey  
Monthly Housing Payments**

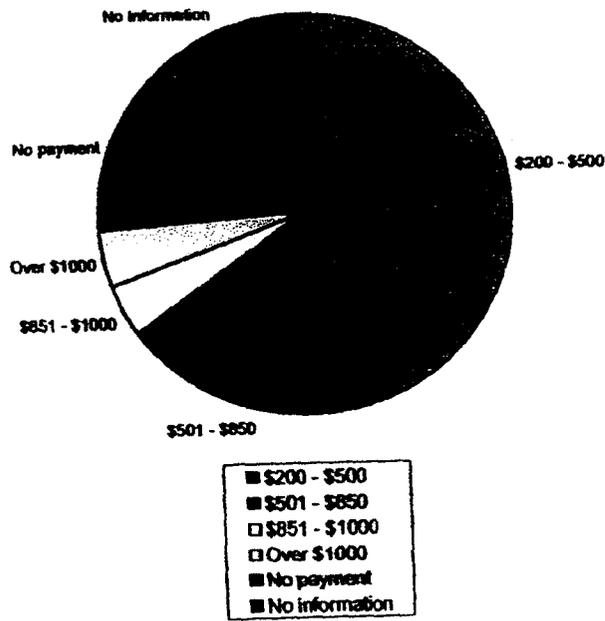


Figure 12

- A 9-5 schedule is not practical for some families.
- People don't like to commit to long-term jobs.
- Jobs don't fit the interests of community members.
- People ask for jobs-NVE says they have them, but still a connection is not being made.
- It is often difficult to get started after being out of the work force for a long time.
- Sometimes those who are more spirited simply don't like being told what to do.
- People only work when they're out of money.
- People "disappear" after CIRI checks arrive.
- Jobs created under grant funding require degrees.

Several recommendations were offered by Tribal members to help address concerns:

- Build in flexibility in the work place, especially for single parent families.
- Special provisions may be necessary to allow parents to succeed in the workplace – such as the occasional permission to work from home.
- Individuals need jobs designed for them, not ones they can 'fit' into.
- Design jobs that people can get a 'feel' for before deciding upon a full commitment.
- People prefer seasonal jobs to allow for commercial fishing and subsistence activities.
- Job development should focus on those who can't keep a job.
- Provide education, job training and professional development opportunities.

During interviews, it was stated that while young people are graduating from high school, it is important to get them trained and motivated early, before entering the work force. Opportunities exist for a variety of internship/mentorship opportunities through NVE. Involvement is the key – finding ways to excite young people and make them fully conversant with individual career opportunities and the job market.

### **Environmental Planning**

"The Native Village of Eklutna is concerned about the health and viability of their community. Located between two of the largest population centers in Alaska, Eklutna is affected daily by the influx of pollution. To gain information about this concern, NVE conducted a survey at its January 29, 2000 annual meeting. Twenty-one Tribal members responded. This report will serve as a starting place for the tribe to document members environmental concerns<sup>1</sup>."

During interviews, village residents often raised verbal concerns about cancer rates, yet the issue was rarely mentioned in written survey responses. It seems likely that respondents were focusing more on the health of the land and therefore didn't highlight the association they make between military waste sites, and buried railroad material and health issues (especially cancer).

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<sup>1</sup> From Marlene Johnson's report

Responses highlight clear priorities expressed by the community. There are the visible aspects of air and water pollution, garbage, junk cars – dust – and the more insidious hidden dumps and hazardous materials that people quietly worry about. We strongly support the report's assertion that a more in-depth community environmental assessment be completed (subject to federal and state funding).

### A Selection of Comments and Goals

*"(I would like to see) development, which contributes to the lifestyle and well-being of the village."*

*"A larger community hall will encourage more people to attend community events."*

*"Promoting acceptance and understanding between the community families."*

*Goal: To ensure the preservation, regeneration, and perpetuation of the traditional values, arts, crafts and practices of the Eklutna Athabascan people.*

*(1992 NVE Mission Statement)*

*"A lot of people have the ability to write (literature) but don't have computers or know how to get things published or the permitting process of documenting stories and history. It is felt that a historical account of Eklutna from the insiders perspective would be valuable."*

*"(I like to) carve wood, ivory, soapstone. I enjoy reading or writing. I've written some poems and have had a couple published but I hope to write a novel some day."*

*"For one thing, don't want too many outside people coming in - don't want it like Anchorage, that's why I moved out here. Peaceful, not too much noise."*

*"(Nothing) that degrades the lifestyle of the residents of the village anywhere within a mile of the residences."*

*"(I like to) bicycle, walk browse - (go) beach combing, boating and sailing."*

*" I like to hunt and fish, also, hiking, explaining and observing wildlife and the natural world. I also enjoy arts and crafts related to natural materials..."*

*"For one thing, I see a green house, more for the people..."*

*"No liquor stores, no businesses owned by outsiders..."*

*"(I like) talking with other Native Peoples, helping them learn ways to keep healthy bodies/teeth."*