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# Yukon Kuskokwim Delta Regional Strategic Plan

Two Year Work Program  
&  
Benchmark System

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## Vision Statement

### *Allakavkenaata\**

*We are a diverse People living in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta where values, traditions and cultures are respected and honored.*

*We envision ourselves as active participants in vibrant, safe, healthy and self-sufficient communities whose future generations will carry these values into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.*

*\*Yup'ik Eskimo word translating as: In our diversity we go on with life being no different from one another in our humanity.*

## Mission

**We will create hope in our families by providing opportunities for our children, care for our elders and a sustainable future for every family.**

## Introduction

The road to sustainable development is convoluted and complex. Our plan reflects the complex needs of our unique region by weaving all of the components of our plan together. For nearly 75 years, federal agencies (and later state agencies, as well) have developed and implemented programs in our region with absolutely no coordination. The result has been development that is inefficient and does not come close to maximizing local benefit. The funds are allocated for projects in our region, contracts are put out to bid, the most competitive proposals come from outside our region, a private firm comes in and completes a multi-million dollar project using few local people and leaves the region taking all of the profit, revenue, jobs and training with them. Construction projects are costly yet several can be going on in our region each summer and no effort is made to coordinate construction to minimize costs. **One of the primary concerns of the Yukon Kuskokwim Regional Strategic Plan is to coordinate development efforts by state and federal agencies to minimize project costs, maximize local employment and foster local involvement and ownership in rural development.** We see the coordination as the responsibility of the Strategic Planning Director. Regional coordination of projects will trickle down into every component of our Strategic Plan. Coordination cannot be limited to

*"I would make more houses for people and side walks to walk in the side walk and make a new play deck and play ground for kids and some road for cars and let the men have open gym night....."*

13 year old Atmautluak student

state and federal projects but will also include village-based development initiatives. One way to provide employment in a region of chronic joblessness is to hire local residents to do the work. We are committed to doing whatever must be done to see local residents employed in projects being developed in our villages. The basis of our Strategic Plan is to foster economic development on a village level by assisting with the creation and expansion of small businesses to meet the increasing needs of every community as well as participating in development projects. In order to have capable, competent and confident individuals in every village, we must strengthen and expand education from how it has typically been provided in western Alaska. Education must provide the knowledge and expertise to obtain meaningful and sustainable employment. In order to accomplish changes in education, we must utilize emerging technologies for distance education to reach people in every remote village. We must incorporate cultural components into education to ensure that students really learn. Last of all, we must make our communities better places to live so that our children see a future in every village.

## **THE STRATEGIC PLAN**

### **Summary**

The basis of our plan is to stimulate the economy of every village at the village level. We plan to do that by:

- Provide comprehensive and intensive assistance toward the development of small businesses.
- Offer gap financing to create new businesses and expand existing businesses.
- Develop home-based computer jobs such as data entry, web page development, accounting services, business proposal writing and selling Native arts and crafts over the internet.
- Establish a regional tourism plan that identifies distinctive “vacations” that can be marketed, as well as necessary village infrastructure such as the need for a restaurant.
- Create village public libraries that have books and periodicals as well as a public internet connection and public use computers. Information is power.
- Implement a regional training and education program targeted at getting people the knowledge and qualifications for jobs that typically are filled by residents from outside our region.
- Increasing the Supportive Services program to assist people with finding and retaining employment.

In order to accomplish our task of developing our regional economy into a sustainable economy, we must solve some basic problems by:

- Coordinating regional development
- Strengthening our regional recycling program and establishing waste reduction programs in every village.
- Delivering comprehensive mental health services to families, including alcohol and drug abuse counseling.
- Providing activities for our young people so that they will not succumb to hopelessness.

*"I well take care of my family and work to pay for the bills and I well make sure that my family got enough to eat and I like this village, This place is my home and I have to help my family go fishing and cut fishes."*

11 year old student

In every village, there is a need for services. Most villages do not have a child care facility, a library, a youth facility, a restaurant or lodging. Few villages offer services like tax assistance, beauty services, entertainment or small engine repair. Every village has so many needs and so many unemployed people that we had to figure out a way to get people working to provide those necessary services. Many of the needs are for the creation of small businesses that will be able to provide services.

Why is small business development so difficult on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta? As we created this plan, we realized that many people were stopped from developing a business by that first step in business development, the business plan. We are a region where the Yup'ik language is widely spoken and traditions remain the driving force of every day life. Creating a business plan is a monumental task for someone with limited experience and no access to computers. The second thing we realized was that loans and financing were intimidating to most people, enough to keep them from establishing a needed and profitable business. As we studied existing small businesses and reviewed comments from business owners, we discovered a third issue: during the first year, many small businesses need nurturing and assistance to accomplish business tasks.

The second component of our strategic plan was to find out why so many businesses, agencies and organizations hired people from outside of our region. We are a region of pervasive unemployment. The turnover rate of staff hired from outside the region is very high. Most do not stay more than two years. We asked the major employers why they did not hire locally and what could be done to increase local hire. Every business replied that local residents did not have the specialized training required. We quantified and categorized the training needs and include specialized training as a major portion of our strategic plan.

Part of the second component is training people to participate in the growing field of computer-based employment. Considering our extreme isolation and the lack of jobs in every community, we believe that technology-based employment will be a driving force in the future of our region. Computers and the internet make employment in fields like data entry, web page development, web-based marketing of indigenous products and tourism, and other jobs can be village-based using technology. Computer training will also be essential towards creating and delivering training.

The third major component of our strategic plan involves improving the quality of life in every village so that young people will feel that there is opportunity, hope and possibilities for the future. We need our young people to stay in our communities, find useful work and raise their families here. It is the only way to ultimately break the cycle of poverty, hopelessness and suicide that is slowly destroying every community. The planning committee worked with school children, college students and children residing in the regional youth corrections facility to find out what would make young people stay. We also surveyed community leaders and visited every fifth home to find out what people thought needed to happen to empower our

region. The results were humbling because they were not grand dreams but very simple requests for services that are taken for granted in virtually every other city in the United States. Children need a playground, people requested flush toilets, communities would like a public library, villages requested a community building, teenagers needed activities to keep them away from drugs, alcohol and vandalism.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

- Improve the quality of life for all residents and provide opportunities to discourage “immigration” to urban communities.
- Assist every community with meeting basic survival requirements like potable water, sanitary waste procedures, health services and safe housing.
- Provide the opportunity for personal growth by creating literacy programs, strengthening adult basic education, offering parenting programs, and providing public access to information and information technology.
- Coordinate job training with job demand by developing employment agreements with private businesses and organizations and training agreements with the University of Alaska and the Alaska Vocational Technical Education Center to train people for specific jobs.
- Develop new businesses and expand existing businesses to provide needed services and employ local residents.
- Emphasize home-based technology-oriented business development.
- Maximize regional resources by initiating region-wide comprehensive planning and coordination among federal, state, and local governments, private industry and regional agencies and organizations; efficient use of resources for greater regional benefit.
- Offer supportive services to remove barriers to job training and permanent employment.
- Strengthen distance delivery education and communication capabilities to provide better education services, improved communication, access to information and the opportunity to participate in the global internet economy.
- Create opportunities for children and teenagers to learn, grow and build self-confidence by providing activities that keep them entertained and away from the perpetuating cycle of hopelessness and substance abuse.

# COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

## INTRODUCTION

Change has come slowly to the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta. Villages remain isolated and small. No roads exist. The population in most villages is over 95% Yup'ik and the Yup'ik language is widely spoken. The land and environment of our region remains a dominant force in every life. The seasonal patterns of subsistence harvest have changed little over the last 4,000 years. It is true that the introduction of modern technology and western practices brought great changes to the Yup'ik way of life. Skin boats, dog teams, bows and arrows and subterranean sod homes have been replaced by outboard motors, snow machines, rifles, modern houses, oil heat, telephones, television and computers. Nevertheless, the central facets of the Yup'ik way of life persist.

The last two years have resulted in extremely low salmon returns. Our region has been designated a natural and economic disaster area. Statistically, it appears the disaster impacts 30% of all families but the effect is felt through out the region.

## THE YUKON KUSKOKWIM DELTA

### OUR REGION

Forty-seven Native Alaskan villages are scattered over an area larger than the state of Ohio. No roads connect villages to each other or to the rest of Alaska. Yup'ik Eskimo have inhabited the region for more than 12,000 years. Traditionally, Yup'ik tribes were nomadic, following caribou herds in the winter and living in temporary fish camps in the summer. In the 1950's, the US Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) built schools at fish camp sites and families settled in one place in order to send children to school. For the last 60 years, villages have struggled to catch up with the rest of the United States. Today, most homes lack piped water and sewer; a "honeybucket" is used for human waste even in the clinics. Approximately half of the homes lack a telephone. The unique characteristics of the delta made it a perfect place for nomadic tribes but a great challenge for permanent villages. The delta terrain is silt underlain with permafrost. The region is treeless subarctic tundra. The cost of bringing infrastructure like telephones and electricity to villages has been extremely high. For many years, missionaries and the federal government encouraged the assimilation of Yup'ik people into western culture yet today native arts and traditions flourish. The Yup'ik language is widely spoken. Most families depend on subsistence foods like seal, walrus, caribou and fish.

Sixty years of merging two distinct cultures has resulted in a myriad of social problems. Alcohol abuse has effected every family. Modern conveniences have replaced traditional practices, leaving people with a lot of time and nothing to do. The lack of jobs in every village has led to a sense of hopelessness, especially among the younger generations who see "real life" on cable television programs. Joblessness is chronic. The cost of constructing community facilities is staggering (even gravel has to be barged up from Seattle). Boredom and hopelessness lead to increased alcohol and substance abuse. Violent crime is increasing.

The remoteness and isolation of each village has helped us keep our traditions and culture in tact. The isolation has also kept many families dependent on welfare for we have never

developed an economic base and there are very few jobs. In most villages, people work for the city and tribal government and some work at the village store. Teachers are hired from outside the region. Unemployment figures do not capture the true picture because they count only people who have filed for unemployment and do not consider the chronic jobless situation.

Our children make up more than half of the population; our villages are rapidly expanding. Education is limited and children routinely score in the lowest quadrille on standardized tests. It is for the children that we need this project. The children are growing up spending their time watching television and videos instead of listening to the stories of elders. They are caught in limbo between the glamorous lifestyles and adventures on television and the isolation of their own village. Suicide rates are very high. Young people in rural Alaska are 25 times more likely to kill themselves than their peers in urban Alaska. Substance abuse is prevalent and has touched every family. Our children need hope; they need to know that there are ways that they can stay in their own community and live full productive lives. We cannot expect children living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to live in the past of our elders. We cannot expect them to relocate to 400 miles to Anchorage be able to access books and information, obtain education and training, or find work.

#### **LOCATION**

The Yukon Kuskokwim Delta is located in western Alaska. The region encompasses over 58,000 square miles, it includes both coastal and inland waterway environments. Bethel is the regional hub community, with a deep water port, a runway adequate for landing jet planes and 25% of the region's population. The other 46 villages, ranging in population from as few as a 100 to as large as 1,000 are situated along the navigable waterways and coast. The northwestern boundaries of our region begin in Emmonak at the mouth and up to Russian Mission on the Yukon River, east over to the upper Kuskokwim community of Stony River and down to the mouth of the Kuskokwim River in Quinhagak and Goodnews Bay. The southern and western boundary is the Bering Sea from the mouth of the Kuskokwim River in the south, west up along the Bering Sea coastline, past Nunivak and Nelson Island, back to the mouth of the Yukon River.

#### **POPULATION**

*All population estimates are based on 1990 U.S. Census information and 1996 Public Health Nursing population estimates.*

The population of the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta is 23,051. Bethel Census Area had 15,659 people and Wade Hampton Census Area had 7,392 people in 1996. Between 1990 and 1996, population increased 16.2% for the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta region. Children four years of age and under represented 14.7% of the population. 44.9% of the population are children under the age of 18. Elders over 65 years of age represent 4.5% of the regional population. The hub community of Bethel is 63% Alaska Native. Excluding Bethel, the rest of the communities are 95.8% Alaska Native. The regional average household has 3.828 members. Some villages average more than five people per household. An estimated 42.9% of the population is living in poverty, according to the U.S. Census. For detailed population data by community and age,

please see the Appendix.

### **LANGUAGE**

Most of the people in our region are Yup'ik and speak Yup'ik fluently. English is maintained as a second language.

### **HISTORY**

The Native people of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta are traditionally nomadic, following seasonal subsistence patterns of fishing, hunting and gathering food. During the late 1700's, Russian explorers entered the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Trading posts or forts ("redoubts") were established between 1819 and 1851. Native people in the region already had access to some Eurasian goods, such as knives, lances, iron, and tobacco, from trade across the Bering Strait and routinely traveled seasonally to trading centers such as *Pastuliarraq*, near present-day Kotlik. Native trade routes connected the southern coast of Norton Sound, the lower Yukon, and interior Athapaskan groups.

Even with limited contact during the Russian period, European diseases already had disastrous effects on Native peoples, attested by the 1838 smallpox epidemic which affected people in both the lower Yukon and the lower Kuskokwim. Disease and the suppression of warfare by the Russians resulted in the establishment of fewer camps.

American explorers, businesses and missionaries began to impact the region in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the late 1880's, the Moravian missionaries in the Lower Kuskokwim region and the Society of Jesus on Nelson Island began to establish themselves as driving social forces throughout the Delta.

The sudden appearance and influence of missionaries coincided with the most disastrous influenza epidemics of 1900 and 1912, which were responsible for the deaths of as much as 70% of the indigenous population in some areas, and in combination resulted in substantial changes in Native spirituality and social mores in a single generation.

Since the turn of the century, because of growing participation in the cash economy, access to schools, amenities, church facilities, health care, and modern technology, the trend towards population growth and stability in fewer larger communities has continued.

### **GEOGRAPHY**

The Yukon Kuskokwim Delta is sub-arctic tundra, with more than 400,000 charted lakes and ponds. Boreal forests are located along the upper Yukon and Kuskokwim river but most of our region is treeless tundra. The Kilbuck Mountains line the eastern boundary of our region. The majority of land is located within the Yukon-Kuskokwim National Wildlife Refuge. All villages are located along the river system.

### **GEOLOGY**

Generally, all villages on or near the coast are tidally influenced wetlands with fine, silty soil.

Construction is extremely difficult because of the nature of the land. Communities situated along the upper river systems are on good stable ground with access to gravel.

### **COASTAL GEOLOGY**

The general geology of the coastal and delta drainage area consists of older coastal deposits of interlayered alluvial and marine sediments including coastal delta deposits. The soils are formed from stratified silts and sandy lacustrine deposits and alluvial sediments. The soil is ice-rich and frost susceptible. The soil has fine grain, is poorly drained and usually collapses when it thaws. Moderately thick to thin permafrost is expected, with a maximum depth extending to about 600 feet. Permafrost is absent around large bodies of water. The active layer of permafrost is estimated to range between 1.5 and 3 feet deep, depending on ground cover and weather conditions.

The land that encompasses most of the coast is classified as Palustrine System wet tundra; common types are emergent marshes and swamps and open water ponds (Cowardin 1979). Vegetation is either subarctic wet, subarctic moist or subarctic alpine tundra, depending on the elevation. All the soil is underlain by permafrost, with possible exceptions around lakes. Approximately 80% of the vegetation in Kotlik is tundra; the remaining 20% is a combination of high and low bush muskeg, and both lowland and bottom land forest. Tundra vegetation is commonly sedges, grass, dwarf scrub and peatland complexes.

### **INLAND GEOLOGY**

The geology of the central Kuskokwim river region is dominated by a sequence of folded, sedimentary rock comprised of limestones, graywacke, siltstones and shales of Cretaceous and Tertiary age or earlier. These earlier sedimentary deposits are overlain in places by Late Cretaceous to early Tertiary volcanic and plutonic rock and some Quaternary basalt flows. During the late Pliocene or early Pleistocene epochs, the Kuskokwim Mountains were uplifted. The present topography has developed by erosion of this old surface on the uplifted blocks. The upper Cretaceous beds have been faulted at shallow depth into crested folds, which tend to parallel the margins of the sedimentary basin. Bedrock is locally overlain by thick surface deposits of loess and alluvium or colluvium of Pleistocene and Holocene age (Box, et al. 1993, Cady, et al. 1955).

### **FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES**

The abundant wetlands that characterize the Y-K Delta provide habitat for many species of fish, wildlife and waterfowl. All species are important to commercial, subsistence and recreational activities. Species include anadromous fish, including all species of salmon, boreal smelt and arctic cisco. Fresh water fish include northern pike, blackfish, stickleback, shefish, burbot and five species of whitefish. Wildlife species include black bear, moose, hares, beaver, mink, muskrat, otter, fox, weasel, caribou, seals and occasionally polar bear and Pacific walrus.

### **THE TUNDRA WETLAND ECOSYSTEM**

The Yukon Kuskokwim delta is one of the most productive waterfowl breeding areas in the world. Most of the region is part of the 26,000,000 acre federal Yukon Delta Wildlife Refuge.

## SEASONS - CLIMATE & SUBSISTENCE

### SUMMER

We have short, ice-free summers beginning in early June through the end of August. Summer is the most productive season of the year with long daylight hours and seasonal economic and subsistence opportunities. Summer months are the most important for gathering subsistence foods. Salmon and herring begin their annual runs soon after the winter ice melts on the rivers and coast. Salmon and herring are harvested in large quantities and dried, smoked and frozen for use all year long. As summer ends, people are busy gathering blueberries, salmonberries, cranberries, crowberries, currants and rose hips.

### FALL

Autumn is September and October, with cooler days, rain, snow, and rapidly declining daylight hours. Most residents are subsistence gathering and storing the last of their fish and concentrating on moose hunting for meat to supplement their diet. Coastal villages harvest seal, walrus and belugas. Migratory birds like teal, widgeon, mallard, pintails, shovelers, sandhill cranes, swans and geese begin their journey south. The temperatures begin dipping below freezing and ice forming on lakes and rivers. The rivers being the primary avenue for transportation is not safe and residents are confined to their respective villages for a period of time.

### WINTER

From November through March, the temperature can range from 40 above to 40 below zero. The land, rivers, and lakes are frozen; when there is enough snow cover, travel is possible in any direction. Winter is the slowest time. Subsistence activities include ice-fishing for pike, burbot and tomcods and catching whitefish and blackfish with nets and traps set under the ice. Ptarmigan and rabbits are hunted. Fox, mink and beaver are trapped and the fur is used to make beautiful winter garments like parkas, hats and gloves. Fur is also sold commercially.

### SPRING

From March through May, the temperature warms and daylight increases dramatically. There is a short period of time when the ice is breaking up and flowing down the rivers that travel is limited. Spring is an important time for harvesting migrating waterfowl and marine mammals.

*"I want a Post Office, a store, and new housing."*  
11 year old Pitka's Point Student

## ECONOMY

Western Alaska is characterized by the lowest per capita income and the highest unemployment rate in the state. Obstacles to local economic development are complex and interdependent. Unemployment and underemployment are chronic problems for each one of the 56 villages. Job opportunities are rare and often restricted to seasonal labor. The poverty rate approaches 100% in some villages and averages 40.95% for the villages. 70.5% of the region's population has Low to Moderate Income (LMI) classification. The region is 88.4% Native Alaskan. Excluding Bethel, the regional hub and the headquarters for all government agencies, the region is approximately 95% Native Alaskan.

Many residents are dependent on public assistance. Transfer payments (public assistance) contribute more than \$1.9 million to Y-K Delta villages each month. The unavailability of work, the dependency on transfer payments and the hopelessness that accompanies such dependency has been linked to a myriad of social problems. High rates of alcohol and substance abuse, suicide, depression, and domestic violence have all been affiliated with chronic unemployment. The Coastal Village Fishing Cooperative stated in the 1993 annual report to the state of Alaska that "...it is easier and preferable to remain on welfare rather than enter the labor force." CVFC concluded that dependency on welfare and the hopelessness that accompanies such dependency must be "unlearned". Communities addressing these problems must somehow develop "...comprehensive programs of individualized attention and career counseling." (CVFC 1993).

### **SUBSISTENCE**

Subsistence is the foundation of village life. We cannot stress the value of subsistence. Subsistence provides traditional food for our families and is a strong tie to the land, the environment, the past and the future. The economic value of subsistence is very difficult to calculate. Most subsistence food cannot by law be sold so value must be derived from substitute goods; it is very difficult to find a substitute for seal. We are dependent on subsistence foods and the nature of every village is intricately linked to subsistence. The last two years have resulted in extremely low salmon returns, impacting the subsistence harvest.

### **COMMERCIAL FISHING**

1,408 individuals own fishing permits on the lower Kuskokwim and lower Yukon River. Approximately 30% of all families are entirely dependent on commercial fishing for income. The last two years have resulted in extremely low salmon returns, plunging our region into economic disaster.

### **GOVERNMENT**

Local, state and federal government provided 61.8% of all of the jobs in the region; 66% of the jobs in the Wade Hampton Census region and 60% of the jobs in the Bethel Census region.

### **OTHER BUSINESSES**

Private businesses made up 35.7% of the jobs on the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta. The private sector employed 31.7% of the working individuals in the Wade Hampton Census region and 37% of the jobs in the Bethel Census region. 34% of the private sector workforce is in retail, 22% in transportation, 11% in communication, 5% in repairs and 5% in personal services.

### **UNEMPLOYMENT AND JOBLESSNESS**

Unemployment figures do not accurately represent the chronic jobless situation in our region. In order to be considered unemployed, an individual must not be working, must be interested in a job and must have recently sought work.

The Alaska Department of Labor has the following unemployment rates for January through July 1998:

- Wade Hampton Census Area unemployment rate averaged 14.68%.
- Bethel Census Area unemployment rate averaged 7.98%.

*"Because I don't think there will be a future for me here, I mean, what is there here for me. There ain't no jobs for me."*  
17 year old Kotlik student

The latest Rural Alaska Labor Market Survey (March 1998) data shows that many residents of villages are interested in working but do not seek work because they believe that no jobs are available. Previous research, including the *Lower Yukon-Kuskokwim Region Labor Market Analysis* prepared by the Alaska Department of Labor, Research and Analysis Section, has shown that a significant portion of the working age population could be considered "discouraged workers" because of the limited employment opportunities in rural Alaskan villages.

**COST OF LIVING**

The Alaska Department of Labor estimated that the cost of living in Bethel was 32% higher than living in Anchorage in 1996 and on average 46.2% higher than the average cost of living in the western United States (AK DOL 1996). The cost of living in the remaining 46 villages is considerably higher than Bethel; the cost varies dramatically depending on the population of a village, if it can be reached by barge, if the air strip is lighted and if there is a store in the village.

**PUBLIC ASSISTANCE**

Welfare reform has a tremendous impact on Yukon Kuskokwim Delta villages. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 gives the Metlakatla Indian Tribe and the 12 regional non-profit tribal organizations in Alaska the opportunity to administer the public assistance program Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). AVCP has contracted with the State of Alaska to administer components of the Alaska Temporary Assistance Program.

<b>Statistics (1990 U.S. Census)</b>	<b>Kuskokwim Delta Communities</b>	<b>Yukon Delta Communities</b>
Population 1991	6871	1756
Unemployment	19.7%	31.1%
Per Capita Income	\$8,916	\$6,519
Median Household Income	\$17,196	\$21,388
Per Capita Transfer Payments	\$791	\$808
Median Household Size	4.2	4.28
Homes Lacking a Complete Kitchen	77.4%	75%
Homes Without Plumbing	80.8%	74.3%

**1997 AND 1998 FISHERY DISASTER**

*"In western Alaska, 8,000 families have been affected by the unusual climatic conditions that resulted in drastically low returns of salmon this year. From the upper Yukon to lower Bristol Bay, Alaska residents have told us there is need for immediate assistance. Without cash from the commercial fishery, families need help to pay their electric bills, buy this winter's fuel and maintain their subsistence activities."*

Governor Tony Knowles, July 30, 1998

In 1997 and 1998, the chum salmon runs were extremely low for the Kuskokwim River. Families depend on chum salmon for subsistence. 809 residents have commercial fishing permits for the Kuskokwim River. The low salmon run had a tremendous impact on the economy of the region. The State of Alaska declared the lower Kuskokwim River communities an economic and natural Disaster for two consecutive years.

In 1998, the lower Yukon River also experienced low numbers of returning salmon. 599 residents of the villages along the lower and middle Yukon owned fishing permits on the Yukon River. The situation was so bad that the Red Cross airlifted baby food and baby formula in August 1998 to the sub-regional hub village of Emmonak for distribution to needy families. The lower Yukon River was also declared a Disaster.

Governor Knowles announced he is writing President Clinton to seek federal disaster assistance through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Small Business Administration, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, Low-income Home Energy Assistance Program and other federal programs. Knowles spoke with FEMA director James Lee Witt this morning and asked him to tour the impacted area and will ask other Clinton Administration cabinet members to do the same during planned visits to Alaska this summer.

#### **THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT QUOTA PROGRAM**

The Community Development Quota program (CDQ) was developed to enable residents of rural coastal communities in western Alaska to participate in the groundfish fishery off their shores in a way that will bring significant economic development to the Bering Sea region. The CDQ program is administered jointly by the Alaska departments of Community and Regional Affairs (lead agency), Commerce and Economic Development, and Fish & Game. The CDQ program is a federal program which allocates 7.5% of the total-allowable-catch of the Aleutian Island and Bering Sea pollock fishery, as well as a portion of the halibut and sablefish quota, to eligible communities in that region. The halibut and sablefish CDQ program is granted in perpetuity, and the pollock program has been extended by the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (NPFMC) until 1998. The State of Alaska is responsible for the administration and monitoring of the program.

Two regional CDQ groups operate on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Coastal Villages Fishing Cooperative (CVFC) represents the villages of Chevak, Chefornak, Eek, Goodnews Bay, Hooper Bay, Kipnuk, Kongiganak, Kwigillingok, Mekoryuk, Newtok, Nightmute, Platinum, Quinhagak, Scammon Bay, Toksook Bay, Tuntutliak and Tununak. Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association (YDFDA) represents the villages of Alakanuk, Emmonak, Kotlik and Sheldon Point.

*"I want it to be the greatest of all the rural areas."*  
13 year old Scammon Bay Student

#### **CHILD CARE**

Approximately 1,480 children live in sixteen villages where there are no registered child care providers. Child care assistance is available but a client must utilize a registered child care

provider. Many parents have cited the lack of available child care as one of the primary barriers to employment.

### **POVERTY**

The poverty rate averages 42.9% for the villages in our region. The poverty rate is lowest in Bethel (12.2%) and highest in the village of Stony River (100%).

### **TRANSPORTATION**

We are a region of bush communities; no roads connect our villages to each other or to the rest of Alaska. Transportation costs are high and weather often hinders travel schedules. We are dependent on air freight all year long for groceries, supplies and mail. During the summer, the rivers are free of ice and barges deliver bulk gas, heating oil, construction material, vehicles, equipment and dry goods to the deepwater port in Bethel. In Bethel, items are off-loaded on to shallow draft barges for delivery to individual villages. Bethel has an airport with a runway adequate for landing a jet. Freight and mail is transferred to small planes for village delivery.

All fuel for the entire winter must be delivered to every village during the summer. Our homes are virtually all heated by oil. Planes, boats, equipment and vehicles depend on gasoline. The wetland environment requires fill for the construction of any homes or buildings and all gravel must be barged from Anchorage to construction sites.

People and families travel between villages by air all year long. Snow machines are common for travel in the winter. Four-wheelers are used in the summer. The intricate river system of the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta makes travel by boat the most common method of travel.

### **ELECTRICITY COSTS PER KW HOUR**

The average cost of electricity is \$0.20 a Kilowatt hour. The cost of electricity ranges from \$0.29.9 per KW in Toksook Bay to \$0.12.2 in Chefornak. **This is the state-subsidized cost of electricity - the price that consumers pay.** The state subsidy is called Power Cost Equalization. Every community provides electricity by using diesel-powered generators. Fuel is transported by barge in the summer and stored in bulk fuel tanks in every village.

### **POWER COST EQUALIZATION**

This program reduces electric rates paid by consumers in rural communities where diesel-fired generators provide most of the local electrical needs. The program aims to roughly equalize the power cost per kilowatt hour statewide, at a cost close to the average cost per kilowatt hour in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau.

### **BULK FUEL STORAGE**

Every community has bulk fuel tanks that hold the fuel for generating electricity, heating homes and powering vehicles and machines.

### **WATER AND SEWER**

Permanently frozen ground makes piped water and sewer systems costly to develop and

difficult to maintain. Only less than 30% (14 communities) have a piped water system. Outhouses are not possible. "Honeybuckets" are used to haul human waste from homes and businesses to the sewage lagoon. The wetland ecosystem means that the water table is very close to the surface and sources of potable drinking water are hard to find. Coastal communities are tidally influenced and drinking water can become contaminated with salt water. Landfills and hazardous waste leach through the wet ground, causing contamination. Hauling honeybuckets to the sewage lagoon are taken on four-wheelers or snow machines over frost-heaved boardwalks. Honeybuckets and honeybucket spills cause wide-spread health problems.

#### **WATER**

Residents haul water from a central community well at the washeteria, collect rainwater in summer, melt ice during the winter and also haul river water. Some villages have piped water systems. All teacher housing and schools have a piped water system but many clinics do not.

#### **SEWER**

Residents haul honeybuckets to the sewage lagoon or to a bunker. Some villages have a honeybucket haul service. Bunkers are excavated with a vacuum. Some village have piped sewer systems. All teacher housing and schools have a piped sewer system but many clinics do not.

#### **HONEYBUCKETS**

Honeybuckets are plastic five-gallon buckets used for a toilet. Bags are placed inside the buckets to make disposal easier but the plastic bags cannot be left in the sewage lagoon. Plastic bags interfere with the discharge and treatment of waste.

#### **LANDFILLS**

Landfills are prone to seasonal floods. The absence of rocks or soil for filling in the dumpsite results in blowing trash. Landfill sites are very difficult to locate. The nature of the ecosystem, combined with state and federal guidelines, restricts landfill sites. In many communities, landfills are full or filling up fast. A tremendous amount of food and supplies is shipped into every village. In the recent past, communities relied on subsistence for food but that is not the way life in any village any longer. Communities today are dependent on store bought packaged food. Our communities were not prepared to deal with the drastic increase in waste. We have few recycling programs in place and little community involvement. Waste reduction is a way of life that our communities need to embrace if we are to move toward sustainability

#### **ROADS**

No roads link our villages to each other or to the rest of Alaska. Bethel, the regional hub and home to more than 25% of the regional population, has 16 miles of road. Most villages rely on a boardwalk system. In the winter, the wetlands and all rivers and lakes are frozen, making travel on snow machine popular. The Kuskokwim River is plowed in the winter to create an "ice road". During the summer, the complex river systems links villages and functions as a major transportation link.

## **AIRPORTS**

Every village depends on an airport. Airports are a vital link to health care, food and supplies. Constructing and improving airports is a costly and lengthy project because of the unstable wetland geology and the cost of transporting heavy equipment and materials. Only two airports have runways that are capable of landing a jet. All freight must be offloaded and transferred to smaller planes. Some airports do not have runway lights, severely limiting travel during the dark winter months.

## **HOUSING**

According to data and statistics gathered by the AVCP Regional Housing Authority (AVCP RHA) from sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Public Health Nursing, AVCP Inc. and village surveys, there are over 2,700 low-income families who need housing assistance. HUD population figures furnished to the AVCP RHA show there are over 13,000 village tribal members living in our villages comprising 2,928 families. About 83% of these families are low-income. Approximately 23% of the families are defined as elderly with nearly 75% being low-income, and 40% of the families are classified as being near elderly. About 90% of the families live in substandard housing with 89% of these families being low-income. Over 72% of the families live in overcrowded conditions, with 89% being low-income.

Therefore, based on this information, there is an estimated need of over 1,700 single-family homeownership units and slightly over 1,000 rental units needed to meet the unmet housing needs for low-income tribal village families.

## **HOUSING PLAN**

The geographical distribution of housing assistance is planned so that each of the 40 villages will have a minimum of 5 single-family houses constructed every 5 years. The order of villages receiving housing assistance shall be determined by the governing body of the AVCP RHA based on the needs assessment results portion of the Comprehensive Survey. Also, it's important to note that the high percentage of the low income families demonstrate why modernization activities have a high NAHASDA funding priority.

## **SCHOOLS**

Each community has an elementary and high school facility. Academic skill development is a major obstacle; student test scores are among the lowest in the United States.

## **LIBRARIES**

In 1997, the situation was the same in 41 of the 47 communities; the school had a small library that was not open to the public. Two villages (Pilot Station and Alakanuk) had libraries with no staff, no telephone lines, no computer and no circulation of materials. Three schools (the Yupiit Nation School District of Akiak, Tuluksak and Kwethluk) opened the library to the public in the evenings and circulated books between themselves. One village (Aniak) had a recognized library. No village had computers or internet service that residents could use. We received small grants from the Department of Education Library Services for eight villages:

Chevak, Chefornak, Toksook Bay, Kwigillingok, Bill Moore's Slough, Pilot Station, Saint Mary's and Crooked Creek. We used the funds to purchase a public use computer for the new library. In January 1998, 24 villages got together to form the Association of Yukon Kuskokwim Delta Libraries (AYKDL), a non-profit corporation with the mission of bringing information and technology to the villages of western Alaska. Since January, we have submitted more than \$1 million in grant proposals and are working with the State of Alaska for recognition of our village libraries.

#### **RADIO AND TELEVISION**

We have one regional radio station (KYUK) and one television station (Alaska Rural Communication Service (ARCS)). ARCS combines programs from all five networks in Anchorage (ABC, NBC, CBS, FOX and PBS) and broadcasts on one satellite stream. ARCS is based in Bethel and operates under rules and regulations established for public broadcasting. No local television service exists; all news is produced 400 miles away in Anchorage. Most villages have local cable access. Cable television provides service to the AlaskaOne public television station. KYUK public television is part of AlaskaOne but access to cable is necessary to view anything but the ARCS channel in a community.

#### **RADIO**

KYUK public radio station is a vital link to the villages in our region. The public radio and television station will play an important role in the tribal college, the library system and telecommunications. KYUK 640am the public radio station for the region. KYKD, a private Christian radio station, operates out of Bethel and can be received in nearby communities. KCUK is a small public radio station broadcast from Chevak; KCUK rebroadcasts KYUK for part of the day and produces its own local programming as well. Our region depends on the vital link that KYUK radio provides. Many homes (52%) do not have telephones and KYUK provides services like the *Tundra Drums*, a message service read on the air three times daily. KYUK also gives comprehensive weather forecasts, news and entertainment. KYUK must comply with U.S. Federal Communication Commission requirements for digital broadcast by the year 2002.

#### **TELEVISION**

ARCS broadcasts a combination of programs to every village. Anchorage news is available on television twice a day. Bethel has a studio and equipment for making and producing films and television programs because KYUK television is part of the Alaska Public Broadcasting Service.

#### **JUVENILE CRIME**

The Bethel Youth Facility serves all of the villages in the region. Between 1990 and 1996, total referrals to the Bethel Youth Facility averaged 352 annually. 17% of the juveniles referred to the Bethel Youth Facility were 12 years old or younger. Approximately one-third of the referrals were for drug and alcohol abuse violations, compared to a 16% average for the state of Alaska. 95% of the juveniles referred to the Bethel Youth Facility were Native Alaskans.

The problem is much more complex than a rise in population and an increase in juvenile crime. Recent tragedies in Bethel and the surrounding villages of Emmonak and Quinhagak have brought the anger, anguish and inability to cope of many of our children to the forefront. More adults are leading sober lives but unresolved family issues put children at a significantly increased risk for violence, suicide and drug, alcohol and inhalant abuse.

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Family and Youth Services (DFYS) reported that the agency did not consistently meet its statutory mandates and did not meet DFYS's own internal measures of effective casework. In 1997, DFYS was unable to respond to more than 5,000 reports of harm because of a lack of resources.

Participants in Parenting Classes have often disclosed that they were once in the DFYS system and had experienced early childhood neglect and abuse. The failure of the state child protection system at providing effective and adequate intervention at the first signs of abuse and neglect has a direct effect on the potential for children to become juvenile offenders and adult offenders. We are unable to cite data for our region that proves the correlation between childhood abuse / neglect and crime but we know that the powerful link exists.

#### **ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE**

Alcoholism and drug abuse affects every community. Almost every resident is touched in some way to a death or accident caused by substance abuse. Alcohol is a major contributor to suicide, accidents and violent crime. Alcoholism reflects and distorts the complex problems in every village, including the debilitating and demoralizing effects of joblessness and chronic unemployment. The issues of self-worth, family and cultural values, and social responsibility must be components of any project.

#### **HEALTH CARE**

Health care is provided by the Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation. The regional hospital is a 50-bed general acute care medical facility located in Bethel, Alaska. It consists of a single-story steel frame structure encompassing 100,000 square feet of space, and has full accreditation by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. Hospital services include a 19-bed adult medical-surgical ward, an 18-bed pediatric ward, a 7-bed obstetric ward, 6 swing beds (Adult/OB), and the following: outpatient department, emergency room, dental department, eye clinic, pharmacy, lab, X-ray, and specialty clinics.

The Hospital supports the largest field health care program in Alaska. Presently, 170 Community Health Aides (CHAs) who work in 49 village-built clinics make up the heart of the YKHC health care delivery system. They are predominantly Native Alaskan and work in a unique and challenging environment. Living in their home communities, they provide basic health-care services to the villages in the Y-K Delta. CHAs work and consult with the Hospital physician staff via telephone when consultation is necessary. Complex health care cases are referred to mid-level practitioners or physicians. Recent program developments have included the introduction of modern telecommunications equipment that enhance the quality and efficiency of CHA's patient services.

Hospital service is based on a unique service plan called "Group Practice". Three wings of the hospital are dedicated to outpatient care, each wing dedicated to serving a pre-set group of villages, so that all patients according to which village they are from are seen in either Group Practice I, II or III. Each patient is assigned a doctor, who, from then on, will be the patient's physician for as long the doctor is employed by YKDRH, therefore ensuring that the patient's condition is being monitored by the same health care provider. Group practice successfully eliminated long outpatient waiting periods and patients being seen by a variety of doctors lacking knowledge of the patients' history.

**Dental** provides emergency, routine, and educational dental services.

**Dental Disease Prevention** provides for Regional Fluoridation Programs, which includes Quality Control, topical fluoride, mouth rinses, and dental health education.

**Eye Care** provides primary vision care including eyeglasses and contact lenses, diagnosis and treatment of vision disorders and eye disease.

**Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** provides nutrition education to pregnant and breast-feeding women, infants and children whose health is threatened by low income and nutritional needs, and provides supplemental foods that can help to correct serious nutritional problems.

**Group practices** provides outpatient clinic services for all residents of the Delta. Each Group Practice serves a designated group of villages, and each patient is assigned a physician within the practice. Group Practice is the core of Bethel based outpatient services.

**Streptococcal Surveillance** provides throat culture testing for strep infection and reports (Group A, Strep-positive patients) to health care providers and assists in patient follow-up. The program also monitors epidemic levels of strep occurrence, as well as provides education on strep infection and rheumatic fever.

**AIDS/HIV Case Management** provides treatment, contact tracking, referral and Sexually-transmitted disease education to patients in an effort to treat or prevent HIV/AIDS.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

A Village Public Safety Officer is located 40 communities. In addition, regional enforcement is provide by the Alaska State Troopers who have an office in Bethel and Aniak. Village Public Safety Officers (VPSO) have a documented need for training. Training would enhance the ability of VPSOs to best possible service to community residents.

## **ANCHORAGE**

Anchorage is 399 air miles due east of Bethel. We feel that it is important to point out that Anchorage is culturally and geographically distant from bush Alaska. The only way to get to Anchorage is to fly to Bethel or Aniak and connect to a "mainline" flight. The average cost of travel from Bethel to Anchorage is between \$330 to \$476 round trip. Anchorage is a large urban city with a population of 226,338. Only 6.4% of the population is Alaska Native.

## **GOALS & STRATEGIES**

### **Summary**

The basis of our plan is to stimulate the economy of every village at the village level. We plan

to do that by:

- Provide comprehensive and intensive assistance toward the development of small businesses.
- Offer gap financing to create new businesses and expand existing businesses.
- Develop home-based computer jobs such as data entry, web page development, accounting services, business proposal writing and selling Native arts and crafts over the internet.
- Establish a regional tourism plan that identifies distinctive "vacations" that can be marketed, as well as necessary village infrastructure such as the need for a restaurant.
- Create village public libraries that have books and periodicals as well as a public internet connection and public use computers. Information is power.
- Implement a regional training and education program targeted at getting people the knowledge and qualifications for jobs that typically are filled by residents from outside our region.
- Increasing the Supportive Services program to assist people with finding and retaining employment.

In order to accomplish our task of developing our regional economy into a sustainable economy, we must solve some basic problems by:

- Coordinating regional development
- Strengthening our regional recycling program and establishing waste reduction programs in every village.
- Delivering comprehensive mental health services to families, including alcohol and drug abuse counseling.
- Providing activities for our young people so that they will not succumb to hopelessness.

In every village, there is a need for services. Most villages do not have a child care facility, a library, a youth facility, a restaurant or lodging. Few villages offer services like tax assistance, beauty services, entertainment or small engine repair. Every village has so many needs and so many unemployed people that we had to figure out a way to get people working to provide those necessary services. Many of the needs are for the creation of small businesses that will be able to provide services.

Why is small business development so difficult on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta? As we created this plan, we realized that many people were stopped from developing a business by that first step in business development, the business plan. We are a region where the Yup'ik language is widely spoken and traditions remain the driving force of every day life. Creating a business plan is a monumental task for someone with limited experience and no access to computers. The second thing we realized was that loans and financing were intimidating to most people, enough to keep them from establishing a needed and profitable business. As we studied existing small businesses and reviewed comments from business owners, we discovered a third issue: during the first year, many small businesses need nurturing and assistance to accomplish business tasks.

The second component of our strategic plan was to find out why so many businesses, agencies

and organizations hired people from outside of our region. We are a region of pervasive unemployment. The turnover rate of staff hired from outside the region is very high. Most do not stay more than two years. We asked the major employers why they did not hire locally and what could be done to increase local hire. Every business replied that local residents did not have the specialized training required. We quantified and categorized the training needs and include specialized training as a major portion of our strategic plan.

Part of the second component is training people to participate in the growing field of computer-based employment. Considering our extreme isolation and the lack of jobs in every community, we believe that technology-based employment will be a driving force in the future of our region. Computers and the internet make employment in fields like data entry, web page development, web-based marketing of indigenous products and tourism, and other jobs can be village-based using technology. Computer training will also be essential towards creating and delivering training.

The third major component of our strategic plan involves improving the quality of life in every village so that young people will feel that there is opportunity, hope and possibilities for the future. We need our young people to stay in our communities, find useful work and raise their families here. It is the only way to ultimately break the cycle of poverty, hopelessness and suicide that is slowly destroying every community. The planning committee worked with school children, college students and children residing in the regional youth corrections facility to find out what would make young people stay. We also surveyed community leaders and visited every fifth home to find out what people thought needed to happen to empower our region. The results were humbling because they were not grand dreams but very simple requests for services that are taken for granted in virtually every other city in the United States. Children need a playground, people requested flush toilets, communities would like a public library, villages requested a community building, teenagers needed activities to keep them away from drugs, alcohol and vandalism.

## STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

- Improve the quality of life for all residents and provide opportunities to discourage “immigration” to urban communities.
- Assist every community with meeting basic survival requirements like potable water, sanitary waste procedures, health services and safe housing.
- Provide the opportunity for personal growth by creating literacy programs, strengthening adult basic education, offering parenting programs, and providing public access to information and information technology.
- Coordinate job training with job demand by developing employment agreements with private businesses and organizations and training agreements with the University of Alaska and the Alaska Vocational Technical Education Center to train people for specific jobs.
- Develop new businesses and expand existing businesses to provide needed services and employ local residents.
- Emphasize home-based technology-oriented business development.
- Maximize regional resources by initiating region-wide comprehensive planning and coordination among federal, state, and local governments, private industry and regional agencies and organizations; efficient use of resources for greater regional benefit.
- Offer supportive services to remove barriers to job training and permanent employment.
- Strengthen distance delivery education and communication capabilities to provide better education services, improved communication, access to information and the opportunity to participate in the global internet economy.
- Create opportunities for children and teenagers to learn, grow and build self-confidence by providing activities that keep them entertained and away from the perpetuating cycle of hopelessness and substance abuse.

# Two Year Work Plan

# TWO YEAR WORK PLAN

## **Introduction**

The road to sustainable development is convoluted and complex. Our plan reflects the complex needs of our unique region by weaving all of the components of our plan together. For nearly 75 years, federal agencies (and later state agencies, as well) have developed and implemented programs in our region with absolutely no coordination. The result has been development that is inefficient and does not come close to maximizing local benefit. The funds are allocated for projects in our region, contracts are put out to bid, the most competitive proposals come from outside our region, a private firm comes in and completes a multi-million dollar project using few local people and leaves the region taking all of the profit, revenue, jobs and training with them. Construction projects are costly yet several can be going on in our region each summer and no effort is made to coordinate construction to minimize costs. **One of the primary concerns of the Yukon Kuskokwim Regional Strategic Plan is to coordinate development efforts by state and federal agencies to minimize project costs, maximize local employment and foster local involvement and ownership in rural development.** We see the coordination as the responsibility of the Strategic Planning Director. Regional coordination of projects will trickle down into every component of our Strategic Plan. Coordination cannot be limited to state and federal projects but will also include village-based development initiatives. One way to provide employment in a region of chronic joblessness is to hire local residents to do the work. We are committed to doing whatever must be done to see local residents employed in projects being developed in our villages. The basis of our Strategic Plan is to foster economic development on a village level by assisting with the creation and expansion of small businesses to meet the increasing needs of every community as well as participating in development projects. In order to have capable, competent and confident individuals in every village, we must strengthen and expand education from how it has typically been provided in western Alaska. Education must provide the knowledge and expertise to obtain meaningful and sustainable employment. In order to accomplish changes in education, we must utilize emerging technologies for distance education to reach people in every remote village. We must incorporate cultural components into education to ensure that students really learn. Last of all, we must make our communities better places to live so that our children see a future in every village.

## **PROJECTS**

- Small Business Development
- Education & Training
- Technology & Internet Services
- Libraries
- Public Broadcasting
- Solid Waste Management
- Tourism
- Youth Programs
- Infrastructure & Housing
- Childcare
- Supportive Services
- Regional Coordination & Plan Implementation

### **Small Business Development**

Small business development will involve:

- The establishment of a Gap Financing program to assist with the down payment on business loans
- Creation of a Micro Loan program
- Small Business Incubator to help businesses through the critical first years,
- Small Business Development Team to staff the Incubator and provide comprehensive, bilingual technical assistance.
- Expand Revolving Loan Program outreach.

### **Education & Training**

Implementation of a regional training and education program in partnership with the private sector targeted at providing the specific training necessary for a competent and qualified workforce. The education system that is currently in place does not meet the basic needs of our residents. A branch of the University of Alaska is located in Bethel but housing and funds are limited. The Alaska Vocational Technical Educational Center (AVTEC) is located 550 miles east in Seward, Alaska. We have a well documented need for adult basic education, literacy programs and specific job training. We have been working on a plan for the development of a Tribal College with funds from a five-year Kellogg grant. The Tribal college will offer classes as an umbrella organization, contracting training from the University of Alaska, AVTEC, and other institutions. Training will be specifically for the creation and retention of an employable workforce. Training will incorporate cultural components, Native languages and distance delivery technology to bring information to every village. We have a documented need for training public safety officers; the training of officers is essential to guarantee the basic safety and security of residents. Initial training will be specifically related to specific jobs in such fields as Public Safety, Water Operation, Solid Waste Management, Public Safety, Library Services, Government Administration and Community Planning.

Education & Training will involve:

- Development of a regional Comprehensive Education, Employment & Training Plan
- Development of a Tribal College Development Plan
- Designing Distance Delivery courses
- Coordinating education programs
- Securing funding for development

### **Technology & Internet Services**

Individual access to information is an essential component of sustainable community development. Telecommunications and emerging technology will enable villages to communicate with other communities, research projects, access health information and participate in effective distance-delivery education courses. Our need is especially great because the longer we do not participate in computer-based telecommunications, the farther we have to go to catch up. We propose using the allocated funds to entice private businesses to establish local Internet Service Providers in every village. Almost every community school has a federally funded internet connection; we would like to see service extended to homes. Home-

based internet services will play a critical role in the economic development of our region. We cannot rely on the production of goods to create jobs and income; the service industries are the best hope for long-term economic development. Access to information and technology is absolutely essential.

Technology Access will include:

- Working with telecommunications providers
- Working with schools and school districts
- Working with libraries and the Tribal College Development Office
- Securing funds to make access to information available in every village

### **Libraries**

Strengthening the new Tribal Public Libraries will include:

- Regional training event on creating, establishing and administering libraries and library programs
- Hire a Library Planner to coordinate library development efforts
- Increase library materials for village libraries
- Pursue America Reads programs for village libraries
- Apply for grants from corporations and private foundations

### **Public Broadcasting**

Only one radio station broadcasts throughout most of the region and it is not up to federal standards or local health and safety standards. We plan to:

- Secure money from federal, state and private sources to meet the specific needs for maintaining and enhancing this necessary service.

### **Recycling and Solid Waste Management**

Most villages have no recycling or waste reduction program and landfills are expanding at an unprecedented rate. The Bethel Recycling Center is staffed by volunteers and has no operating budget. Over the past two years, the Center has made a tremendous effort to provide technical assistance to the remote villages in the region. To enhance regional efforts, we plan to:

- Develop plans for sustainably dealing with trash and hazardous waste (such as recycling, burn barrels, landfill certification, clean-up green-ups, used oil burners, battery recycling etc)
- Solid Waste Management Implementation which will involve the specifics of implementing and evaluating plans
- Develop a Watershed Management project for the Kuskokwim River
- Develop a Habitat Protection project (or Environmental Impact Oversight project), which would include oversight of the Hovercraft of the Air Force's cleanup plans for hazardous waste spills at Cape Romanzof.

### **Youth Programs**

Every village needs a program for children. Boredom and a lack of activities, including access to books, computers and technology, as well as no place to go has contributed to the increase in crime, vandalism, substance abuse and suicide among young people:

## **Infrastructure, Roads and Housing**

Objectives are to:

- Work with villages to compile BIA 2% Transportation Planning funds into one fund to hire a regional Transportation Planner
- Find funds to offer technical assistance and training to any Tribally Designated Housing Entity (TDHE) to successfully administer NAHSDA programs
- Provide information to village residents about home loans
- Keep villages informed about potential sources of funding

## **Child Care**

Our objective is to develop a Child Care Training Center that will act as a training facility for training people to become licensed child care providers and will provide technical assistance to child care programs starting in villages. The project will also provide quality child care (based on Head Start principals) to working families in Bethel. We propose to train welfare recipients to become registered child care providers. This project will not only provide jobs for the child care providers, but will remove a barrier to employment for many other welfare recipients. We anticipate training providers in the sixteen villages, as well as several villages with more than 200 children and only one registered child care provider. We will:

- Search for funding and submit proposals
- Plan for a Child Care Center that trains village staff

## **Supportive Services**

As our region begins to implement TANF, we will plan to:

- Efficiently package all related supportive services effectively together
- Implement an Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Program
- Implement TANF
- Search for funding to fill supportive service needs
- Investigate other programs

## **Staff**

AVCP will create a Planning Division that is responsible for implementing the Strategic Plan. Other responsibilities will include the coordination development efforts by state and federal agencies to minimize project costs, maximize local employment and foster local involvement and ownership in rural development, as well as foster continued partnerships and collaborations.

Staff will include:

- Community Development Planner
- Environmental Planner
- Library Planner
- Tribal College Planner
- Transportation Planner
- VISTA Volunteers