

STEVENS VILLAGE

COMMUNITY PLAN

2024-2029



Prepared by Tanana Chiefs Conference Planning & Development Program

In Collaboration with Stevens Village Tribal Council

With help from Stevens Village Community Members

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RESOLUTION

STEVENS VILLAGE TRIBAL COUNCIL
P.O. BOX 74016
STEVENS VILLAGE, AK 99774
Ph: (907) 478-7228
FAX: (907) 478-7229

FY24-4 Resolution Adopting Community Plan 2024

Whereas, this Community Plan is important to the future growth and development of Stevens Village; and,

Whereas, this plan was created through a public process that captured the values and goals of our community; and,

Whereas, this plan is a tool that helps us manage change in our community; and,

Whereas, this plan is intended to coordinate future community development and service delivery; and,

Whereas, it is understood that this document was created for public use and will be made publically available and,

Whereas, we ask all public, private, and non-profit entities serving our community to recognize and use this plan; and,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the parties of this resolution agree to work together to pursue the values, goals, and vision express in this plan.

Certification

We hereby certify that this resolution was duly passed and approved 5 in favor, 0 opposed by the following parties:

David Kniskern
1st Chief
Pat Helm
Secretary/Treasurer

1/4/24
Date
1/8/24
Date

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Stevens Village Community Plan was completed with the help of Tanana Chiefs Conference Planning and Development Program, Stevens Village Council, Dinyea Corporation, and other entities in Stevens Village. The community has been instrumental in developing a community plan through community planning meetings and surveys. The plan was reviewed and adopted as an official document on 01/08/2024.

The Stevens Village Council will implement this community plan by utilizing it as a living document. The community plan should be updated yearly and utilized to move the goals and objectives forward to develop projects and proposals. Implementation of the Stevens Village Plan also opens up capacity building and funding opportunities, including the Tanana Chiefs Conference Planning & Development Grant Development Specialist position, which provides funding for the Tribe to employ a community-based Grant Writing Specialist (GDS) that works closely together to write a grant for the Tribe to carry out one of the top goals and priorities in the community plan.

VISION

To unite and move forward to improve living standards through economic development and the protection of our traditional lands for future subsistence use and sustainability. The people of Stevens Village (Htttdochaakk'at).

VALUES

Community members were asked what they like about Stevens Village the most, gathering the following values



HISTORY

Before Western contact, the Koyukon Athabascan Indians that occupied Interior Alaska were semi-nomadic. Depending upon what food was available to gather for the season, determined where tribes lived. Summer months were spent by the river to smoke and preserve fish. Winter months were spent trapping and hunting just to survive. This was true for the people of the Stevens Village area also. By 1850, most Northern Athabascan had experienced some form of contact with immigrants. Stevens Village is one of the oldest villages in the interior. According to local tradition, three brothers founded Stevens Village: Old Jacob, Gochonayeeya, and Old Stephen. The Village was first called Dinyeet, meaning “in the canyon, in the high places,” referring to where the Yukon River flows from the Yukon Flats into the Rampart Canyon area. The Stevens Village people are called Dinyeet Hot’Anna that means “Canyon People.” Around 1926, a flu epidemic struck the town and killed most of the elders.

In 1936, a post office was established, and later cartographers began calling it “Stephens Village.” In 1968, oil was discovered in the Prudhoe Bay region and oil infrastructure was needed to facilitate development. A pipeline, haul road, pump station, and bridge over the



Archives, University of Alaska, Fairbanks

Figure 1 Stevens Village Group Portrait - Alaska Digital Archives

Yukon River were built on Stevens Village traditional lands. This action was taken without local permission. The people of Stevens Village joined five other villages in filing a lawsuit to stop construction. In 1969 construction, efforts halted. The passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) in 1971, meant that construction continued, and the pipeline and haul road were built allowing unabated new access into Stevens Village’s traditional lands. The Dalton Highway and Hickel Highway now bisect the Ancestral lands of Stevens Village. The negative impacts to subsistence resources are still evident today.

The people of Stevens Village continue to work to protect the traditional lands. Any proposed action that may negatively impact the Ancestral lands of Stevens Village by the state of Alaska, and federal agencies is thoroughly reviewed. The Council regularly provides



Figure 2 Stevens Village Bank Front - Alaska Digital Archives

written comments, verbal testimony, and responses to proposed projects. Proposed changes to state of Alaska and federal rules and regulations that have the potential to negatively impact Stevens Village Tribal members, traditional lands, and or resources are carefully monitored and addressed.

Many skilled Athabascan Musicians, dog mushers, sled makers, toolmakers, artists and traditional singers have come from Stevens Village. Horace “Holy” Smoke Sr. even won the Open North American Sled Dog Championship in 1949, 1950 and 1951. He bred champion sled dogs for mushers across the state of Alaska. For years, the Stevens Village competed in the Nuchalawoyya dance and athletic competitions beginning in 1962 and continued to participate through the 80’s. Nuchalawoyya is an annual traditional celebration held in Tanana, Stevens Village Dancers were a large part of the Nuchalawoyya celebration.



Figure 3 Stevens Village Dance Group at 2016 Festival of Native Arts in Fairbanks

CULTURE

The population of Stevens Village is predominantly Alaska Native, a larger percent being Koyukon Athabascan. The people of Stevens Village are very active in all subsistence activities. The traditional ways of smoking and drying fish and preserving large game is the most practiced of all the subsistence activities.

Other subsistence activities include

gathering of seasonal berries, plants, and trapping. Annually the Stevens Village Dancers perform at the Festival of Native Arts at the University of Alaska Fairbanks with approximately 40 dancers and the audience looks forward to seeing them every year.

LOCATION

Stevens Village is located at coordinates 66°01'N, 149°06'W. The community is located on the north bank of the Yukon River, 24 miles upstream of the Dalton Highway bridge crossing and 90 air miles northwest of Fairbanks. The closest community is Rampart, which is located 75 miles downstream from Stevens Village.

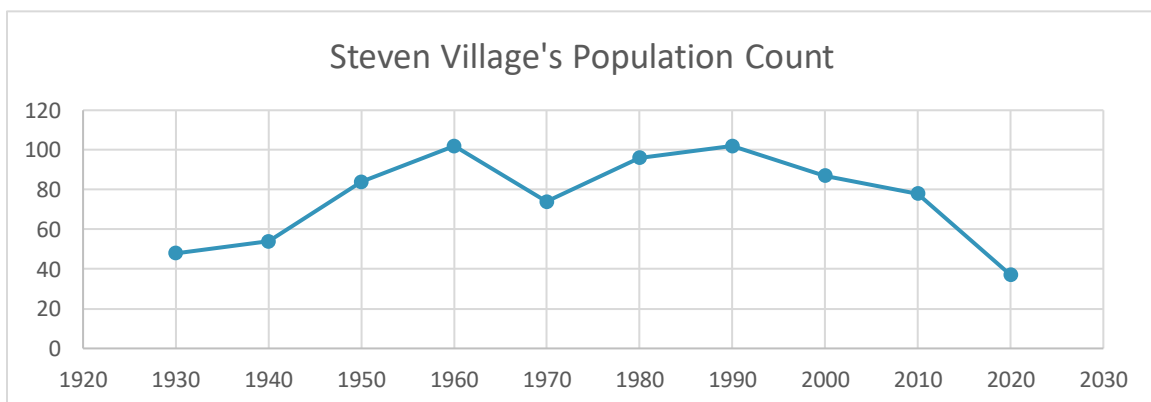


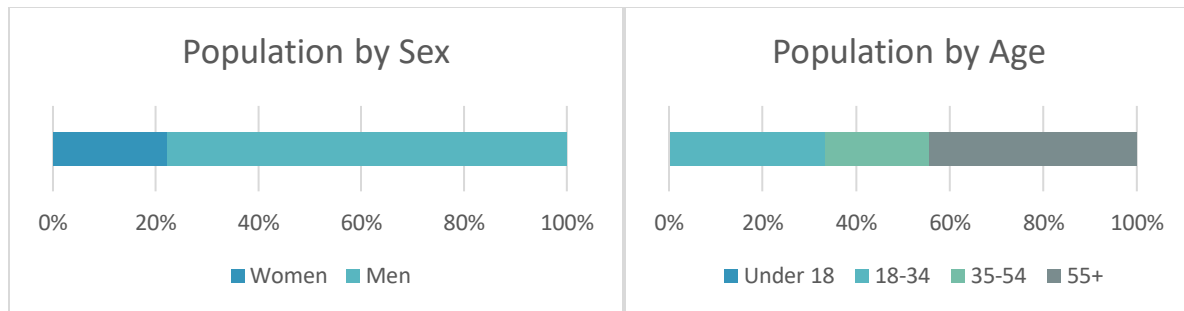
Figure 4 Stevens Village on Alaskan map

POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

As of 2021, the current population in Stevens Village is approximately 48 people, which is an increase from 2020's data of 37 community members. With 100% of the population being American Indian/Alaska Native. The population consists of elders, adults, juveniles, and young children.

There has been a gradual decrease in the population. However, during the summer months the population doubles, as families return home to partake in subsistence, cultural activities, and community gatherings.





The old Stevens School closed in 2013 due to low enrollment. Approximately eight youth and six families moved away so their children could continue their education in other communities. One of the main goals of the Stevens Village Tribal Council is to get the school reopened. Local schools play a critical role in community strength and longevity.

GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

VILLAGE COUNCIL

The Stevens Village Council (SVC) consists of nine council members. Nine positions were filled during the January 2020 election. Council elections are held annually. Once elected, the four candidates that receive the highest votes are elected to serve a two-year position and the remaining five serve a one-year position. The Council is working with BIA to reestablish the tribal court. BIA completed a tribal court assessment in 2022. The Council will continue to work on reestablishing the tribal court.

Currently, there are approximately 355 tribal members enrolled to the Stevens Village. The number of tribal members is expected to increase drastically over the next few years.

The SVC currently operates the following programs:

- ICWA
- Federal Highway Administration Program (FWHA)
- EPA IGAP
- Public Utilities
- Delta Bison Farm- More information on the Bison Farm is covered in the subsistence section of this plan.

As of 2023, the Stevens Village Tribal Council is seeking to fill the following positions:

- Elder Nutrition Cook
- Health Aide
- VPSO

VPSO/ LAW ENFORCEMENT



Figure 5 TCC VPSO Program

Stevens Village does not have a VPSO or Alaska State Trooper stationed in the community. Currently, if an emergency arises, a State Trooper is dispatched from Fairbanks. This presents a safety concern for the community because of the time it takes them to arrive on the scene (approximately 1 hour). Stevens Village did have a VPSO stationed in the community for a few years; however, that position currently is not

available. The Council did receive funding through Tanana Chiefs Conference to build new VPSO housing. The VPSO cabin was completed in 2023.

CORPORATIONS

DINYEY CORPORATION

Dinyea Corporation is the ANCSA village corporation for Stevens Village. Dinyea currently has one subsidiary; River Villages which provides oil-spill responders contractually to Alyeska Pipeline. River Villages employs 5-9 shareholders on an on-call basis. The employees train quarterly for oil spill response. Dinyea Corporation has approximately 92,003 acres conveyed as 12a; and approximately 22,988 acres conveyed as 12b, for an approximate total of 114,991 acres conveyed. The corporation has nine board members. The office is located at 701 Bidwell Avenue, Suite 402, Fairbanks, Alaska.

COUNCIL OF ATHABASCAN GOVERNMENTS (CATG)



COUNCIL OF ATHABASCAN TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

The Council of Athabaskan Tribal Governments (CATG) is a tribal consortium founded in 1985. The shared vision is self-sufficient communities with a shared commitment to promoting common

goals, culturally integrated economies based on customary and traditional values in a contemporary setting. CATG was formed by ten villages: Arctic Village, Beaver, Birch Creek, Circle, Canyon Village, Chalkyitsik, Fort Yukon, Rampart, Stevens Village, and Venetie.

CATG traditional lands are in the upper Yukon Flats, a 55,000-square-mile area encompassing what is now the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge (YFNWR) and part of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). Stretching from the White Mountains to the Brooks Range in the north, from the western edge of the Yukon Flats and east to the United States-Canada border. Since time immemorial the CATG Tribes and their tribal membership have lived in reciprocity with these lands and the numerous cultural and linguistic resources therein.

DOYON, LIMITED

Stevens Village is part of Doyon Limited, the Alaska Native Regional Corporation for Interior Alaska established in 1972 under the Alaska Native Claim Settlement Act (ANCSA). Provisions under ANCSA, Doyon is entitled to receive approximately 12.5 million acres across Interior Alaska, making Doyon the largest private landowner in Alaska. Doyon has, to date, received title to nearly 10 million acres, mainly around the 34 villages within the TCC region.



Figure 6 Doyon Logo

Doyon Vision:

Leader In All We Do

Doyon Mission:

To continually enhance our position as a financially strong Native corporation to promote the economic and social well-being of our shareholders and future shareholders, to strengthen our Native way of life, and to protect and enhance our land and resources.

Tanana Chiefs Conference

Tanana Chiefs Conference was formed in 1962 and incorporated under Alaska State Law in 1971. We are organized as Dena' Nena' Henash or "Our Land Speaks"; an Alaska Native nonprofit corporation, charged with advancing Tribal self-determination and enhancing regional Native unity. TCC provides a unified voice in advancing sovereign tribal governments through the promotion of physical and mental wellness, education, socioeconomic development, and culture of the Interior.



Figure 7 Tanana Chiefs Conference Logo

TCC provides services while balancing traditional Athabascan and Alaska Native values with modern demands. TCC's objectives are to provide health, social, and economic services to the native people and villages of interior Alaska, known as the TCC region, using federal, state, and local resources. TCC is comprised of three core departments: 1. Administration; 2. Health Services; and 3. Tribal Client and Tribal Government Services.

The Tanana Chiefs Conference region covers an area of 235,000 square miles in Interior Alaska, which is equal to about 37 percent of the entire state, and just slightly smaller than the state of Texas. Within our region are six subregions:



Within our six subregions are 39 villages, for an approximate population of 6700. We also serve clients in the Fairbanks area.

Board of Directors for Stevens Village

- David Kriska, Director
- Peter Hjelm, Alternate Director

DENAKKANAAGA



Figure 8 Denakkanaaga Logo

Denakkanaaga, meaning “Our People Speak” in Denaakk’e (Koyukon Athabascan), is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization which serves as the voice for the Interior Native elders in the Doyon and Tanana Chiefs Conference region. Denakkanaaga acts on behalf of the elders, working to ensure their concerns are addressed regarding topics such as Native cultures, traditions, languages, subsistence and social issues. As the population over 65 grows within Interior Alaska, Denakkanaaga works with other organizations to maximize efforts to advocate for Native Elders.

Denakkanaaga Core Values/Commitments:

United Voice

Keep Native voice stronger together for positive action

Continue traditions, art, cultural values, language, and subsistence life

Unity among Native organizations and people

Denakkanaaga core programs:

Peer support for each other (elder to elder)

Support/mentor the next generation

Cultural programs

Regional voice on issues/concerns

Board of Directors from Stevens Village includes:

None at this time.

INTERIOR REGIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY



INTERIOR REGIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

Interior Regional Housing Authority (IRHA), a non-profit organization, is the Tribally Designated Housing Entity for Circle Tribal Council. Formed in 1974, they implement the Indian Housing Plans to improve and expand affordable housing. IRHA offers services such as, grant writing, environmental reviews, project managers, project site control, payroll, accounts payable, financial reporting, procurement, material inventory/shipment, homebuyer counseling and collections.

MISSION STATEMENT:

To provide housing opportunities and support self-sufficiency through housing.

VISION STATEMENT:

Thriving families with quality affordable housing.

VALUES:

Innovation

Respect

Honesty

Accountability

IRHA Board Members from Stevens Village:

None at this time.

PUBLIC UTILITIES

WATER AND SEWER

The Stevens Village Washeteria is owned and operated by the Stevens Village Council. The washeteria employs a full-time Water Plant Operator, alternate, and a janitor. There is a plan in the future to order smaller boiler/furnaces to lower the cost of heating the building.

At this time only the washeteria, health clinic, Council office building and school are the only buildings connected to the water and septic system.

All residents rely on the local washeteria for their drinking water, laundry, and showers. Residents use private outhouses or honey buckets. In the winter and summer months many residents utilize nearby creeks for drinking water.

Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) is working with the Council to explore options for a piped water system for the village. Site visits were completed during the summer of 2023. The next step will be final analysis and selection of the most viable options.

SOLID WASTE

There is a landfill located 2.3 miles north of Stevens Village. Residents self-haul their waste to the landfill. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) IGAP Manager and Council are working to control access to the site per regulations. It consists of an open trench surrounded by a fence and is projected to last for many years if properly managed. Waste products are to include only domestic solid waste, limited construction, and demolition waste. There is an incinerator at the dump as well. The Council is working to improve how the landfill is used and access to the site. The Council hired a landfill Operator in 2022. The Council has been working closely with the EPA IGAP Manager and Landfill Operator to update current waste policies and procedures.

COMMUNICATIONS

Microcom provides internet services and ACS provides phone services. A few homes now have internet connectivity through Starlink. Not everyone in the community has internet service.

Others rely on Wi-Fi.

The Biden Administration is making investment in high-speed Internet availability a top priority. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has brought more than \$1.86 million in grants to 226 Tribal entities. Bringing high-speed internet to underserved communities is a top priority of the Biden Administration.

Alaska FiberOptic Project is a collaboration between several Alaska Native corporations, regulatory agencies and service providers that are working to bring Internet connectivity to more than 20 communities in the Yukon and Kuskokwim regions. Beginning in Fairbanks and extending to the Bering Sea Coast. The Alaska FiberOptic Project One segment will run terrestrial cable from Fairbanks to the Yukon River Bridge. The next phase will run cable in the Yukon River from the Yukon River Bridge to Fort Yukon. The terrestrial fiber network will begin in Fort Yukon and extend to Venetie. Community members and businesses along the route will receive Gigabit speeds through a fiber-to-the-home connection.

Village members in rural Alaska have been forced to go without the direct benefits of having reliable, high-speed internet in their communities. This lack of reliable internet connectivity has increased disparities in healthcare, education, and economic development. The lack of connectivity has also negatively impacted the social well-being of rural community members that do not enjoy the same degree of social connection provided to urban community members connected via the internet.

The Tanana Chiefs Conference and Doyon Limited have received large grants under the Biden Administration's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law bill and will be working to bring reliable high-speed internet to Interior villages, including Stevens Village. It is past time to bring reliable high-speed internet to villages in rural Alaska. Doing so will allow Stevens Village and all rural Alaska villages to live and prosper in the new digital economy.

POWER/ENERGY

Bulk Fuel

Total fuel storage capacity for the village is 26,000.00 gallons. The village burns an average of 80 gallons a day. The water company burns 20 gallons per day. That is a total of 29,200 gallons per year. Average cost per gallon is \$4.65. That comes to a total estimated cost of \$135,780.00 of fuel per year.

Fuel is being ordered in bulk and is being delivered to the village by way of barge and if needed by airplane in the winter. It is used to supply electricity to the village and for some heat in public spaced heated with monitor stoves. Wood is the main source of heat.



Figure 9 Bulk Storage

It is imperative that the Council begin planning for renewable energy projects. The current cost of heating fuel for the village is unsustainable. The Council will work with Tanana Chiefs Conference to study renewable energy projects appropriate for Stevens Village.

Electric

The Stevens Village power plant was constructed in 2003. Generators that Stevens Village Council oversees run the Power plant. That power plant supplies electricity to all households, in addition to all public buildings. The Council is working to become active in the Alaska Power Cost Equalization (PCE) Program once again. The Council must control the cost of fuel and energy generation. The Council is working to setup monthly billing and monitoring that will help offset the cost of fuel.

In 2009, Stevens Village IRA Council received an AEA Village Energy Efficiency Program (VEEP) Grant to complete energy efficiency upgrades to eight community buildings. The estimated saving from those efforts is approximately \$23,000 annually. The following buildings received electrical retrofitting:

- Washeteria & water plant
- Community hall

- Clinic & Tribal Council office
- School
- School gym
- Generator shed
- Sewer lift station

In 2021, the Council worked with Tanana Chiefs Conference to upgrade all generators in the power plant. The project included replacing existing generators with more efficient ones that are a better fit to the size of the community.

The Council was awarded the U.S. Department of Energy Grid Resiliency grant in 2023. This grant to design to strengthen the community power grid to reduce power outage risks. This is a multi-year grant that can be used for such things as training, relocation of power lines, use of protective technologies, and fuel storage just to name a few.

The electrical grid in the village is vulnerable. Past floods in 2009, 2014 and 2023 caused major damage and caused erosion of the riverbank to accelerate substantially. The spring flood of 2023 caused extensive damage to Front Street in the village. The community main power grid is located along this route and is dangerously close to the Yukon River. The community will need to address this critical issue and begin planning for: 1) Erosion Control and 2) Electrical Grid Stabilization.

The Council will need to start planning to diversify energy generation in the village. Relying solely on fossil fuels is not sustainable and is creating a situation where the electrical supply is extremely vulnerable. Disruption in the oil markets, problems with distribution, socio-political unrest, and equipment failures in the village all play a part in the over-all stability of Stevens Village power generation. The time has come to start exploring and planning for renewable energy projects that will work to stabilize electrical power generation in Stevens Village.

PUBLIC FACILITIES

EXTERNAL TRANSPORTATION

Community members can receive supplies year-round through commercial air. Warbelows Air Venture flies into Stevens Village three days a week weather permitting. During the summer months, supplies are barged on the Yukon River. There are two locations for the barges to land and dock. Many residents travel to and from Stevens Village using the Dalton Highway. There is a bridge over the Yukon River. From there the community is accessible by boat; Stevens Village is located 28 miles above the Yukon River Bridge. Snow machines take the place of boats on the Yukon River the remaining 4 months of the year. Common reasons for residents to travel outside of the community are medical and personal needs. Travel is frequent for most because there is no local store or health clinic.

In 2001, the Stevens Village airstrip was relocated. The original airport was too short and narrow for the aircraft using it (2,120 feet long by 60 feet wide). It was right next to the community. This location hindered expansion and provided less than ideal safety conditions. The new site was chosen through collaboration with PDC Inc. Engineers, State of Alaska Department of Public Facilities and Transportation, the Stevens Village Tribe, residents, and Native Corporation. As of January 2015, Warbelow's Air Ventures, is the only carrier that provides passenger air service into the community.

CLINIC



Figure 10 Stevens Village Clinic

Stevens Village does not currently have a community health aide. The Stevens Village Council owns and operates the clinic. Tanana Chiefs Conference is starting the process of building a new clinic in the village-with a completion date of 2024.

The local health aide, depending upon what level of experience they have, can treat most medical emergencies, common colds, and non-life threatening emergencies. Either depending on the seriousness of the situation, the patient will be sent over on the next regularly scheduled flight or if the patient is in serious life-threatening condition, they will be medevacked out immediately.

SCHOOL

Old Stevens School is a part of the Yukon Flats School District. The school closed in 2013 due to low enrollment. This School was built in 1985. When in operation the school employed three teachers. The first Old Stevens School was a health hazard due to asbestos and a rotting floor; it had to be torn down. Early head start, tutoring, meal plans and extra-curricular activities were also offered by the school, while it was operational. TCC offers youth programs, unfortunately there not enough youth available in the village to fill the positions and programs TCC offers. Re-opening the school is a top priority for the Council.



Figure 11 Stevens Village School

WASHETERIA

Stevens Village has a small washeteria with three washers, two dryers, two showers, and two bathrooms. The washeteria was upgraded in 2002. The water plant provides service to the school and to the health clinic. Residents haul water from a watering point and use honey buckets and outhouses for wastewater disposal. Wastewater from the washeteria, clinic and school are disposed of in a lagoon.



Figure 12 Washeteria and Health Clinic

The Stevens Village washeteria is the oldest such facility in Interior Alaska and it is inefficient and deteriorating. Stevens Village did receive a large ICBDG CARES Imminent-Threat Coronavirus Aid grant in 2020 through IRHA to repair the sagging foundation. IRHA engineers later determined that the facility foundation was beyond repair and that total replacement would be necessary in the future. IRHA did make some short-term improvements to the facility in 2023.

POST OFFICE

There is a post office located in mid-town Stevens Village, next to the washeteria. The clinic, elder's housing as well as the tribal council office are all located in the same building. A new postmaster was hired for the village in 2023. The post office will be moved to the main Council office building soon which will make access to the post office more accessible.

HOUSING

There are 36 houses located in the community of Stevens Village. Out of those 36 houses, only 10 are occupied. Out of the 26 houses, four are unlivable and six need major repairs. There are 16

houses that are livable but unoccupied, these homes could be renovated for future tribal members to move home and revive the community.

Several construction projects have been implemented with funding made possible through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund. Critical heavy equipment was purchased for infrastructure projects. The community was able to implement the SVS ARPA Housing Rehab project where several homes are being upgraded to better serve Tribal members in the community. Projects to upgrade existing homes consisted of new windows, doors, roofs, insulation, and expansion to include a grey water system for showers.

ECONOMY

LOCAL STORES AND BUSINESSES

Local businesses in Stevens Village reflect the instability of business development, which is common in rural Alaska. One-time business licenses, as found on the State of Alaska website, included services that focused on crafts, boat service (for those wanting to access the community via Alaska Highway bridge crossing), convenience shops/stores, and snow removal. As of 2023, there are no businesses currently operating in the community.

COMPOSITION OF EMPLOYMENT

As of 2023, the only full-time positions in the community are offered through the Stevens Village Council and eventually through the local health clinic. The Stevens Village Council is working to get the VPSO and Health Aide positions back in the village. Funding for the TWDS and Health Aide positions are through Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC). Most of the community members depend on subsistence lifestyles to get through the year. According to the U.S. Census local incomes average is \$16,000 - \$20,000.

Seasonal work in the community is offered by summer firefighting and subsistence activities. Since 2020, temporary employment has increased due to the influx of Coronavirus funding made available to communities across Alaska.

Stevens Village is considered a “distressed community”, according to the Denali Commission (2023). The distressed status is determined by comparing average income of a community or CDP

to full-time minimum wage earnings, the percentage of the population earning greater than full-time minimum wage earnings and a measure of the percentage of the population engaged in year-round wage and salary employment (2023 Distressed Communities, 2023). 30% or more of the local residents earn less than \$21,507, the state’s annual minimum wage for 2023.

TRANSPORTATION

INTERNAL TRANSPORTATION

There are eight main roads in Stevens Village and ten frequently used trails. The primary modes of transportation within the community are snow machines, four-wheelers & boats. Stevens Village does have a Long-Range Transportation Plan that was created in 1995 and was updated in 2021. The Transportation Manager is working to update the inventory to include an annual ice road project, and other critical transportation projects for the village.



Figure 13 E. L. Patton Bridge over the Yukon River

LAND USE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

LAND OWNERSHIP

In 1939, 1950, and 1960 Stevens Village petitioned the Department of Interior to put 60 square miles (near and around the community) into trust; both petitions were denied. In the mid-1960’s

the Rampart Dam Project was proposed by the US government but later failed because it proved to be not economically feasible and would have had devastating impacts on the Yukon Flats region.

GEOGRAPHY

Located 30 snow machine miles behind Stevens is a remote Hot Springs that is only accessible in the winter. Lying at the foot of Lonely Mountain some say it is a place of healing surrounded by willing and much respected animals that gave their lives so that our ancestors stayed warm throughout the harsh winters of the Yukon Flats.

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

The community of Stevens Village is located next to the Yukon Flats Wildlife Refuge covering 8.6 million acres of land, spanning an area approximately 220 miles east to west. Stepping into the refuge's wildlands is like going back into time, where there are no horns honking from cars or trucks, along with the pollution that comes with big city life, overcasts of city lights as well as people. Generations of people travelling throughout the refuge have felt the same wonder when confronted by a landscape that does not reflect the passage of time. The establishment of the refuge in the 1980's bestowed a gift that allows for the protection of the Stevens Village traditional lands.

The significance of this area and the recorded traditional use by the Stevens Village people is meticulously documented in the following land use planning documents; *A Comprehensive Land Use Plan for the Traditional Lands of Stevens Village, 1991*, and *Stevens Village Land Use Plan, Ethnography of Ancestral Lands, and Integrated Resource Management Plan, 1999*. These documents reflect the land protection and resource use values of the Stevens Village people that have been the cornerstone of traditional resource management in this area.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Flooding: Every spring the community experiences very high waters but they rarely reach the heights of the lowest bank. Floods along the Yukon River are caused by ice jams which in turn causes the water to back up and rise it can take days or even minutes. The flood of 2009 was the biggest and most devastating experience Stevens Village to date. Several homes had such massive water damage and silt piled so high that entire floors had to be replaced, two story homes thirty to forty feet long didn't stand a chance once the "Mighty Yukon" decided to carry them as far as

twenty feet from their original foundations. The massive flood of 1964 that nearly ended the town sites existence.

Flooding in 2014 and again in the spring of 2023 caused major damage to roads, homes, and community infrastructure. Increased flooding has accelerated erosion along Husky Road in the village which runs parallel to the Yukon River. This erosion problem is beginning to endanger homes, roads, the village power plant, power grid and the village water plant/washeteria.

The Council is working with FEMA, BIA, and state of Alaska to assess damage and to repair community roads, infrastructure, and get reimbursement to residents for losses caused by flooding. Climate change will bring changes to the environment that will need to be addressed and properly planned for. Waiting for the next disaster to strike is not an option when village resident lives are on the line along with community infrastructure: proper planning to mitigate the negative impacts of climate change will be necessary.

SUBSISTENCE

Village members have subsidized the cost of food by living subsistence lifestyles. Fishing in the summer months, moose and caribou hunting in the fall, trapping in the winter as well as hunting geese, ducks and muskrat in the spring for as long as the sun has shined. Athabascans on the Yukon River depend on king salmon year round to sustain the balance that has always been among the fish in the river and the people that live along the river.



Figure 14 Stevens Village Residents Hunting - Tampa Bay Times

Stevens Village is a part of the Yukon Flats Advisory Committee. The committee represents the subsistence interests for the communities of Birch Creek, Arctic Village, Circle, Venetie, and Stevens Village. There are two designated seats for each community, except Birch Creek which has one designated seat. Stevens Village is also active with the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

Yukon River Salmon Fishery Disaster:

Low salmon migration numbers have caused the closure of the salmon subsistence fishery for the past three years. This closure affects every village along the Yukon River. Families are being forced to go without this vital, traditional food source. Not only is salmon nutritionally superior and vital for physical well-being but it is also vital for the spiritual and emotional well-being of the Athabascan people. Stevens Village tribal members and families have relied on this vital food source for thousands of years. This closure is unprecedented and is having a devastating impact on all villages and community members in Interior Alaska.

Dog mushers usually rely on salmon to feed their teams. This is no longer available and now dog food must be purchased. The cost of living in interior Alaskan villages is extremely high and most residents are now struggling to make ends meet due to the on-going fishery disaster.

In 2004, Stevens Village began operating and managing a community bison farm. The land was purchased through the United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency (USDA-FSA) Indian Tribal Land Acquisition Program. Stevens Village is the first Alaskan community to establish a bison farm commodity. The intent of the farm was to reintroduce bison farming and traditional meats for the community, to provide a healthy substitute of processed meats. The farm started in collaboration with the Inter-Tribal Bison Council. The initial efforts started with 14 calves and 24 adults with the belief that it would someday quadruple in numbers and be reintroduced back into the lands surrounding Stevens. The current numbers of adults are 100. More calves are expected to be born in 2024.

COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

CHURCHES

St. Andrews is the Episcopal Church located in Stevens Village. The Episcopal Diocese of Alaska sends clergy members to Stevens Village as needed for funerals and weddings and for occasions such as Easter and Christmas. The Pinnix family travels to the village throughout the year.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

HEALTH

The health center can staff one full-time Community Health Aide Practitioners, but is currently vacant. Medical services offered by the clinic include prenatal and perinatal services, family health, emergency medical treatment, specimen collection, and pharmacy refill services. Likewise, itinerant public health nurses provide immunizations and well-child services. Other medical services include itinerant physician and dental visits to Minto.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Tanana Chiefs Conference offers Behavioral Health Services to Stevens Village. The behavioral health professional assigned to the community and makes scheduled quarterly visits to the village and visits as needed depending on circumstances.

CULTURAL AND/OR SEASONAL GATHERINGS

Most tribal members return to Stevens Village for subsistence activities such as fishing and moose hunting. Different families hold memorial potlatches in honor of someone who has passed away. Families hosting a Memorial Potlatch will gather and make gifts for several years to give away at this special event. A song in honor of the deceased is made and sung at the Memorial Potlatch. Memorial Potlatch widely practiced among all interior Athabascans and is a very special time for families to honor deceased loved ones.

Stevens Village holds the annual Memorial Day celebration every year. This is a time for the annual cleaning of the resting places of those that have passed. This is also a time for our Tribal members to celebrate life and being together.

In 2023, the community held a culture camp that was attended by several youth, elders, and community members. A camp was established at Twin Lakes near the village and will be the location for future culture camps sponsored by the Stevens Village Tribal Council. The process of sharing traditional knowledge and values with the younger generations is critical to the Stevens Village people.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Below are the goals that were established during the June 2023 community meeting in Stevens Village and Tanana Chiefs Conference Planning & Development Program. These are goals and action items identified by the following individuals who attended:

- Cheryl Kriska
- Peter Hjelm
- David Kriska
- Darrell Kriska
- Judith James
- John Evans
- Cora Simon
- Margaret Matthew
- Prestley Peter

HOUSING

Goal: Stevens Village will work together to create more housing for its community and tribal members.

Action Items:

- Meet with Tanana Chiefs Conference and Interior Regional Housing Authority regarding current housing plan that was established to build a total of 6 houses in the community.
- Meet with Dinyea Corporation about securing land for housing in the community.
- Research grant opportunities that can assist Stevens Village with their housing plan.
Grants that are not exclusive to one income level
 - Rasmussen
 - Indian Community Development Block Grant
 - Denali Commission
- Research housing packages that will meet the needs for families in Stevens Village
 - For elders homes
 - Single person homes
 - Single family homes
- Gain control over own Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act (NAHASDA) funds if communication and relationship does not improve with IRHA

PUBLIC SAFETY

Goal: Stevens Village residents are safe within the community

Action Items:

- Request a Village Public Safety Officer or Tribal Police Officer from Tanana Chiefs Conference Public Safety office
- Tribe to expand codes and ordinances with Tanana Chiefs Conference Tribal Government Division to re-establish tribal courts
- Request Alaska State Troopers to improve response to emergencies
- Request a health aide from Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center
- Request Tanana Chiefs Conference Forestry program for assistance on establishing and training local fire fighters if emergency was to occur
- Request Red Cross Alaska to village and train Stevens Village community members on CPR/1st Aid training

PUBLIC UTILITIES

Goal: Stevens Village community members have a lowered cost of living and have improved sanitation facilities.

Action Items:

- Contact Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) and State of Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation Village Safe Water Program to inquire about Capital Improvement Project funding for a new washeteria or a piped water and sewer system
 - Ask Tanana Chiefs Conference Office of Environmental Health about other funding options
- Prepare the village for broadband infrastructure that will begin construction in 2024
- Assist tribal members with purchasing of Starlink packages

SUBSISTENCE

Goal: Stevens Village residents are involved with the subsistence activities and policies that affect them

Action Items:

- Tribal office hire a conservation officer to watch over tribal lands during hunting season

- Apply for water rights through Alaska Department of Natural Resources
 - Ask for more information
- Contact Doyon, Limited and Dinyea Corporation to inquire about turning over land to the tribe for projects
- Ask community members to become involved with local Advisory Committees for the fishing and hunting activities
 - Contact Tanana Chiefs Conference Tribal Resource Stewardship Program on how to get more involved
- Contact Doyon, Limited Lands program and TCC Realty Program to send private property signage to discourage trespassing during hunting season
- Contact TCC Culture Program to inquire about holding culture camp

TRANSPORTATION

Goal: Stevens Village residents have safer roadways for the community members and traveling guests

Action Items:

- Contract with Tanana Chiefs Conference Transportation to apply for safety plan funding, that will address the following needs and concerns:
 - Improving roadways
 - Airport shelter
 - Water truck
- Contract with TCC Transportation program to update the Long Range Transportation plan that will address the following needs and concerns
 - Needing bridges for certain areas
 - Updating the National Tribal Transportation Facility Inventory
 - Get a permit for the overland winter access trail
- Contract with TCC Transportation program to write apply for transit plan funding
- Advocate to local airline about improving services to the community
- Request heavy equipment maintenance training to be held in the Stevens Village region

- Transportation Coordinator to explore funds and options to purchase a small barge for community and seasonal residents

YOUTH & ELDERS

Goal: Stevens Village residents focus on their well-being

Action Items:

- Tribal office to hire a Tribal Family and Youth Specialist in the village
 - Ask TCC Tribal Government Division for resources to deal with situations while the position is vacant
- Tribe to brainstorm ideas on how to get families to move to Stevens Village
 - Create more housing through ICDBG Grants
- Request a post master
- Tribe to host cultural activity nights
 - Host community gatherings

STEVENS VILLAGE COMMUNITY SURVEY

RESULTS

From the survey data we conclude the following:

1. We asked about goals for the community:
 - The community was asked what they enjoy most about living in Minto
 - Quiet
 - Peace and Quiet
 - Rural community
 - Home is where the heart is
 - Peace and quiet
 - Just moved back 4 days ago
 - Community feeling and support
 - Learning stuff
 - How strong the community comes together, to help one another, especially when it comes to summer work
 - Chillin
 - The people
 - The community was asked what do they see as the biggest issues/challenges in the community
 - Utilities and public safety
 - No running water, high cost of living, no school or clinic employees, no church or store, limited single family homes
 - Piped water and sewer, eco-tourism, land into trust
 - Cost of fuel
 - Lack of funding, need for public safety, re-opening school, develop jobs and rebuild population
 - Internet
 - Lack of community members for the amount of work and getting the younger generation back to the villages that's on probation or parole
 - Too much water
 - Getting food from airline, don't fly here too often
 - What would you like to see happen in the community in the next 5 years
 - Bring people back
 - New washeteria and clinic
 - Running water, open school, better energy production
 - Inland road to bridge
 - New housing for returning people

- Re-open school, increase jobs, increase training and education for tribal members, improve housing
- Have cell service
- Have housing, better washeteria and showers, internet and more permanent job opportunities more enrollees may stay
- Have cell service
- Road access

2. We asked about current housing concerns:

- A large majority of the community members feel that housing is of high priority. A common trend stating current homes are overcrowded, aging, and no newer more efficient housing are available.
- With current households their primary concerns are overcrowding, high energy costs, lack of space & storage. And a need for rehabilitation and weatherization on houses, no water or sewer.
- The community would like to see the following buildings built:
 - Elders Home
 - Single Family homes
 - Seasonal Housing
 - Temporary

3. We asked about the current infrastructures in the community:

- We asked what are the main infrastructure needs in the community:
 - Washeteria
 - Clinic
 - Water/sewer
 - Activities for youth
 - New homes
 - Roads
 - Dump
 - Store
 - Gas Station
 - Internet
- We asked the community to rate the conditions of the following:
 - Clinic: Fair condition (mixed reviews)
 - Tribal Building: In fair condition
 - Other: Washeteria: Poor condition

4. We asked about transportation needs in the community:

- The main transportation issues within the community are the following:
 - Dust Control
 - No freight and Transportation options
 - Fuel Prices
 - Road safety
 - Poor road maintenance
 - Airfreight/Flights
 - Freight costs
 - The community would like to see the following needs addressed
 - Limited transportation in and out community
 - Access trail, Road maintenance
 - Road repair
 - Erosion is a major problem, need to protect infrastructure
 - Roads are bad
 - Dusty roads
 - Erosion roads
 - Raise roads for future floods
5. We asked about Cultural/Traditions practiced in the community:
- The community values Fish Camp and gatherings, Native dancing and Singing, Helping youth and sharing this knowledge with them. Hunting and Gathering is valued as well.
 - Revitalizing these activities are considered important to the community
6. We asked about health and wellness needs of the community:
- The main health and wellness issues within the community are the following:
 - Drug and Alcohol abuse
 - No clinic employees
 - Behavioral health
 - No health aide
 - Need to reintroduce wellness activities
 - Dusty
 - Water supply
 - Sanitation
 - What the community would like to see in the community:
 - Wellness camp
 - Wellness workshops
 - More sober activities
 - Singing, Dancing, Men and Woman gatherings
 - Summer camps

- Camp for the younger generation
 - Youth coordinator
 - Sports
7. We asked about public safety/enforcement within the community:
- Main issues with public safety/enforcement in the community:
 - Erosion
 - Washeteria
 - Electric lines
 - No presence of law enforcement
 - Need a VPSO
 - That for people that are on probation or parole cannot return back to the community without having others advocate for them and we do need and want to come “home”
 - When asked if the community feels safe the majority answer was yes with one saying sometimes
 - When asked if the community felt the Public Safety was adequate the majority answered no with one sometimes and a few yes.
 - We asked what would make community feel safer:
 - Public safety officer
 - Presence of law enforcement
 - Better communication
 - Starlink
 - VPSO
8. We asked about the economy in the community:
- What are the main economy challenges in the community?
 - Access
 - Freight
 - Year round employment
 - Limited full time employment
 - All available jobs are taken
 - Lack of ambition
 - Employment availability
 - Lack of jobs
 - Lack of business opportunities
 - No jobs
 - No water system
 - Gas

- Low paying jobs or no benefits
- When asked where the community spends their money a majority said in the city with a small amount saying online
- We asked the community for suggestions to create jobs in the community:
 - Local store
 - Freight company
 - More economic opportunities
 - Eco tourism
 - 6 Pack license in community
 - Land into trust
 - Increase population
 - Create and develop programs for more funding opportunities
 - Start up the school
 - Better housing
 - Water system
 - More permanent jobs
 - Open store/Gas station
- What business would the community support:
 - Trade school
 - Store for food and fuel
 - Conservation department
 - Education
 - Tour guides
 - B&B's
 - Outdoor recreation
 - Law and land enforcement
 - Local store
 - Any and all community job opportunities that support elders and youth
- We asked what education/training would prepare the community for the workforce:
 - VOC Ed
 - Training for new employment
 - Training for health professionals
 - Hazwoper
 - Hazmat
 - 6 Pack license class
 - Opening up the school
 - Laborer
 - Elderly nutrition
 - Youth Coordinator

- EPA
- Transportation
- Fishing and Hunting
- Trades

9. We asked the community regarding education and youth in the community:

- What are the main education and youth issues:
 - School
 - No School
 - School has been shut down
 - Internet
 - Need to reopen school
 - No youth coordinator
 - No educational opportunities
- Suggested Activities for the youth:
 - School
 - Youth corps
 - Youth center
 - Culture
 - Wellness and recreational camps
 - Healthy lifestyle
 - Bi-monthly youth activity night (1. Movie night & Pizza 2. Outdoor activities 3. Camp for youth)
 - Summer camp
 - Youth coordinator
 - Winter/Summer camp
 - Sewing
 - Native dancing

10. We asked about public utilities in the community:

- What are the main issued with public utilities in the community:
 - Electric lines are close to bank erosion
 - Washeteria condition
 - Outdated washeteria
 - No running water
 - Internet
 - Electric
 - Water and sewer
 - High costs

- Need reliable running water throughout the year
- Washeteria needs to be rebuilt
- Old washeteria
- No running water
- No showers
- What are public utilities needs in the community:
 - Washeteria condition
 - Running water in homes
 - Need fuel to monitor stoves
 - Re-enforce power grid
 - Running water
 - Internet
 - Shower house
 - Plumbing
 - Sewer

11. We asked the community about the land & environment:

- What are the main land/environment issues in the community:
 - Erosion
 - Changing weather/environment
 - Out of state hunter think all is available to hunt
 - Trespass violators
 - Need to prepare for climate change
 - Flooding
 - Wild fires
 - Land trespass abatement
 - Hunters in traditional lands
 - Land trespassers
 - Damage control due to flood
 - Flood
- Suggestions to help address land issues:
 - Make clear which land is public
 - Work with regional and village corporations to put sacred lands into trust
 - Community planning development programs
 - Programs to address issues
 - Getting more help from transportation
 - Put it in the river

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