



NORTH STAR GROUP

Joint Meeting Notes & Summary Anchorage Municipal Assembly and Native Village of Eklutna December 8, 2021

On December 8, 2021, the Municipality of Anchorage and the Native Village of Eklutna held its second joint meeting (the first was on May 27, 2021) following the historic, first-in-Alaska/second-in-the-nation adoption of formalized government-to-government agreement between a tribe and a municipality/city.

The most important accomplishment was the identification of more issues on which the tribe and municipality can work together in future months and years, as well as discussion of the process through which collaboration will occur. To this end, committees or working groups may be formed to make progress on specific issues between the twice-yearly formal government-to-government meetings.

The following list of issues was identified for future work, discussion, and action:

- Invite Anchorage School Board President to attend future meetings.
- Establish MOA-NVE committees or work groups to address specific issues.
- Invite the chairs of the Anchorage Assembly's committees—if not already present—to attend the MOA-NVE joint meetings.
- Find ways to increase the availability of affordable housing.
- Find ways to improve senior access to senior care services.
- Address the problem of missing and murdered Indigenous people. Make sure the new chief of the Anchorage Police Department is aware of and will work on this problem, as well as other Indigenous concerns.
- Ensure that Indigenous concerns are addressed in setting Anchorage's law enforcement and public safety priorities.
- Establish culturally sensitive and relevant programs in correctional and detention institutions.
- Address process for naming Anchorage parks, green spaces, and streets so that Indigenous people have more participation in the process.
- Continue the Indigenous Place Names project.
- Honor the individuals buried in a nearly forgotten cemetery site for the deceased attendees at the long-closed Eklutna Vocational School (operated 1925-1945).
- Examine Anchorage municipal policy regarding the taxation of Tribal property.
- Coordinate on the federal deadline for Tribes and Native corporations to spend federal COVID relief money.
- Continue work on Eklutna River salmon restoration project. Communicate with Chugach Electric Association interview committee to ensure that candidates for the CEO position are fully aware of the importance of the salmon restoration project. Prepare joint Anchorage Assembly-NVE communique to the CEA board of directors emphasizing the project's high priority and their support for Eklutna River salmon restoration.

Minutes summary – The following is a summary of the discussion that occurred at the meeting.

NVE tribal council members present: Aaron Leggett, Maria Coleman, Tresia Coleman, Dorothy Cook, Angeleen Waskey, and Dustin Loran

MOA assembly members present: Suzanne LaFrance, Pete Peterson, Forrest Dunbar, John Weddleton, Kameron Perez-Verdia, Felix Rivera, Christopher Constant, and Austin Quinn-Davidson

Chair Leggett called meeting to order at approximately 3:20 p.m., followed by land acknowledgement, 5/27/21 meeting minutes approval, and agenda approval.

S.LaFrance: Introduced topic of inviting the Anchorage School Board President to the joint MOA-NVE meetings.

M.Coleman: Good way for the Tribe to communicate its concerns about local education. Described, as an example, the areas where her grandson excelled and had difficulty in the Anchorage school system.

Consensus among assembly and tribal participants that school board president attendance would have value as an information source for the two governments.

A.Leggett: Addressed confusion about Eklutna, Inc. (ANCSA village corporation) and NVE (federally recognized Tribe). Described their separate roles, functions and structures, though both represent the same people. Eklutna, Inc. has 180 members and NVE 380.

F.Rivera: Request clarification that the Anchorage mayor and his office (not in attendance) was invited to the joint meeting. (The answer was yes.)

M.Coleman: Having a gathering place is more important than designating a building for meetings. Raised topics for joint meetings – housing and senior care access. Recommended formation of committees to work on details for solutions and push them forward.

F.Rivera: Anchorage Assembly is working on housing. It's a good subject for collaboration with federal money and national Build Back Better Act resources becoming available. Transition period coming up for the new chief for the Anchorage Police Department. Want to address the problem of missing & murdered Indigenous women.

K.Perez-Verdia: Chairs the assembly's Public Safety Committee. Want to identify and work on the issues that need to be addressed. One issue is how parks, green spaces, and streets are named in Anchorage. Believe the street-naming process leaves Native voices unable to be heard. People who live on unnamed streets have the most say on street names.

M.Coleman: Recounted difficulties in recognition of cultural remnants. On JBER, if a hole in the ground is a foxhole, it's historically significant. If it's a fish trap or fish storage location, it's dismissed.

K.Perez-Verdia: Indigenous names and heritage at least need to be considered in Anchorage's process for naming locations.

F.Dunbar: Indigenous concerns are in conflict with the mayor's law enforcement priorities. The mayor cut funding for the women's shelter. Fortunately, three Native women were appointed to the Anchorage Public Safety Advisory Commission in 2020.

F.Rivera: Important to have culturally sensitive and relevant programs in correctional institutions.

D.Loran: Described issue involving the Eklutna Vocational School Cemetery. Burial site identified for deceased individuals who had been attending the Eklutna Vocational School, which operated 1925-45. Want to have an appropriate ceremony for the deceased. Have applied for a federal grant of up to \$25,000 for the cemetery site.

M.Coleman: Deceased vocational school attendees were also buried in other locations, but no records were kept.

A.Leggett: The school was originally set up by the BIA in Anchorage as a tuberculosis treatment facility. It was moved to Eklutna and became a vocational school. Eklutna was chosen as the location because of easy access to cheap coal in the Matanuska Valley to use for heating.

M.Coleman: Raise issue of municipal taxation of Tribal property. At one time, the property was tax exempt.

A.Leggett: The taxed property consists of several houses, the clinic, and the tribal office. Land without buildings is not taxed. It would be a long process to change municipal policy on taxation and the Tribe already has so much to do.

P.Peterson: Could contact MOA's property appraisal office to find out what's going on.

F.Dunbar: Asked about the coming deadline for Tribes and corporations to spend federal COVID relief funds.

A.Leggett: After a court ruling, Alaska's Native regional corporations became fully eligible to receive relief funds. While a conflict exists between Tribes and corporations over the specific amount of funding available to each entity, regional corporation eligibility brings much more money to Alaska than it would otherwise receive. Tribes and corporations have tried to spend the money as fast as they could and are not sitting on huge unspent amounts. Might still be a year-end extension on the spending deadline.

F.Dunbar: Asked about additional housing, and whether it should be in Anchorage or Eklutna village.

M.Coleman: Not all tribal members want to live in the village. Many want to live in Anchorage where they are closer to their work locations.

A.Leggett: The Tribe is interested in multiple styles and approaches for housing. Will have discussions with Eklutna Inc. on this subject. In building housing, get more bang for the buck the further one is away from Anchorage (and its land prices).

C.Constant: Might want to contemplate having an Indigenous overlay for the Anchorage Housing Plan.

A.Leggett: Eklutna Inc's Potter Ridge subdivision will feature a mix of housing.

A.Leggett: We continue to work on the Indigenous place naming project. Do this thoughtfully. Have received national attention about it. Also working on Eklutna River salmon restoration. This group can keep an eye on the project as the participants work their way through all the requirements for restoration.

F.Dunbar, J.Weddleton, and C.Constant: The Chugach Electric Association will soon have a new CEO. The interview process is underway. MOA-NVE could talk to the CEA interview committee to request that Eklutna River restoration be one of the issues raised with the CEO candidates. The Anchorage Assembly and NVE should draft a joint communique to the CEA board of directors requesting that river restoration be considered as a priority issue.

A.Leggett: Would like to schedule the next meeting for early to the middle of May after the 2022 municipal elections. Everyone is busy, so want to make the MOA-NVE joint meetings as effective and productive as possible. Between formal meetings, we could have small groups working on specific issues.

Member Closing Comments

M.Coleman: Recognize people that have helped me succeed on goals in life.

T.Coleman: Want us to do better because I know we can. I am direct in my statements. Our job is to improve life for our people. Attended this meeting with a positive attitude and have been given hope because we've been able discuss many important issues.

F.Rivera: Appreciate having these meetings so we can build relationships. Look forward to continuing this process and showing the state and rest of country that we can work together.

S.LaFrance: This was one of the most positive meetings I've attended in a while. Look forward to what we can do together as a group.

A.Leggett: Really means a lot to us at NVE to have these meetings and this process. Will be an uphill fight on some of these issues. However, we'll have a better city when we all work together.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m. The next official MOA-NVE joint meeting will be in May 2022. *This summary was prepared by Karl Ohls, [North Star Group](#). View the full meeting on the [Municipal Youtube Channel](#).*