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Metlakatla Indian Enterprise Community

Lead Entity: Metlakatla Indian Community

Demographics *State:* Alaska

Tribal Area (Census Tract): Prince of Wales (9582)

Population: 1,469

Poverty Rate: 26.3% of families with incomes below 50% of the State median

Net Land Area: 129 square miles

Background

- Only true Indian Reservation in Alaska
- Unemployment rates as high as 80% due to periodic sawmill closures
- Economy directly linked to the health of lumber and fishing industries

Community Overview

The Metlakatla Indian Community is located on the Annette Islands in southeastern Alaska, just south of Ketchikan, and can only be reached by ferry or airplane. Annette Islands is about 720 miles northwest of Seattle, Washington and 300 miles south of Juneau. The Tribal Council, Annette Islands Reserve, has full control and jurisdiction over its natural resources, land base and for-profit tribal entities are community owned and operated. The Metlakatla have an unemployment rate 50 to 80% higher than most of the surrounding communities, largely due to its dependence on lumbering and fishing industries. The community is striving to diversify its economy and improve the quality of life for all residents while maintaining a sensitivity to its cultural values, land base, and environment. Tourism and value-added enterprises for wood and salmon products are key parts of this strategy. There is strong evidence that the planning process was inclusive with ample opportunity for participation and input. One result has been that the Tribal Government has amended its own vision and value statement to more closely reflect the principles of the Empowerment Zone program.

Strategic Plan Highlights

EXHIBIT

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- Economic Development- Value-added forest and salmon products, job training, local business counseling
- Tourism-Tribal Museum and Artist Village, licensing program for guides and charter fishing services
- Transportation- Construction of a ferry terminal and seaplane seaport, new ferry service, all-weather road construction.
- Infrastructure- Develop sewer system, solid waste disposal incinerator with power generation capacity, water system.
- Health Care- New health center, crisis home/halfway house and intervention center, multi-purpose youth and recreation center.
- Natural Resource Development- Construct Fish & Wildlife and Forestry Research laboratories, feasibility study for sockeye salmon hatchery.

Partnerships

The process of developing the strategic plan helped the isolated Metlakatla Community to forge new partnerships with federal agencies, state government, and universities. USDA Forest Service is developing an MOU with the community to participate in the Special Forest Products program and build a visitors center. The Annette Island School District is partnering with the Northwest Rural Educational Laboratory to develop a school-to-work program. To help develop tourism-related businesses, the University of Alaska Small Business Center will be providing business startup seminars in the community.

Community Involvement Meetings were held throughout the area at varying locations, days, and times to ensure maximum participation. Local residents played an active role in developing surveys, needs assessments, and benchmark priorities. Meetings were held at least monthly, announced several days in advance in the local media, and open to all. All standing committees on the governing body, except Finance, are open to all community residents, without limit.

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