

NEWTOK RELOCATION QUARTERLY UPDATE

INFORMATION FOR NEWTOK RESIDENTS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS PROVIDED BY PROJECT MANAGER ANTHC TO KEEP STAKEHOLDERS INFORMED OF PROGRESS, KEY MILESTONES AND NEXT STEPS OF THE RELOCATION.



Credit: Daniel Martinez

Move-In and Mertarvik Occupancy in Fall 2019

AFTER TWO DECADES OF PLANNING, FIRST RESIDENTS SET TO MOVE IN SEPTEMBER

This summer, the Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) program and Ukpeaġvik Iñupiat Corporation Construction (UICC) completed critical infrastructure in Mertarvik that will support the first wave of relocation from Newtok. Basic infrastructure to allow for year-round occupation in the new village will be completed by the planned move-in date of Oct. 15. This infrastructure will include: 13 new houses with Portable Alternative Sanitation Systems (PASS), eight older houses with PASS units, a pioneering water and sewer system for the Mertarvik Evacuation Center (MEC) and a water treatment plant for village water supply, electrical distribution system and power plant, landfill, townsite roads, and pioneering school facility. A pioneering bulk fuel facility and temporary health clinic will be completed by mid-November, providing additional critical services to Mertarvik's first residents.

The services available will be different than those in Newtok. There will not be a Department of Transportation (DOT) certified and operated airport to serve residents, but rather an emergency landing strip capable of landing charters and Medivac planes in the event of a medical emergency. The clinic will be a temporary facility established in what is currently the man-camp cafeteria, which will be renovated in October to provide basic and emergency health care. The pioneering school will be housed in the MEC, which will contain a warming kitchen, two classrooms, two bathrooms and a handwashing station. The school will not include a gymnasium or play deck for students.

These facilities and their associated services will be available to the 21 households, or approximately 140 people, moving to Mertarvik in October. Newtok Village Council (NVC) selected these households with a housing policy, application and application scoring sheet. The scoring sheet was developed by NVC in communication with their partners, such as Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) Regional Housing Authority (AVCP-RHA), and their legal consultants. The goal of the housing policy, formalized last winter, is to move all Newtok households to Mertarvik. It sets guidelines for determining household eligibility and their moving order. Criteria include proximity to erosion and flooding, number of school age children, tribal affiliation, alternative housing availability, critical job skills, and more. Newtok residents applied for housing in Mertarvik during the spring, applications were reviewed in early summer and households were chosen for the first wave of relocation in July. These construction efforts and the first wave of relocation would not be possible without funds awarded from the Denali Commission, State of Alaska, and the United Methodist Committee on Relief.



Xavier John speaking with an engineer in Mertarvik's power plant module.

Construction accomplishments



HOUSING

During the summer months, 13 new homes were built in Mertarvik. The homes were designed by the Cold Climate Housing Research Center, while IRT and UICC collaborated on their construction. Initially, IRT planned to build four homes and UICC the remaining nine, but the project offered so many valuable training opportunities for service members that UIC and IRT agreed on a joint effort as the best use of resources. In June, after Brice Inc. finished construction of house pads, IRT and UICC crews built the frames, installed roofing and flooring, blew insulation, and are now completing interior and exterior finishing work. All 13 of the four-bedroom homes will be ready for occupancy by Oct. 15, adding to the eight homes built during previous construction seasons.

ELECTRICAL DISTRIBUTION

Commissioned by the Alaska Energy Authority (AEA), UICC completed construction of the modular power plant at their Anchorage yard and shipped the completed facility to Mertarvik by barge in August. Field construction of the power plant will begin in September. In July, Newtok power plant operator Xavier John visited Anchorage for a tour of the new modular facility as well as introductory operations and maintenance training.

NEW CONSTRUCTION CAMP

In late spring, NVC acquired a 26-bed camp facility from a completed Nightmute construction project. It was transported to Mertarvik, where it was installed to house UICC's construction crew and other agency and contractor personnel developing Mertarvik. The camp is a modular facility with 14 bunk rooms, kitchen, dining hall, entertainment room, washer/dryer and bathroom facilities.

TOWN-SITE ROADS

UICC and IRT built Mertarvik roads using gravel produced by Brice, Inc. at the quarry east of the town site. In late May and early June, the quarry road, which serves as the emergency landing strip for aircraft, was extended and widened to accommodate Medivac planes.

IRT began work on the townsite roads in early June. They finished constructing the lower road and most of the middle road to access existing buildings before the last IRT crew departed in late-August.



LANDFILL

The Innovative Readiness Training program built the landfill and landfill access road. Excavation for the trenches began in June and finished in July, and fencing was completed in August. The image shows the landfill trench in the rear and the septage disposal area in the front. UIC Construction began using the landfill in August. Credit: Rob Raney, UICC

PASS

UICC and IRT began installing the Portable Alternative Sanitation System (PASS) units in late July. Engineers from ANTHC were on hand in Mertarvik to assist with the first units. All Mertarvik homes will have PASS units, including the 8 homes constructed in previous years and residents will receive operations and maintenance training from the PASS team at ANTHC.

PIONEERING WATER & SEWER

Commissioned by ANTHC, UICC completed construction of the modular water plant at their Anchorage yard and shipped the building to Mertarvik by barge in August. Field construction of the water plant will begin in September.

UICC installed a membrane bioreactor (MBR) system to provide temporary sewage treatment for the community. The system, comprised of an MBR module and supporting arctic piping, treats sewage generated by the MEC pioneering school and NVC construction camp before effluent is discharged into the Baird Inlet. The MBR was delivered in early June and commissioned by LifeWater Engineering on June 20. A representative from LifeWater filmed a training session on MBR operations and provided the film to NVC for future Mertarvik operator training.



Framing of house by the Innovative Readiness Training program.

Design update

1. PIONEERING BULK FUEL FACILITY

In the spring, AEA provided ANTHC \$733,000 to construct a pioneering bulk fuel facility while the community continues to seek funding for long term bulk fuel infrastructure. HDL Engineering designed an expansion of the existing fuel farm to serve as a pioneering bulk fuel facility with sufficient storage for the next several years as the community grows. Upcoming

construction to the fuel farm includes placing two new fuel tanks with re-use of existing fuel containment, and installing tank appurtenances, piping, and spill response equipment on the two existing and two new tanks. The pioneering bulk fuel farm will have a total capacity of over 87,000 gallons. Fuel will be transferred from the facility and distributed for end users by two fuel tank trailers.

2. TEMPORARY CLINIC

ANTHC and NVC worked with the Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC) to design a temporary health clinic to serve Mertarvik residents through the first years of relocation. This fall, the NVC-owned construction camp

cafeteria will be renovated to serve as the pioneering health clinic in Mertarvik. The health clinic will contain an exam room, pharmacy, urgent care room, bathroom and office.

Upcoming Construction & Training Efforts

Late season construction efforts include erecting the water treatment plant and power plant (both of which arrived in Mertarvik on an August barge), renovating the man-camp cafeteria to serve as a temporary health clinic, completing PASS install, constructing the pioneering bulk fuel farm, and building the MEC interior to serve as a pioneering school. UICC will complete all late season projects in Mertarvik. The last IRT crew demobilized and departed from Mertarvik in late August.

In addition to late season construction efforts, fall relocation efforts will include training new Mertarvik residents. For example, ANTHC PASS experts will work with residents on operations and maintenance of their new PASS system. Other training efforts include operator training for new infrastructure, residential training for use of utilities and services in Mertarvik, and household maintenance preparation.

Funding status

SMALL AMBULATORY PROGRAM GRANT APPLICATION

YKHC submitted a Small Ambulatory Program (SAP) grant for Mertarvik this past spring. The grant funds small clinics in Native American and Alaska Native communities that meet specific population requirements. If awarded, this grant would provide funds to construct a permanent health clinic in Mertarvik.

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS TRIBAL RESILIENCE PROGRAM APPLICATIONS

The Center for Environmentally Threatened Communities at ANTHC assisted Newtok with applying for four Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Tribal Resilience Program grants this past spring. Two of the applications would support the NVC's travel costs, including travel for the Newtok Planning Group and conferences such as the Alaska Federation of Nations (AFN) annual convention. Two additional grant applications were to fund design of improvements to Mertarvik's deep water barge landing and assist with design of a new health clinic. Newtok was informed in August that they received the two travel grants.

Anticipated support needs

COMMUNITY HOUSING

AMOUNT NEEDED PER HOME: \$400,000

OTHER SUPPORT: COMMUNITY OUTREACH ON LOAN OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIVIDUAL HOMEOWNERS

NVC is working closely with Association of Village Council Presidents Regional Housing Authority to establish as much additional housing in Mertarvik as possible. The greatest need in Mertarvik is funding for community housing, as the pace of relocation is partially based on the amount of funding that can be secured for home construction. Occupied housing in Mertarvik will expedite relocation because the community's eligibility for many traditional state and federal funding programs depends on a critical mass of people living in the new townsite.

Additionally, Newtok suffers from a significant housing shortage, with multiple families living in single family homes. Because of this, households in Mertarvik may still live in overcrowded environments before additional housing is provided. To alleviate this housing shortage, the community would like to explore opportunities beyond grant funding, such as loans to individual households and to the village council. The community would like outreach and information on loans and other housing opportunities for Alaska Native people.

2020 DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION EFFORTS:

TOTAL AMOUNT NEEDED: \$10,000,000

For the 2020 construction season, the Newtok Village is focused on building as many housing units as possible. Additional projects include the extension of electrical service and pioneering sanitation infrastructure for new homes, as well as roads to access them. An additional focus for the 2020 season is securing funding for the design of a full-service health clinic and a school to serve the entire community.

By the end of 2020, it is anticipated that more than half of Newtok's residents will have relocated to Mertarvik. At this point, Mertarvik's pioneering facilities will be stretched thin serving the entire population and funding for the planned expansion of these facilities will be critical.



*Innovative Readiness Training program crew member blowing insulation in the floor.
Credit: Daniel Martinez*

Newtok community update

WATER IS LIFE VISIT

The National Tribal Water Center (NTWC) received funding through the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) for a Water is Life project in Newtok. Water is Life promotes the importance of water for health and sanitation by engaging with youth and community members through art. In Newtok, the art project is a school play. The play will be a collaboration between the community and two Native theater professionals recruited for the project: Lance Twitchell, of Yup'ik and Tlingit

heritage, and Ty Defoe, of Oneida and Ojibwa heritage. In May, Defoe visited the community with two ANTHC employees to discuss the project and solicit ideas for the play. He visited with community members, including Elders, to learn about traditional practices surrounding water. While there, Defoe astonished community members with a Hoop dance, a tradition from his community, and a performance on his flutes.

IRT DISTINGUISHED VISITOR'S DAY VISIT TO NEWTOK AND MERTARVIK

On Thursday, July 25, the IRT hosted a distinguished visitors' day that brought military and civilian leaders to Newtok and Mertarvik to experience the results of the IRT's labor this summer. The visitors included General Joseph Streff, commander of the Alaska Army National Guard, as well as representatives from the IRT's headquarters in Washington, D.C. and from Alaska's Congressional delegation. As the primary funder of the Newtok relocation effort, the Denali Commission was also invited and participated in distinguished visitor's day. The group spent the morning in Newtok before flying to Mertarvik for a tour of the construction site.

In the Newtok school gymnasium, visitors were welcomed with dried fish, akutaq ("Eskimo ice cream"), and Yup'ik dance performed by three generations of community

members. Capt. Alyson White, the IRT's Officer in Charge of the project, informed the audience that each IRT rotation is welcomed to Mertarvik by Newtok residents, who share their culture with the new crew. She explained that these visits – which always feature Yup'ik dance and a dance lesson for the IRT – have been very meaningful for all participants.

After the dancing, Romy Cadiente and Gavin Dixon presented a brief history of the Newtok relocation. Capt. White followed with a discussion of IRT's progress in Mertarvik throughout the summer. The visitors then flew to Mertarvik, where they toured the houses and landfill site and had the chance to meet the service members in the fourth and final IRT rotation.

NEWTOK STORY LAB

Paul Charles of the NVC attended a Climate Story Lab in New York City this summer with a team of filmmakers working on an advocacy film for the Newtok relocation project. The lab was an opportunity to learn more about the power of film to create change.

The short film is currently in rough-cut phase and was one of 12 climate media projects selected for the lab from a pool of 132 national proposals. Paul gave a presentation about the film and the relocation project along with Director, Katie Basile, Post Producer, Nathan Golon and Yup'ik interpreter, Corey Joseph (Kwigillingok).

Filming will continue this Fall and release is set for early 2020. The film will raise awareness about the Newtok Relocation Project and the need for federal policy changes regarding funding for slow-moving disasters.

The Newtok Storytelling Project is a collaboration between KYUK, Bethel Community Services Foundation, Good Fight Media and the Newtok Village Council with funding from the Rasmuson Foundation and the Charlotte Martin Foundation.



Newtok Village Council member, Paul Charles, looking through virtual reality goggles on his trip to New York City for a Climate Story Lab.

Newtok Student Story

This poem is written by a young adult in Newtok. The poem describes her class's senior trip and the experience of her and her classmates.

Brief Journey

While waiting patiently, to travel the unknown.

Boarding flight, then traveling to another dimension

Once awake, and I knew we reached our destination

Looking for our lost items, and found them in the wild

We went to our shelter, and settled in

The next day came, and we explored the jungle

We collected souvenirs, and brought it back to our shelter

Never sleeping early, but we rest in peace

Every day we stay in pack, collecting rare items as we go by

On the third day, others left me, while I was seeking for help

I mostly stayed inside, as they checked my weak spot

On that day, I took something they gave me

Then the rest of the pack came back, and we all ate together

We went back to the shelter, and we lounged around
Having nothing to do, but look at items our magical souvenirs

We all awoke, and went back to the jungle and collected more items

The fifth day came and the pack split in half

The others collected more items, as me and my group went swimming

Then the last day, my group went to play at the trampoline,

As usual the others went to get things done.

On our last night, we went all-nighters and enjoyed it for the last time

We went home, even when we wanted to stay at our shelter.

I wish I can turn back time and enjoyed more of that day.



*Innovative Readiness Training program members dancing with Newtok community members at the Mertarvik Evacuation Center.
Credit: Daniel Martinez*

FREQUENTLY USED ACRONYMS

NVC = Newtok Village Council

MEC = Mertarvik Evacuation Center

UICC = Ukpeaġvik Iñupiat Corporation Construction

CCHRC = Cold Climate Housing Research Center

PASS = Portable Alternative Sanitation System



ALASKA NATIVE
TRIBAL HEALTH
CONSORTIUM

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT:
GAVIN DIXON, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
GNDIXON@ANTHC.ORG | (907) 729-3586 | ANTHC.ORG

