

Chignik

People and Place

Location

Chignik, from a Koniag (Sugpiaq) word meaning “big wind,” is located on the south shore of the Alaska Peninsula on Anchorage Bay. The three Chignik communities are clustered on the south side of Chignik Bay. In fact, the complete name of this community is Chignik Bay. This town lies 450 miles southwest of Anchorage and 260 miles southwest of Kodiak. Chignik, part of the Lake and Peninsula Borough, encompasses 11.7 square miles of land and 4.2 square miles of water.

Demographic Profile

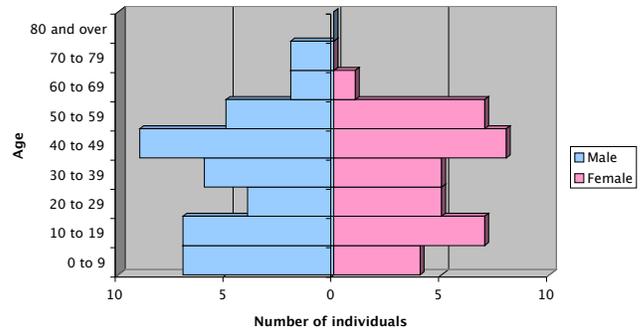
In 2000, the city had 79 inhabitants in 29 households. About 60.8% of the recorded inhabitants of Chignik were Alaska Native, 31.6% White, 2.5% Asian, 2.5% Hawaiian Native, 1.3% other, and 1.3% were two or more races. A total of 60.8% of the population recognized themselves as all or part Alaska Native or American Indian. At the same time, 1.7% of the population identified themselves as having Hispanic origins.

This community, in comparison to other communities of the area, has a fairly balanced gender ratio, although it is still significantly skewed compared to national patterns: 53.2% of the population was male and 46.8% female. This ratio may vary significantly, especially in summer when the population increases by 600 to 800 people (mostly male) when seasonal employees arrive to work for the processing plants. There were 42 empty households for seasonal use. The median age of this community, in contrast to most neighboring communities is similar to the national average: 36.3 years and 35.3 years, respectively. The historical records of the census are inconclusive with a high degree of variability. This may be a consequence of the seasonality of the fishing industry, corresponding employment opportunities, and associated short term migratory movements.

Of the population 25 years of age and over, a total of 25.9% of the population never completed 9th grade, 74.1% had graduated from high school and gone on to further schooling, and 13.0% of the population had a bachelor’s degree or higher.

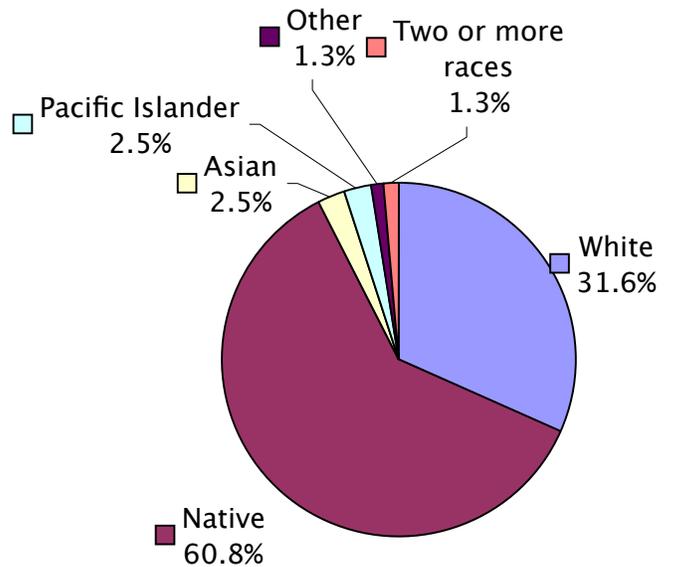
2000 Population Structure Chignik

Data source: US Census



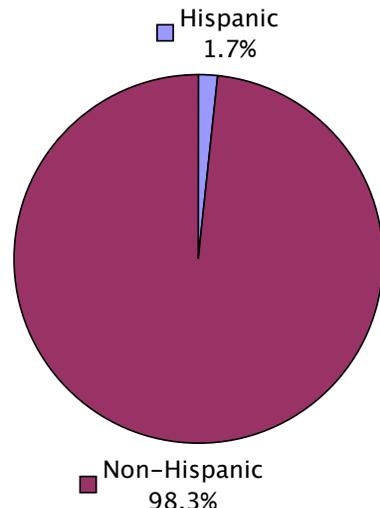
2000 Racial Structure Chignik

Data source: US Census



2000 Hispanic Ethnicity Chignik

Data source: US Census



History

The earliest peoples in the Chignik area were Aleuts, the Native peoples of the Aleutian Islands and the Alaska Peninsula. There is evidence of early settlements in the Chignik area dating back to at least 1900 years ago. A Kaniagmuit village referred to as ‘Kalwak’ was originally located in the area where Chignik is today, but it was destroyed by the Russian fur industry in the late 1700s when locals were enslaved to provide work for the fur trade. These changes translated to massive relocation of populations. The area received important population influxes.

The village of Chignik began in the late 19th century as a salmon cannery and a fishing village. Workers and supplies were transported from San Francisco to Chignik by the Star of Alaska, a ship that brought Chinese crews to make tin cans for the cannery, as well as Japanese workers to process the fish.

The population of Chignik was reported as having 193 people in 1890. By the early 20th century the village had two large canneries, which provided a large part of the infrastructure for the village. A post office was set up in Chignik in 1901 and coal mining was popular in the area from 1899 to 1915. Chignik was incorporated in 1983.

Two historical canneries are still in operation in the city. Today they are part of the Norquest Adak and the Trident Seafoods processing companies. Historically, many native Alutiiq women of the Chignik area married men who were Scandinavian, Chinese, Japanese, Mongolian, Hawaiian, or Filipino. Still present in the community today are many of the Scandinavian and Russian names of those original immigrants.

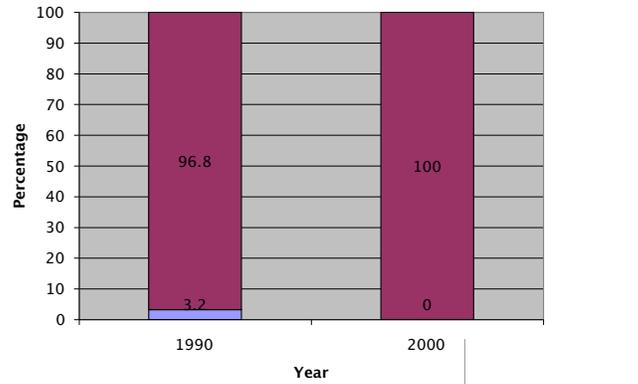
Infrastructure

Current Economy

The current economy of the City of Chignik is based on both commercial fishing and subsistence practices. The city has 18 residents holding commercial fishing permits and two processing plants: Aleutian Dragon and Chignik Pride Fisheries. The processing facilities are a fundamental factor in Chignik’s demography and economy; between 600 to 800 people come to Chignik to fish or work in the plants each summer from places such as Mexico, the Philippines, and U.S. states. The city also employs residents for road rebuilding and the

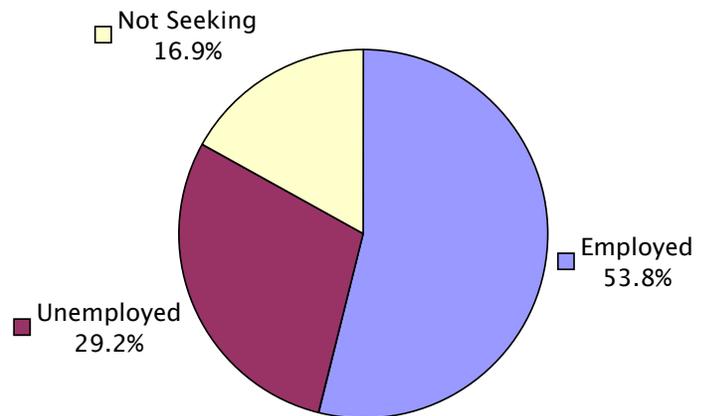
**% Group Quarters
Chignik**

Data source: US Census



**2000 Employment Structure
Chignik**

Data source: US Census



construction of the new boat harbor.

In 2000, the employment structure of the community showed that a 53.8% of the total workforce was employed, a very significant 29.2% was unemployed, and 16.9% of the adults were not seeking jobs. Overall, 41.5% of the total workforce worked for the government. The community had an average per capita income of \$16,166 and a median household income of \$34,250. A total of 4.5% of the population lived below the line of poverty.

Trapping is a source of income during the off-season. Subsistence practices are present in the area and play a significant role in the local economy. These practices include the harvesting of salmon, trout, crab, clams, caribou, moose, and porcupine.

Facilities

Chignik can be reached both by air and sea. The city has a state-owned gravel runway, a state-owned

seaplane base, and a gravel airstrip owned by Chignik Fisheries. Regular air flights run to Chignik from King Salmon and Port Heiden. The price of a roundtrip airplane ticket from Chignik to Anchorage in early September of 2003 was \$752.

The State Ferry operates over the summer from May to October and travels to the area bi-monthly. Barges carry transported goods to the city weekly from late spring to early fall, and arrive monthly from fall to spring. The city has a public dock and a 110-slip small boat harbor currently under development, and there is already a privately owned 600 foot dock and boat haul-out present in the Bay. The primary means of local transportation are ATVs and skiffs.

There is only one store in Chignik and it is owned by one of the processors, Trident Seafoods. The store is only open during the salmon processing season which ends in September. During the rest of the year residents must order their supplies, usually from Seattle, and have them shipped by barge. During winter some staple goods are held in a community store room and are available for sale.

There is a local health clinic, the Chignik Bay Sub-Regional Health Clinic, but for all major medical services such as births, residents must travel to other cities. The town has centralized water and sewage systems managed by the municipality. Chignik Electric, operated by the city, provides power to the town. The community has a school, the Chignik Bay School, with 14 students and 2 teachers. There is no local police department.

Governance

The second-class City of Chignik, incorporated in 1983, has a “strong mayor” form of government with a seven-member city council. The city has no sales tax and no property tax, but it does have a 1% salmon and 2% other seafood landing tax. The taxes on fish are a fundamental income for these communities and a main incentive to incorporate. There is also a 2% raw fish tax which is imposed and collected by the borough.

Far West Inc. is the local Native corporation managing approximately 119,000 acres. The Bristol Bay Native Corporation (BBNC) is the regional Native corporation for the area. Its counterpart, the regional Native non-profit institution, is the Bristol Bay Native Association. Also located in the community is the Chignik Bay Tribal Council which is a traditional council accepted by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Chignik has an Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) office open during summer. Sand Point or Kodiak are the closest permanent offices. In order to access to a Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) office the inhabitants of Chignik have to get in touch with Kodiak, Unalaska, or Anchorage. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has its closest quarters in Kodiak, Unalaska, or Homer.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

Although Chignik is the central community of the Chignik cluster due to the presence of two processing plants, the importance of commercial fishing for the community cannot be understood without taking into account the combination of the employment-businesses-fleet structure of the three Chigniks combined.

According to ADF&G records for 2000, Chignik had 18 commercial permit holders holding 41 all-fisheries combined permits. Simultaneously 37 of its residents were registered as crewmen. There were 4 federal fisheries vessel owners plus 11 owners of salmon vessels resident in the community. The Chignik fleet fished most of Alaska’s significant species: crab, halibut, herring, other types of groundfish, other shellfish, and salmon.

Fishing permits issued for the Alaskan fishing industry are specific to species, size of the vessel, type of gear and fishing area.

Groundfish: The groundfish sector accumulated eleven permits (three fished): two permits for vessels under 60 feet and one for a vessel 60 feet or over, all of them to fish with pot gear (3 fished). The remaining groundfish permits, one hand troll, two longline vessels under 60 feet, one beam troll and one with mechanical jig, were not fished in 2000. All groundfish permits had a statewide range.

Herring: The herring fleet also has a significant presence in Chignik’s harbor. In 2000 there were nine issued permits (two fished). Three permits were issued for herring roe with purse seine in Bristol Bay (two fished). Five permits were issued for herring roe with purse seine: one in Prince William Sound, one in Cook Inlet, one in Kodiak, one in Chignik, one in the Alaska Peninsula, and one for herring food/bait with purse

seine in Prince William Sound (none fished).

Salmon: The salmon fleet held 13 permits for purse seine restricted to Chignik (14 fished).

Other fisheries: In the community there was one non-fished Dungeness crab permit for a pot gear vessel under 60 feet with westward range. There were also four permits to fish halibut (three fished). All of them were for longline vessels over 60 feet with statewide range. There was also a non-fished permit for a vessel under 60 feet with pot gear fishing to catch octopus/squid.

The commercial fishing plants in Chignik process salmon, herring roe, halibut, cod, and crab. At the NorQuest processing plant they work with halibut, sablefish, groundfish, and salmon. At the Trident Seafoods (Sea Catch Inc.) facility they process and can salmon and groundfish.

In accordance with confidentiality regulations, data for fish landings in Chignik are not available. The composition of the fleet delivering at Chignik's harbor though, offers a perspective on the capacity and particularities of its fishing industry: groundfish (36 vessels), sablefish (6 vessels), halibut (20 vessels), and salmon (112 vessels). The fleet delivering landings is clearly larger than the number of ships home-ported or anchored in that particular harbor. The presence of processing plants automatically turns a harbor into a regional center for the local fishing industry.

The Chignik Seafood Producers Alliance (CSPA) is a new organization and a fundamental development in the fishing industry. CSPA is made up of purse seine salmon permit holders and "in 2002, 77 Chignik permit holders joined the Co-op, 22 permit holders chose to fish independently in the open fishery, and one permit holder did not join the cooperative and also did not fish" (Knapp et. al. 2002). Permit holders can choose to join the Co-op and the Co-op is allowed a percentage of the sockeye salmon harvest in Chignik. Permit holders can also choose to not join the Co-op and can still fish independently.

Chignik received a direct allocation of \$56,421 in federal salmon disaster funds at the same time that Lake and Peninsula Borough received \$442,002. These allocations were to compensate for losses due to prices plummeting in the international market. This allocation was implemented in 2003.

The community, the borough, and the BBEDC (CDQ) received \$24,860, \$29,832, and \$ 75,026

respectively to reduce the impact of Steller sea lion protective regulations that came up after the inclusion of this species into the endangered species list. This allocation, under ESA regulations, was implemented in 2002.

The funds not directly allocated to the city were added to the general budget of the borough or the CDQ and helped to compensate for the decline in fish taxes income and to relieve the budgetary tensions of the institutions of the area.

Sport Fishing

Sport fishing is not a significant source of income in the community of Chignik. In 2000 this community did not issue a single sport fishing permit. The area, though, is visited by numerous non-residents who get their permits elsewhere. One company offers fishing services to outsiders.

Subsistence Fishing

In 1991, Chignik demonstrated the significance of subsistence practices for traditional Alaska communities. All households participated in the use of harvested resources. In relation to the main marine resources: 100% used subsistence salmon, 96.7% used other types fish (cod, halibut, prowfish, rockfish, sablefish, sculpin, wrymouth, char, grayling, and trout), 33.3% marine mammals, and 100% marine invertebrates. The results reflect that the inhabitants of the community were harvesting 357.5 lbs per person per year. This statistic emphasizes the importance of subsistence fishing, hunting, and gathering for these communities.

In order to understand the relative importance of each resource we have to break down the composition of the harvest: salmon 47.9%, other fish 30.7%, land mammals 6.82%, marine mammals 0.7%, birds and eggs 1.2%, marine invertebrates 10.9%, and vegetation 1.8%.

In 1999 Chignik had 11 Alaska salmon household subsistence permits: the catch was mainly sockeye. Residents of Chignik and member of Alaska Native Tribes who hold a valid Subsistence Halibut Registration Certificate (SHARC) issued by NMFS, are eligible to harvest subsistence halibut. These allocations are based on recognized customary and traditional uses of halibut. Regulations to implement subsistence halibut fishing were published in the Federal Register in April 2003 and became effective May 2003.