

Chignik Lake

People and Place

Location

The town of Chignik Lake is located on the south side of the Alaska Peninsula on the shore of Chignik Lake. The three Chignik communities are clustered off of the south side of Chignik Bay. Chignik Lake took its name from its location and proximity to Chignik, the Koniag (Sugpiaq) word for “big wind.” This community is situated 13 miles from Chignik, 265 miles southwest of Kodiak and 474 miles southwest of Anchorage. The area encompasses 12.3 square miles of land and 9.6 square miles of water.

Demographic Profile

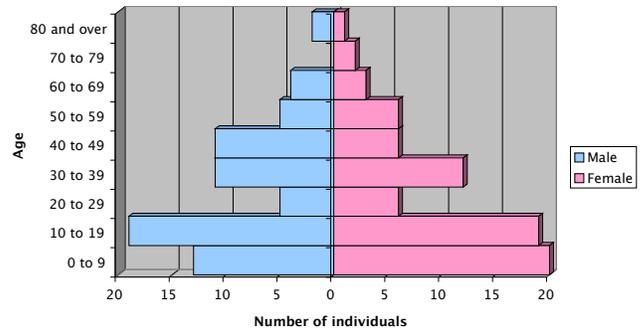
According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Chignik Lake had 145 inhabitants. The racial composition in 2000 was: 86.9% Alaska Native or American Indian, 11.7% White, 0.7% Asian, and 0.7% two or more races. A total of 87.6% of the population recognized themselves as all or part Alaska Native or American Indian. A small 1.4 % of the population was of Hispanic origin. All the permanent residents of the village lived in 40 households. Ten housing units were vacant in the community and of those one was vacant due to seasonal use.

In 2000, the median age of Chignik Lake was 20.8 years versus the U.S. median of 35.3 years. A high percentage (49%) of the population was under 19 years old. In 2000, females outnumbered males 51.7% to 48.3%. Chignik Lake does not show up in the Census until the 1960s. A historical analysis depicts a community with a slow but constant growth tendency. Of the population age 25 years and older, 42.9% never completed high school, 57.1% graduated from high school or higher schooling, and 8.6% of the population had a bachelor’s degree or higher.

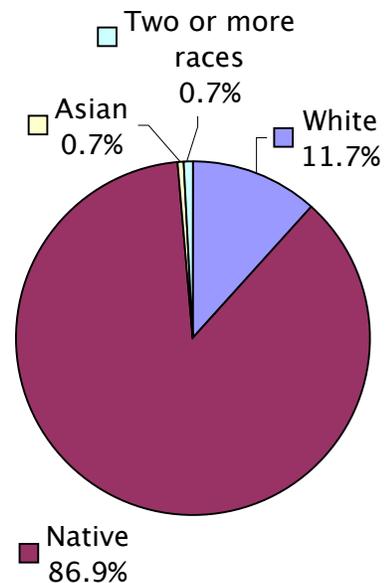
History

The building of a school in the early 1950s was a turning point in the emergence of Chignik Lake. It attracted a group of families, mostly Russian Orthodox, eager to protect their identity and educate their offspring in near-isolation. Before that event, the community seems to have been a winter residence for a few families, the first of which settled in the area around 1903. It is hard to understand the population dynamics of Chignik Lake in the first half of the 20th

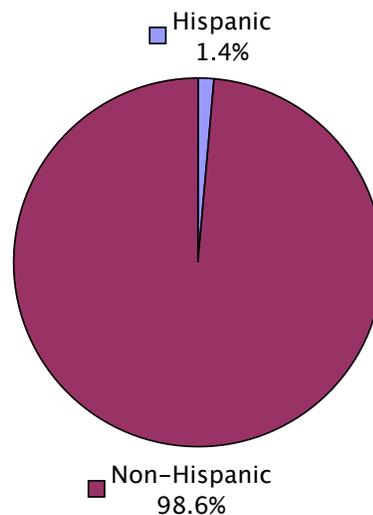
2000 Population Structure Chignik Lake
Data source: US Census



2000 Racial Structure Chignik Lake
Data source: US Census



2000 Hispanic Ethnicity Chignik Lake
Data source: US Census



century because the community does not appear in any census before the 1960s.

The population, mostly Aleuts or of Aleut descent, seem to be originally from Kanatag and Illnik on the opposite shore of the Alaska Peninsula. Prior to the foundation of the school, all of these communities used to meet in different semi-permanent camps. The community still keeps the winter camp character of its origin. During the summer months an important part of the town travels down the river to fish in the Chignik salmon fishery or to work in fish processing industry.

Infrastructure

Current Economy

The economy of this small community is based exclusively on commercial fishing and subsistence. A significant number of residents, still following the old seasonal pattern, leave the community to work at the commercial fishing industry in the Chignik Bay processing plants or as crewmen of the fleet of the area. Eight residents of the community hold commercial fishing permits. In addition, Chignik Lake relies heavily on subsistence hunting and fishing (salmon, other fish, caribou, moose, and seal). It is important to point out that an attempt to establish a tourism industry seems to be developing, including accommodations and fishing guides.

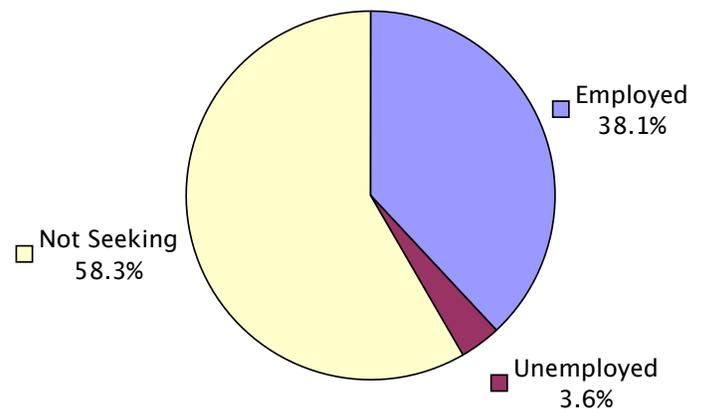
The employment structure shows that 38.1% of the potential labor force was employed, 3.6% was unemployed, and 58.3% were not seeking jobs. The singularity of these results, as well as its accuracy to represent social reality, needs to be understood in the context of a community completely dominated by a seasonal industry. Censuses, with their tendency project a 'snapshot' of a community, are not well equipped to represent communities that in fact are extremely variable across the year. An appalling 22% of the population is reported to live below the line of poverty. The per capita income was \$13,843 with the median household income having been \$41,458 in Chignik Lake in 2000.

Governance

Chignik Lake is an unincorporated village located in the Lake and Peninsula Borough. The Bristol Bay Native Corporation is the regional for-profit Native corporation while the Chignik River Ltd. is the local corporation managing 100,000 acres.

**2000 Employment Structure
Atka**

Data source: US Census



This community is part of the Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation (BBEDC) and receives community development quotas (CDQ) from this organization. Bristol Bay Native Association is the regional nonprofit. The community is also part of the region-wide nonprofit Bristol Bay Native Association. Chignik Lake Traditional Council is recognized by the BIA.

Although only open seasonally, the closest Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) offices are located in Chignik and Port Moller. Sand Point or Kodiak are the closest permanent ADF&G offices. In order to access a Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) office residents of Chignik Lagoon have to go to Kodiak, Unalaska, or Anchorage. The nearest National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) offices are in Kodiak, Unalaska, and Homer.

Facilities

The easiest way to access Chignik Lake is by airplane. The community has a State-owned gravel airstrip and seaplanes land at nearby Chignik Lagoon. Regularly-scheduled and charter flights are provided mainly by Peninsula Airways. The price of a roundtrip ticket from the community to Anchorage in early September of 2003 was \$752.

Chignik Lagoon is the port of arrival of most commodities destined for Chignik Lake. These goods are transported weekly during the summer and monthly during winter. By sea, the inhabitants of Chignik Lake have to rely on the services that the State Ferry provided to Chignik Lagoon four times per

year. There is no harbor, dock, barge access, or boat haul-outs. Skiffs and ATVs are the primary means of local transportation. The three Chigniks are currently lobbying for the construction of roads between them.

Chignik Lake has two registered businesses licensed for visitors' accommodation. The community has one school, the Chignik Lake School, with 38 students and four teachers. The town had no police presence. Primary health care is provided by the Chignik Lake Health Clinic or, alternatively, by the Chignik Lake Rescue Squad. The town has centralized systems of water and sewage management, and during the summer, power is provided by the Chignik Lake Electric Utility Inc. In winter power is purchased from the school district.

Involvement in the North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

As mentioned in the Current Economy section, the importance of commercial fishing for Chignik Lake 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 Lake had 8 commercial permit holders, holding 10 all-fisheries combined permits. In Chignik Lake 38 individuals were registered as crewmen and there was one vessel-owner fishing in federal fisheries, and 5 owners of salmon vessels. The small fleet of Chignik Lake was mainly focused on salmon, although it was also engaged with herring and other groundfish fisheries.

Permits issued for Alaskan fisheries are specific to species, size of the vessel, type of gear, and fishing area.

The community had only one permit that was fished which pertained to a vessel under 60 feet with pot gear for miscellaneous salt water finfish. The salmon fleet encompasses most of Chignik Lake's commercial fisheries. It accounted for eight permits, six of which were fished: six were purse seine restricted to Chignik (five fished), one for a drift gillnet which was fished, and one for a set gillnet which was not fished, both restricted to the Bristol Bay waters. There was also one permit issued and fished to catch herring roe with purse seine in Bristol Bay which was actually fished in 2000.

Although Chignik Lake did have a fleet, there was no real landing of fish due to the absence of a large processing plant. This lack pushes the vessels of this community to deliver elsewhere, probably Chignik Bay.

In 2003, the Lake and Peninsula Borough, where Chignik Lake is located, received an allocation of \$442,002 in federal salmon disaster funds to compensate for losses due to plummeting salmon prices, and \$29,832 to reduce the impact of Steller sea lion protective regulations. The BBEDC also received \$75,026 for this reason. The funds, added to the general budget of the borough or the CDQ, helped to compensate the decline on fish taxes income and to relieve the budgetary tension of the institutions of the area.

Sport Fishing

In 2000, this community did not issue a single sport fishing permit. The area is visited by numerous outsiders that get their permits elsewhere, though. In 2002, the village had two business licenses related to sport fishing as a tourist activity.

Subsistence Fishing

In a survey conducted on behalf of ADF&G in 1991, Chignik Lake demonstrated the great 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% of the households used subsistence salmon, 100% used other types of fish (herring, smelt, cod, flounder, greenling, halibut, rockfish, sablefish, sculpin, char, and trout), 70.8% marine mammals, and 100% marine invertebrates. The results reflect that the inhabitants of the community were harvesting 442.4 lbs per person per year. These statistics emphasize the importance of subsistence fishing, hunting, and gathering for these communities.

In order to understand the relative importance of each resource it is helpful to break down the composition of the harvest: salmon 46.06%, other fish 9.4%, land mammals 34.5%, marine mammals 0.9%, birds and eggs 3%, marine invertebrates 4.7%, and vegetation 1.5%.

In 1999, residents of Chignik Lake had 11 Alaska salmon household subsistence permits and the catch was mainly sockeye. In addition, the inhabitants of this community (rural residents or members of an

Alaska Native tribe) are eligible to harvest subsistence halibut by holding Subsistence Halibut Registration Certificates (SHARCs). 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.