

Emmonak

People and Place

Location

The community of Emmonak is situated at the mouth of the Yukon River on the coast of Western Alaska. It is located about ten miles from the Bering Sea and is on the north bank of Kwiguk Pass. The community is located in the Wade Hampton Census area and makes up an area of 7.5 square miles of land and 1.1 square miles of water.

Demographic Profile

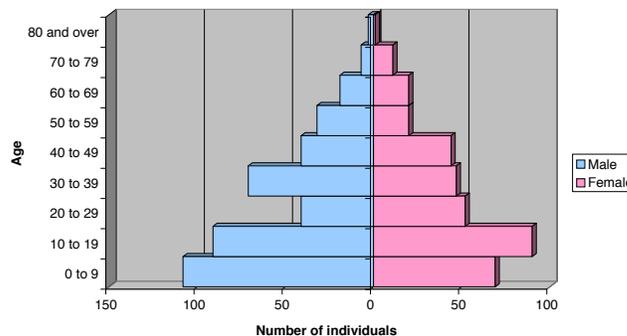
There were a total of 767 inhabitants of Emmonak city in 2000, and of those 53.8% were male and 46.2% were female. A population was first recorded by the Census in 1940 when there were 42 inhabitants. The population reached 358 by 1960 and has continued to rise since. The population can swell to as many as 2000 persons seasonally during the fishing season. According to the 2000 U.S. Census the racial composition of Emmonak is as follows: 91.3% American Indian and Alaska Native, 5.6% White, 0.3% Black, 0.1% Asian (Korean), and 2.7% two or more races. When considering race alone or in combination with one or more races, 93.9% of the population were American Indian and Alaska Native. About 1.0% of the population of the community was Hispanic. Approximately 55.9% of the population was age 18 and over in 2000 and the median age was 23.0 years versus the national median age of 35.3 years. There were a total of 218 housing units in 2000, of which 29 were vacant, 9 due to seasonal use. No one lived in group quarters in 2000. About 71.3% of the residents age 25 and over had graduated from high school or higher and 4.5% had obtained a bachelor's degree or higher.

History

According to the National Park Service “one of the most distinctive and widespread Arctic cultural traditions appeared around 4000 BP”, the Arctic Small Tool tradition, which is significant because “some investigators feel that the Arctic Small Tool tradition marks the arrival of the ancestral Eskimo cultures” to the Arctic area (National Park Service 2003). Historically the native Eskimo people present in the area of Emmonak have been the Yup’ik peoples. Because “southwestern Alaska lacked significant

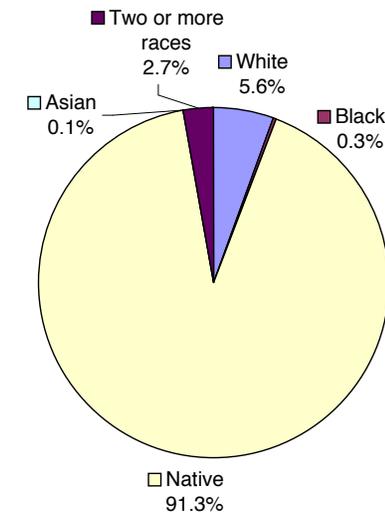
**2000 Population Structure
Emmonak**

Data source: US Census



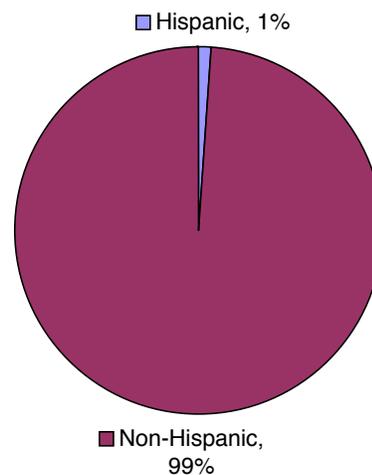
**2000 Racial Structure
Emmonak**

Data source: US Census



**2000 Hispanic Ethnicity
Emmonak**

Data source: US Census



amounts of any of the commercially valuable resources that first drew non-Natives to other parts of the state”, the Native people of the southwest region did not experience continual contact with the outside world until missionaries settled in the area beginning in the mid-1800’s: Russian Orthodox, Moravians, and Jesuits (Fienup-Riordan 2000, p. 115).

The village of Emmonak was originally called “Kwiguk” which is a Yup’ik word meaning “big stream.” Those from the village refer to themselves as “Kuigpagmuit” meaning “people from the Yukon River.” The community has also been recorded historically as “Emanguk” by the Census Bureau and was at first a summer fish camp before becoming a permanent village. The village was first reported by the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey in 1899 at which time it was situated 1.4 miles south of its current location. In 1920 a post office was established. The community members “built their own log cabin school in 1950” and Emmonak “has the distinction of being the only village to build its own school without outside assistance” (Lower Yukon School District 2003).

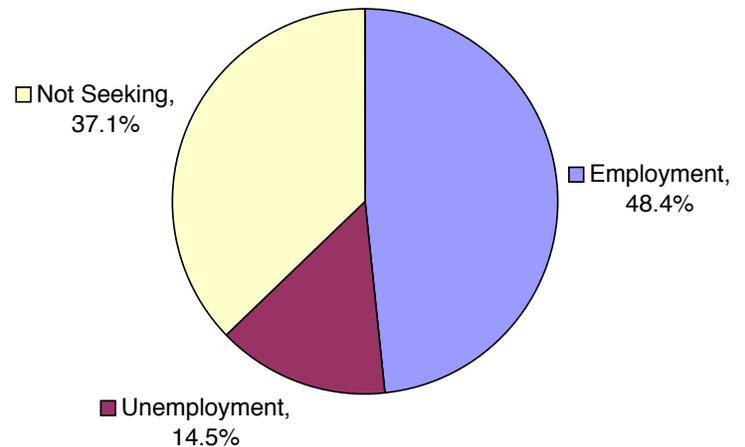
When commercial fishing became a key industry in the community, the northern Commercial Company established a cannery, although it was washed away in 1964 by flooding. Also in 1964 the City government was incorporated. During 1964 to 1965 the village was relocated to its current location because of growing flooding and erosion at the previous site. The new village site was named Emmonak, meaning “blackfish.” The sale, importation, and possession of alcohol is banned in the city. Residents of a nearby fish camp, Chuloonawick live in the city of Emmonak as well.

Infrastructure

Current Economy

The economy of Emmonak is very seasonal. It is the center for commercial fishing, processing, and purchasing on the lower Yukon River during the commercial fishing season. Residents travel to subsistence fish camps during the summer months to dry salmon for use in the winter. In 2000, 107 commercial fishing permits were issued to residents of Emmonak and there were 134 residents which were licensed crew members. The Yukon Delta Fish Marketing Co-op is present in the community as is a processor (Bering Sea Fisheries Inc.) which processes

**2000 Employment Structure
Emmonak**
Data source: US Census



salmon. Of the population of Emmonak age 16 years and over, 48.4% were employed in 2000, 14.5% were unemployed, and 37.1% were not in the labor force. Of those which were employed, over half were classified as government workers. The per capita income in the community in 2000 was \$9,069 and the median household income was \$32,917. About 16.2% of the people in Emmonak lived below the poverty level at the time of the Census. Subsistence is very important to residents of the community.

Governance

Emmonak is a second-class city which was incorporated in 1964 and has a manager form of government that includes a mayor, seven person city council, five person advisory school board, and various municipal employees including a gaming supervisor. There is a 3% Sales Tax in the city as well as a Raw Fish Tax. There is no Property Tax. The city is not located in any organized borough. The regional Native corporation in which the community is included is the Calista Corporation, the second largest of the 13 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANSCA) regional corporations. The Native village corporation is the Emmonak Corporation and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) recognized traditional village council is called Emmonak Village. The Community Development Quota (CDQ) group for the area is the Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association. The nearest Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) office is located within the city of Emmonak, but is a seasonal office which is open from June 1st to August 31st, and an office is available year round in the community of Nome. The closest Bureau

of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) office is also located in Nome. A National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) field office is located in Bethel and the main office is located in Anchorage.

Facilities

Emmonak is reachable by air, water, and by land trails to Kotlik, Alakanuk, and Sheldon Point using snow machines during the winter. A 4,400 foot gravel airstrip, owned by the State, is available to the community. The approximate cost according to Travelocity and Expedia to travel by air roundtrip to Anchorage from Emmonak is \$710 (price given for date as close to September 1, 2003 as possible) and requires travel via a rural airline. There are seven airline services that travel to the city. During the summer all terrain vehicles (ATVs) and skiffs are used for local transportation by community members. Accommodations are available at the City Hotel and a B&B. There is one school, the Emmonak School, K-12, which had 229 students and 17 teachers in 2000. Health care is available at the newly constructed Emmonak Health Clinic which is operated by the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC) and by the City. Police services are provided by the City Police Department. The electric utility's name is AVEC which is operated by REA Co-op and the City, and the main power source is diesel. In 2000 about 94.4% of the households heated using kerosene. Water, sewage, and garbage are all operated by the City.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing*

There were a total of 107 commercial fishing permits issued to residents of Emmonak in 2000 according to the Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (ACFEC). There were no vessel owners from the community of Emmonak participating in federal fisheries or in the commercial fishing of salmon. There were a total of 134 licensed crew member residents in 2000.

Of the 107 permits issued to Emmonak community members, 87 were fished. Two permits were issued for king crab using pot gear on a vessel under 60 feet in Norton Sound (none fished). A total of five herring permits were issued with one for a herring roe gillnet around Nelson Island (none fished), one for a herring gillnet around Nunivak Island (one fished), and three

for herring roe using a gillnet in Norton Sound (none fished). One hundred permits were issued to residents of Emmonak for salmon using a set gillnet in the Lower Yukon (86 fished).

The only landings in the community were salmon, delivered by one vessel in 2000. In accordance with confidentiality regulations, landings data for the community are unavailable. Bering Sea Fisheries, Inc., a land based salmon processor, was present 2000. According to the Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association "for more than thirty years, Bering Sea Fisheries, Inc. has successfully been buying and marketing Yukon kings and chums" and "even in the disaster declaration years, Bering Sea Fisheries, Inc. managed to make ends meet." Also present in the community was the Yukon Delta Fish Market Co-op.

The City of Emmonak was recently allotted \$27,711 in federal salmon disaster funds. The CDQ group, the Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association, was recently granted \$50,017 by the Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference as part of the Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Program "in recognition of the negative economic impacts of federal measures to protect the Steller sea lion" with money which had been allocated by the U.S. government (Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference 2003).

Sport Fishing

Sport fishing does not seem to be much of a tourist attraction. A total of 81 sport fishing licenses were sold in Emmonak to Alaska State residents in 2000 and a grand total of 82 sport fishing licenses were sold to non-residents. According to the ADF&G, there were no sport fishing guide businesses registered in Emmonak in 2002 and no business licenses currently on file with the Department of Community and Economic Development.

Subsistence Fishing

According to the ADF&G, for the most representative year of 1980, a total of 100.0% of all households in Emmonak used all subsistence resources: 72.2% salmon, and 50.0% marine mammals. The data for non-salmon fish was not available, although it

* Commercial fishing permit data presented here is from the CFEC and is for the communities of Chuloonawik and Emmonak combined.

was mentioned that cod, eel, blackfish, burbot, pike, sheefish, and whitefish were used. The per capita subsistence harvest of all resources by residents of Emmonak in 1980 was 612.20 lbs. The composition of the harvest was made-up of 36.92% salmon, 33.18% non-salmon fish, 15.44% marine mammals, 5.21% birds and eggs, and 9.28% land mammals. A total of 157 household salmon subsistence permits were issued to residents of Emmonak in 1999 for a total of about 11,039 harvested fish. Residents of the community are eligible to apply for subsistence halibut registration certificates. 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.