

Nikiski

People and Place

Location

The community of Nikiski is located 9 miles north of the City of Kenai on the Kenai Peninsula on the Sterling Highway. Nikiski is also known as Port Nikiski and Nikishka and is located in the Kenai Recording District. It is made up of 69.6 square miles of land and 6.6 square miles of water.

Demographic Profile

Nikiski had a total population of 4,327 in 2000. The gender composition in the community was 52.2% male and 47.8% female. Since 1980, the population has increased from 1,109 inhabitants to 4,409 in 2002, as established by a State Demographer. At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census the racial makeup was: 87.2% White, 0.1% Black, 7.6% American Indian and Alaska Native, 0.7% Asian, 0.5% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, 0.8% other, and 3.1% two or more races. A total of 10.1% of the population recognized themselves as all or part Alaska Native or American Indian.

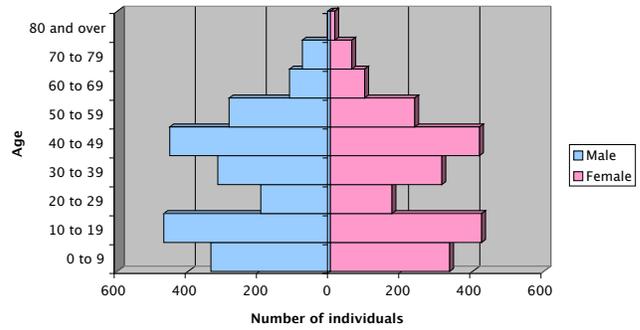
About 1.3% of the population was of Hispanic. The median age in the community in 2000 was 34.2 years old, compared to the national average of 35.3 years. About 33.5% of the population was under the age of 18. There were a total of 1,766 housing units in the community and of those 252 were vacant with 93 having been vacant due to seasonal use. No one lived in group quarters. About 88.5% of the population age 25 years and over had graduated from high school and gone on to further schooling, 16.8% had obtained a bachelor's degree, and 4.3% had a graduate or professional degree.

History

The area of Nikiski was historically in Kenaitze Indian territory. For the most part Athabascan Indian groups live in interior Alaska, and Eskimo and Aleut groups live in the coastal areas; the Kenaitze Indians are the exception. The Kenaitze Indians were Dena'ina Athabascan people who replaced the Kachemak people in around 1000 A.D. (VisitKenai.com 2003). The Native people of the area were called Kenaitze by the Russians which meant 'the people who live along the Kenai River', although "the Kenaitze, however, called themselves Kahthuht'ana, an Athabascan word

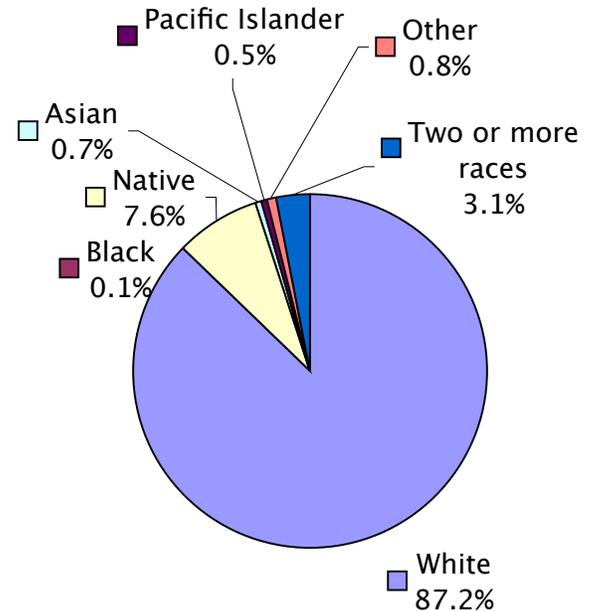
**2000 Population Structure
Nikiski**

Data source: US Census



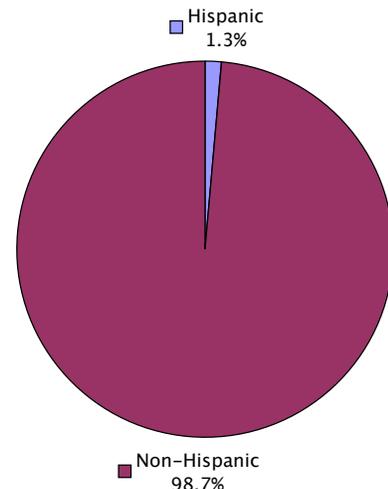
**2000 Racial Structure
Nikiski**

Data source: US Census



**2000 Hispanic Ethnicity
Nikiski**

Data source: US Census

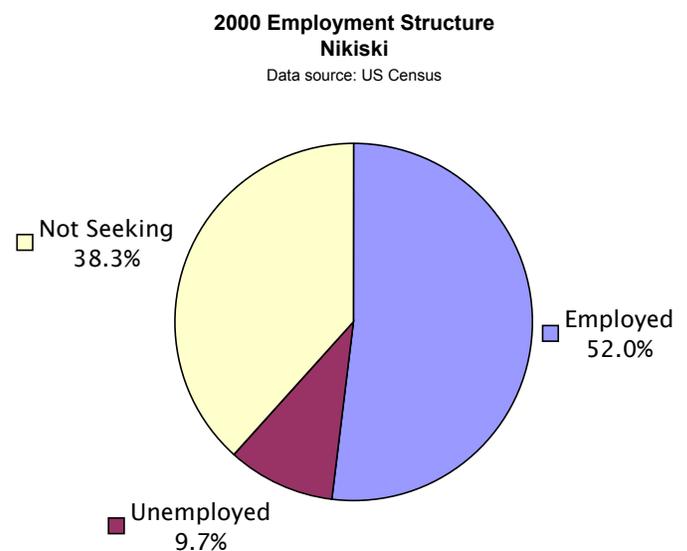
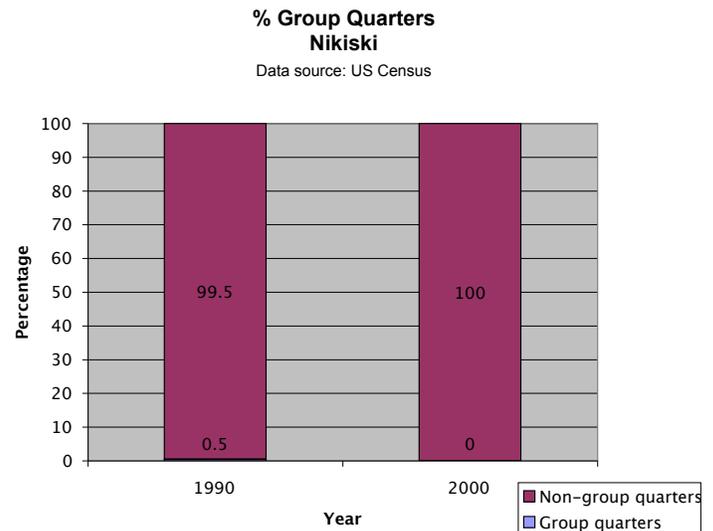


meaning ‘the people of the Kenai’” (Halliday 1998, p.182). Between 1786 and 1791 Russian fur traders came to the Kenai area and established settlements. Around 1795 Russian Orthodoxy was introduced into the area by Father Juvenaly. In 1838, there was a smallpox epidemic and approximately 50% of the Dena’ina people died from the disease. The Native population was hit again in the years 1918 to 1920 during the worldwide influenza epidemic. The first cannery in Kenai was built in 1888 by the Northern Packing Company. In 1923 the Alaska Railroad was finished and in 1937 construction was started on the Kenai airport. The area of Nikiski was homesteaded in the 1940’s. Construction began on the Sterling Highway in 1947, was finished in 1951, and was paved in 1954 which provided greater access to the area. The region grew with the discovery of oil on the Kenai Peninsula in 1957. Oil-related industries had located to the area by 1964 including Tesoro, Chevron, Phillips 66, and Unocal. A fire department was organized for Nikiski beginning the 1960’s and has since “developed one of the best and most aggressive training programs in petroleum firefighting you can find anywhere in the states” (Nikiski Fire Department 2003).

Infrastructure

Current Economy

Nikiski is the most industrial area on the Kenai Peninsula because the oil industry is so important to the economy of the community. It is the site of a Tesoro oil refinery where crude oil from Cook Inlet (and some from the North Slope) is processed into diesel, gasoline, and jet fuel. A BP natural gas to liquid fuel pilot plant has also been constructed in the area. Natchiq, Inc. and Alaska Petroleum Contractors are building portable modules which will be shipped to the Alpine oil field in the North Slope for oil service work and are being constructed in Nikiski. Five hundred residents are employed at Agrium, Inc.’s fertilizer plant which produces 600,000 tons of ammonia and 1 million tons of urea yearly. The Captain Cook Recreation Area is located about 10 miles outside of the community, drawing visitors to the area. Employment is also provided by the timber industry, retail, government, tourism-related services, and commercial and sport fishing. There were a total of 71 commercial fishing permits issued to residents of Nikiski in 2000 and 93 licensed crew members



lived in the community. Subsistence activities do seem to be present to a certain degree in the community, although there is little data available. Of those age 16 and over about 52.0% were employed, 9.7% were unemployed, and 38.3% were not in the labor force. Of those employed, approximately 24.0% were classified as being in construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations. The per capita income in the community was \$20,129, and the median household income was \$51,176. About 11.4% of the population lived below the poverty level at the time of the 2000 U.S. Census.

Governance

Nikiski is unincorporated; therefore, no city or borough officials or employees live in the community. Nikiski is included in part of the Kenai Peninsula Borough and the North Peninsula Chamber of Commerce is present. There is neither a regional Native corporation, nor any Native village corporation

for the community. Nikiski was not included as part of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) and is not federally recognized as a Native village. The nearest Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) office is located in Soldotna, which is also on the Kenai Peninsula, whereas the closest Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration (BCIS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) offices are located in Anchorage. There is also a NMFS office in Homer as well.

Facilities

Nikiski is accessible by land with the Sterling Highway providing access to Anchorage, and roads linking the community to Kenai where airport and docking facilities are available. The approximate cost to fly to Kenai from Anchorage roundtrip was \$114 according to Travelocity and Expedia (price given for date as close to September 1, 2003 as possible). Two private airstrips are present in the area, one owned by the Shell Oil Company. Offshore drilling platforms are serviced by the Port Nikiski docks. Accommodations are available at Lynn's Inn B&B, Moose Haven Lodge, Daniel's Lake Lodge, Bishop Creek Campground, and Discovery Campground. There are three schools in the community; Nikiski Elementary, North Star Elementary, and Nikiski Middle/Senior High School which had a collective enrollment of 967 students taught by 58 teachers in 2000. There is no health care available directly in the community, but a hospital is located in Soldotna and emergency care can be obtained from the Nikiski Fire Department. There are also no police in the community. The electric utility is the Homer Electric Association, operated by REA Co-op with the main power sources of hydroelectric and natural gas. Most of the houses in Nikiski use individual water wells and septic tanks as no public sewer system or piped water systems are available. Refuse is collected by Peninsula Sanitation and is operated by the Borough transfer facility and Unocal Oil.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing*

Nikiski saw a total of 71 commercial fishing permits issued to its residents in 2000, and 93 licensed crew members lived in the area. There were 5 vessel owners participating in commercial federal fisheries,

and 15 vessel owners participating in the commercial salmon fishery.

Out of the 71 commercial fishing permits issued to Nikiski residents, 51 were fished. There were 11 permits issued for halibut: 6 were issued for halibut using longline on a vessel under 60 feet statewide (2 fished), two using a mechanical jig statewide (one fished), and 3 using longline on a vessel over 60 feet statewide (3 fished). Five permits were issued to Nikiski residents for herring: two for herring roe using gillnets in Cook Inlet (none fished) and three for herring roe using gillnets in Kodiak (none fished). Five permits were issued for other groundfish, one for lingcod using a mechanical jig statewide (none fished), one for miscellaneous saltwater finfish using a hand troll statewide (none fished), one for miscellaneous saltwater finfish using pot gear on a vessel under 60 feet statewide (none fished), and two for miscellaneous saltwater finfish using a mechanical jig statewide (two fished). A total of 50 salmon permits were issued of which 43 were fished: one was issued for salmon using a purse seine in Prince William Sound (none fished), 2 using drift gillnets in Prince William Sound (2 fished), 13 using drift gillnets in Cook Inlet (14 fished), one using a drift gillnet in Bristol Bay (one fished), 29 using set gillnets in Cook Inlet (22 fished), 2 using set gillnets in Kodiak (2 fished), and 2 using set gillnets in Bristol Bay (2 fished).

No vessels delivered landings to Nikiski in 2000, since there were no processors located in the community. Landings are most likely delivered to nearby Kenai which has processors for a variety of species. The community of Nikiski was not allotted any federal salmon disaster funds, although the Kenai Peninsula Borough was allotted \$623,295. The Kenai Peninsula Borough was also recently granted \$810 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

There are quite a few sport fishing related businesses present in the community of Nikiski. In 2002, there were 10 freshwater guide business listings according to ADF&G, 4 aircraft/fly-in services listings, 4 drop-off services listings, and 7 full service guide listings. There were 20 sport fishing licenses sold in

Nikiski to residents of the state of Alaska, and a total of 274 sold to non-residents.

Subsistence Fishing

Nikiski is considered a Federal non-rural area, meaning the residents of the community are not eligible to harvest subsistence resources on Federal land (of which 60% of the land in the state of Alaska is designated). In order to have the right to harvest subsistence wildlife, fish, and shellfish on Federal land, a status of “rural” must be granted. Rural status had been temporarily granted to all communities in the Kenai in 2000 as requested by the Kenaitze Indian Tribe, although this decision has been overturned and currently only certain Kenai communities are given

the designation of rural. Nikiski is not one of them, and therefore, not eligible to harvest subsistence on Federal lands. Residents of Nikiski are eligible to harvest on State lands because the State considers all the communities of Alaska as rural. Most likely, some form of subsistence is occurring in the city, although there is no information (except for salmon) available from the ADF&G because of this Federal non-rural designation. According to the ADF&G there was one salmon household subsistence permit issued to a resident of Nikiski in 1999 for an estimated total harvest of 66 fish. It does not appear that residents of the community are eligible to apply for halibut subsistence certificates.