

# Ninilchik

## People and Place

### Location

Ninilchik is located on the Kenai Peninsula, approximately 38 miles south of Kenai and 30 miles north of Homer, on the Sterling Highway. The area encompasses 207.6 square miles of land and 0.1 square miles of water.

### Demographic Profile

In 2000, there were 772 residents in 320 households. The racial composition of the community was as follows: White (82.3%), American Indian and Alaska Native (14.0%), Asian (0.5%), other (0.1%) and two or more races (3.1%). A total of 16.6% of the population recognized themselves as all or part Alaska Native or American Indian. In addition, 0.6% of residents were of Hispanic ethnicity. The gender makeup of the community was slightly skewed, at 52.5% male and 47.5% female. The median age was 42.5 years, significantly older than the U.S. national average of 35.3 years. Approximately 79% of residents aged 25 years or older had a high school degree or higher level of educational attainment.

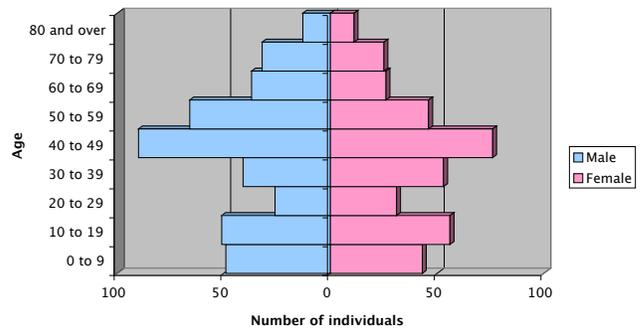
### History

The Kenai Peninsula is historically considered to be Dena'ina Athabascan Indian territory, although archaeological sites on Kachemak Bay suggest the presence of Pacific Eskimo or Alutiiq people as early as 4,500 years ago (Halliday 1998: 183). The Dena'ina word "Niqnikchint" means "lodge by the river." In the 1820s, the Russian-American Fur Company established a permanent settlement in present-day Ninilchik as a place for disabled and sick employees who could not return to Russia.

Nine families originally settled Ninilchik, all of whom were descendants of Grigorii Kvasnikoff, a Russian Orthodox missionary from Moscow, and Mavra Kvasnikoff, a Russian-Sugpiaq from Kodiak. In 1846, the early founders built the Transfiguration of Our Lord Russian Orthodox Church; this church, the most recognizable feature of Ninilchik, was constructed on its present site in 1901. By the 1940s, homesteaders began settling in the community, and today Ninilchik is comprised of many ethnicities.

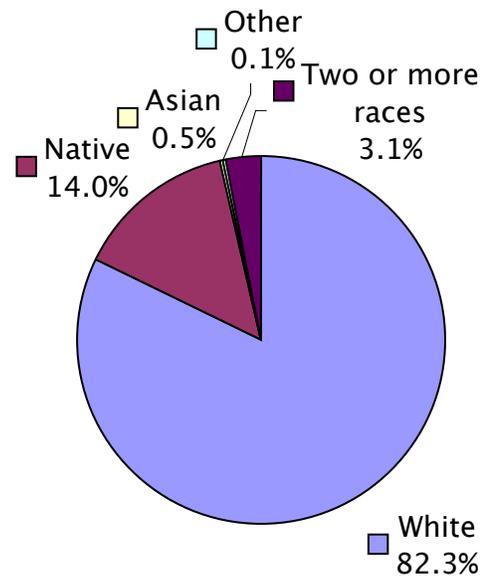
**2000 Population Structure  
Ninilchik**

Data source: US Census



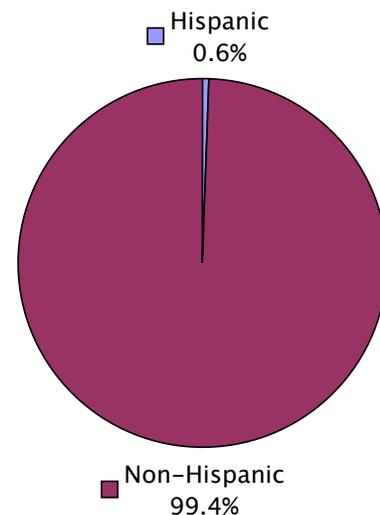
**2000 Racial Structure  
Ninilchik**

Data source: US Census



**2000 Hispanic Ethnicity  
Ninilchik**

Data source: US Census



## Infrastructure

### Current Economy

The local economy revolves around fishing, including commercial, sport, and subsistence. Many residents hold commercial fishing permits. Sport fishing guide services, especially during the summer season, constitute another important source of local employment.

In 2000, the median per capita income was \$18,463 and the median household income was \$36,250. Unemployment was 10.5%, and 41.7% of residents aged 16 and older were not in the labor force (i.e. not working and not seeking work). The poverty rate was 13.9%.

### Governance

Ninilchik is unincorporated. It is governed by a traditional village council, which is recognized by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). It is under the jurisdiction of the Kenai Peninsula Borough. The nearest Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) office and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) office are about 30 miles away in Homer. The nearest Bureau of Immigration and Citizenship Services (BCIS) office is in Anchorage.

### Facilities

Ninilchik is accessible by road via the Sterling Highway. The nearby Kenai airport provides access to communities throughout Alaska. Roundtrip airfare from Kenai to Anchorage is \$134. Most homes use individual water wells and septic tanks. Studies are currently underway to determine the feasibility of installing a community-wide water and sewer system. Electricity is provided by the Homer Electric Association, which uses both hydroelectric and natural gas. The local health clinic is owned and operated by the village council. Police services are provided by the state troopers. There is one school in the community that offers instruction to students from K-12. There are 13 teachers and 186 students.

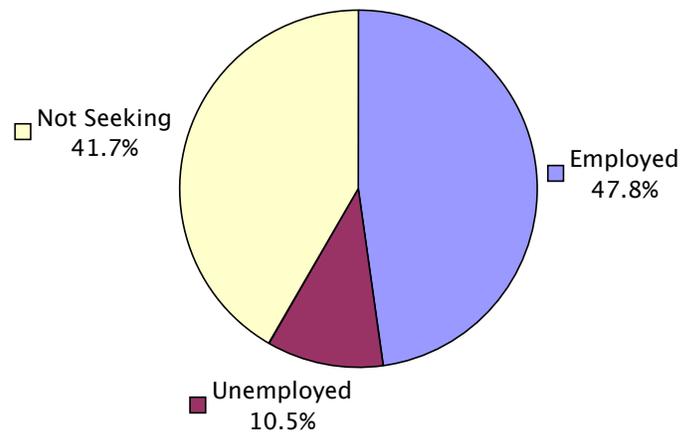
## Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

### Commercial Fishing

Commercial fishing operations constitute a major portion of the economy in Ninilchik. Seven vessel owners with operations in federal fisheries and 22

2000 Employment Structure  
Ninilchik

Data source: US Census



vessel owners with operations in state fisheries resided in the community in 2000. There were 58 registered crew members. Forty-nine local residents held a total of 68 commercial fishing permits, predominantly in the salmon and halibut fisheries. This section contains a detailed description of commercial permits issued to Ninilchik residents in 2000.

*Crab:* Two local residents held a total of two Dungeness crab pot gear permits for vessels over 60 feet in Cook Inlet (none fished).

*Halibut:* Nine residents held a total of 10 commercial permits in the halibut fishery, including: 6 halibut longline permits for vessels under 60 feet in statewide waters (4 fished), one halibut mechanical jig permit for statewide waters (one fished), and 3 halibut longline permits for vessels over 60 feet in statewide waters (3 fished).

*Herring:* Five residents held a total of five permits in the herring fishery, including: four herring roe gillnet permits for Cook Inlet (two fished), and one herring roe gillnet permit for Norton Sound (none fished).

*Other Groundfish:* Four residents held a total of eight permits in the groundfish fishery, including the following: two lingcod mechanical jig permits for statewide waters (none fished), two miscellaneous saltwater finfish longline permits for vessels under 60 feet in statewide waters (one fished), two miscellaneous saltwater finfish pot gear permits for vessels under 60 feet in statewide waters (one fished), and two miscellaneous saltwater finfish mechanical jig permit for statewide waters (one fished).

*Salmon:* Forty-two local residents held a total of

43 commercial permits in the salmon fishery. These permits included the following: one salmon purse seine permit for Prince William Sound (none fished), 2 salmon purse seine permits for Cook Inlet (one fished), 2 salmon purse seine permits for Kodiak (3 fished), 2 salmon drift gillnet permits for the Southeast region (2 fished), 2 salmon drift gillnet permits for Prince William Sound (3 fished), 11 salmon drift gillnet permits for Cook Inlet (9 fished), one salmon drift gillnet permit for Bristol Bay (one fished), 21 salmon set gillnet permits for Cook Inlet (14 fished), and one salmon set gillnet permit for Bristol Bay (one fished).

In 2000, there was one commercial fish processing plant located in Ninilchik. In accordance with confidentiality regulations, data for fish landings in Ninilchik is unavailable. In 2002, the Kenai Peninsula Borough received \$810 in federal funds to compensate for fisheries losses due to Steller sea lion habitat protection under the Endangered Species Act. In addition, the Kenai Peninsula Borough received \$623,295 in salmon disaster funds to compensate for falling salmon prices. A portion of these sums will likely be used for projects that affect Ninilchik.

### **Sport Fishing**

Fishermen from Alaska, the lower 48 U.S. states, Canada and elsewhere come to the Kenai Peninsula to fish in Cook Inlet, Kachemak Bay, and nearby rivers. The sport fishing industry in Ninilchik primarily revolves around halibut, but silver, sockeye and pink salmon are also important. Nearby rivers offer fishing for steelhead and Dolly Varden, as well.

In 2000, sport fishing license sales in Ninilchik totaled 5,251—more than six times the total population of the community. Of these, the majority (3,753) were sold to non-Alaskans. There were 41 registered saltwater sport fishing guides and 12 freshwater sport fishing guides in Ninilchik in 2002.

### **Subsistence Fishing**

The ADF&G's Division of Subsistence reports that, in 1998, 99% of households in Ninilchik used subsistence resources. Approximately 90.1% of households used subsistence salmon (including all five Pacific species), and 92.1% used non-salmon subsistence fish (especially cod, halibut, greenling, rockfish and char). Only 2% of households used marine mammals for subsistence, but 78.2% used marine invertebrates (especially crabs, clams, and mussels).

The annual per capita harvest of subsistence foods for Ninilchik in 1998 was 163.8 lbs, and was comprised of the following resources: salmon (25.9%), non-salmon fish (23.4%), land mammals (40.4%), marine invertebrates (6.7%), birds and eggs (0.9%), and vegetation (2.7%).

Beginning in 2000, the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council designated non-Native residents of Ninilchik as ineligible to harvest subsistence halibut. Residents have filed an appeal to this decision, and the appeal is still pending.