

Port Graham

People and Place

Location

Port Graham is located on the Kenai Peninsula, about 7.5 miles southwest of Seldovia and 28 air miles south of Homer. The area encompasses 5.9 square miles of land.

Demographic Profile

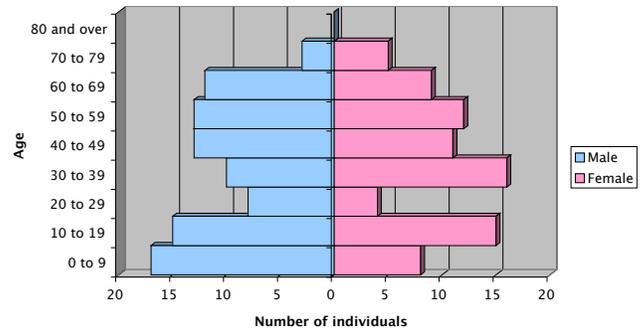
Port Graham is a predominantly Alutiiq, or Sugpiaq, village. In 2000, there were 171 residents in 70 households; all residents lived in family households rather than group quarters. The racial composition of the community was as follows: American Indian and Alaska Native (84.8%), White (11.1%), two or more races (3.5%), and other (0.6%). A total of 88.3% of the population recognized themselves as all or part Alaska Native or American Indian. In addition, 3.5% of residents are of Hispanic ethnicity. The gender makeup was slightly skewed, at 53.2% male and 46.8% female. The median age in Port Graham was 37.8 years, whereas the national age median was 35.3 years. In terms of educational attainment, approximately 67.5% of residents aged 25 years and older held at least a high school diploma. These demographic characteristics show a relatively stable Native community marked by self-reliance and minimal in- or out-migration.

History

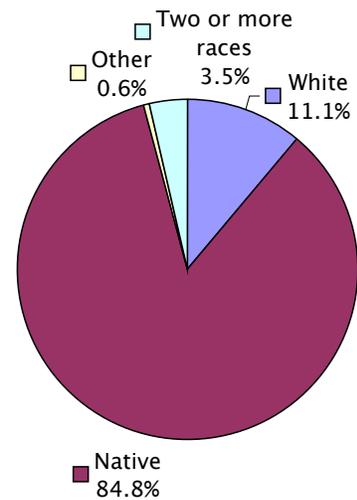
The Kenai Peninsula has been inhabited by Dena'ina (Athabascan) Indians for thousands of years. Alutiiq people have also occupied the region since the distant past. The earliest known permanent settlement was established by Russians from the nearby trading post at Nanwalek, about seven miles away. The Russian-American company, first concerned with the fur trade, became interested in the rich coal reserves at the current site of Port Graham. By the 1850s, the company had extracted nearly 800 tons of coal, shipping it south to feed the growing gold rush in San Francisco (Alaska Historical Society, Unit 5 1982: 15). The coal mine lasted only a few years before it became economically infeasible and was abandoned.

A fish cannery has been in operation in Port Graham off and on since the early 1900s. Today Port Graham is predominantly a community of Alutiiq people with strong ties both to their Native cultural traditions and to the Russian Orthodox Church.

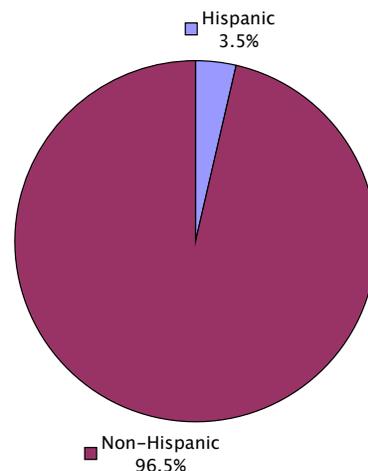
**2000 Population Structure
Port Graham**
Data source: US Census



**2000 Racial Structure
Port Graham**
Data source: US Census



**2000 Hispanic Ethnicity
Port Graham**
Data source: US Census



Infrastructure

Current Economy

The economy of Port Graham is heavily influenced by commercial fishing. Although only a small number of local residents are directly engaged in fishing activities themselves, there is a salmon cannery in the village that is a major source of employment. There is also a pink salmon hatchery that provides fish to the cannery. In addition to the formal economy, all residents of Port Graham depend heavily on subsistence fishing and hunting.

The median per capita income in Port Graham for 2000 was \$13,666, and the median household income was \$40,250. During that year, 13.2% of the potential labor force was unemployed, and 18.8% of residents lived below the poverty level.

Governance

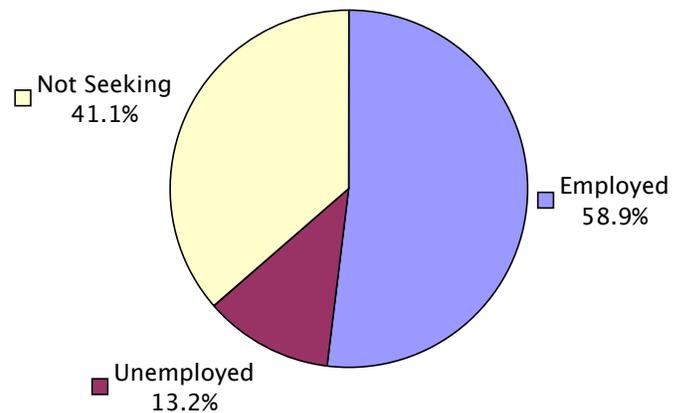
Port Graham is an unincorporated community governed by a traditional village council and is located within the Kenai Peninsula Borough. The village council is recognized by the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs. There is also a local village corporation, which holds a land entitlement under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). Port Graham is a member of a regional Native corporation, the Chugach Alaska Corporation. The nearest Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) offices are both located in Homer. The nearest Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) office is located in Anchorage.

Facilities

Port Graham is not accessible by road. A state-owned 1,975 foot airstrip is available for local charter flights. Roundtrip airfare to Anchorage, after a short charter flight to Homer, is approximately \$175. There are no roads in the community, but a trail connects Port Graham with the nearby village of Nanwalek. There is a piped water and sewer system, operated by the village council. All houses have indoor plumbing. Electricity is provided by the Homer Electric Association and is produced by a hydroelectric facility and natural gas generator. There is a local health clinic operated by the village council. Police services are provided by a village public safety officer. The village has a small port with docking facilities. There is a salmon cannery in the village. There is one school in Port Graham that provides instruction to students from kindergarten

2000 Employment Structure
Port Graham

Data source: US Census



through 10th grade. The school has three teachers and 32 students.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

Despite its relatively small size, Port Graham is significantly involved in North Pacific fisheries. One vessel owner with operations in federal fisheries and six vessel owners with operations in state fisheries resided in the community in 2000. There were 12 registered crew members. There were 12 local residents who held a total of 15 commercial fishing permits; the salmon fishery constituted most of these permits. This section contains a detailed breakdown of commercial permits issued to residents of Port Graham in 2000.

Halibut: Only one local resident held a halibut permit. This was a longline permit for vessels over 60 feet in length in statewide waters. The permit was actually fished.

Herring: Only one local resident held a herring permit. This was a herring roe purse seine permit for the Bristol Bay fishery. The permit was actually fished.

Sablefish: Only one local resident held a permit for sablefish. This was a longline permit for vessels over 60 feet in statewide waters. The permit was not actually fished.

Other Groundfish: Only one local resident held a groundfish permit. This was a miscellaneous saltwater finfish longline permit for vessels over 60 feet in statewide waters. The permit was not actually fished.

Salmon: Eleven local residents held a total of 11 permits for the salmon fishery. These included the following: one salmon purse seine permit for Prince William Sound (none fished); eight salmon purse seine permits for Cook Inlet (three fished), and two salmon drift gillnet permits for Cook Inlet (none fished).

In addition to direct involvement in commercial fisheries, Port Graham has a pink salmon hatchery and cannery. 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 as a whole received \$623,295 in salmon disaster funds in 2003. A portion of these sums will likely be used for programs that directly affect Port Graham.

Sport Fishing

Sport fishing accounts for a fair percentage of economic activity in Port Graham, although its role is less significant than in other towns on the Kenai Peninsula. Because of its relatively small size and out-of-the-way location far from the sport fishing hubs of

Seward and Homer, sport fishing in Port Graham is limited. In 2000, 43 sport licenses were sold in Port Graham, the majority to Alaska residents. In 2002, there were no registered sport fishing guides.

Subsistence Fishing

As a predominantly Alutiiq village, Port Graham relies heavily on subsistence resources. The ADF&G reports that, in 1997, 100% of households in Port Graham used subsistence resources. All households used subsistence salmon (including all five Pacific species), and 93.2% used non-salmon subsistence fish (especially cod, herring, and halibut). Approximately 86.4% of households used marine invertebrates (especially clams, chitin, and octopus) for subsistence, and 81.8% used marine mammals (including seal, sea lion, and sea otter).

The annual per capita harvest of subsistence foods for Port Graham in 1997 was 253.4 pounds, and was comprised of the following resources: salmon (56.9%), non-salmon fish (29.8%), marine mammals (3.7%), marine invertebrates (5.0%), vegetation (3.6%), and land mammals (0.5%).