

In the 1989 *AFN Report on the Status of Alaska Natives: A Call for Action*, ISER reported that the Alaska Native population included approximately 75,000 people. Data from the 2000 census show an increase of the Alaska Native population to 119,241 people. **The Alaska Native population is predicted to be 165,000 by the year 2020.** What will the future look like?

## Alaska Native Population Facts at a Glance

The majority of the Alaska Native population (58%) lives in rural Alaska, and there is a growing urban Alaska Native population (42%). Both rural and urban Native populations are young, living longer, and experiencing a changing household composition.

- Census 2000 shows a statewide Alaska Native population of 119,241 people (19% of the total state population of 626,932).
- 82% of the population living in remote rural areas are Alaska Natives.
- Alaska Natives are comparatively young, with a median age of 24 years.
- More than 44% of all Natives in Alaska are 19 years of age or younger.
- The Native population is statistically balanced between males and females, 50.2% male, and 49.8% female.
- 42% of all Alaska Natives live in urban Alaska, and 58% live in rural areas of the state. There is great geographical mobility among Native people, and the 2000 Census shows a trend of people moving from rural villages to regional centers and urban areas of Alaska.
- The life expectancy of the Native population is increasing, and more people now survive to old age than in prior decades.
- If the Native population continues to grow at the rates by which it increased during the 1990's, it is predicted to number 140,000 people in the year 2010 and 165,000 in 2020.

## Discussion of Selected Data from the Status of Alaska Natives Report 2004

The following section discusses selected data on Alaska Native population and is taken from the *Status of Alaska Natives Report 2004 (Natives 2004)*. The Policy Center's Project Team identified these data as those that provide a good overview of the Alaska Native population. These selected data compare the numbers of Alaska Natives to American Indians, and the age, gender, statewide and urban/rural differences among Alaska Natives. This chapter also presents additional data on households and where Alaska Natives live. When the Policy Center presented these data in regional meetings, the Alaska Native Community said it wanted to see these numbers on a 12-region basis. We have provided that in Chapter Seven.

## Alaska Natives and American Indians

### State of Alaska: Largest Percentage of Native Population

Five states have Native American populations greater than 7% of the total state population. Of these states, shown in Table 3-1, Native Americans are a larger *percentage* of Alaska's total population than are Native Americans in any other state. The actual *numbers* of Native Americans in several other states are greater than the number of Native Americans that live in Alaska.

Table 3-1: States with Native Americans Greater than 7 percent of Population in 2000

State	Total Population	Native American Race, Alone or Mixed*	Percent of State Population
Alaska	626,932	119,241	19.0%
Oklahoma	3,450,654	391,949	11.4%
New Mexico	1,819,046	191,475	10.5%
South Dakota	754,844	68,281	9.0%
Montana	902,195	66,320	7.4%

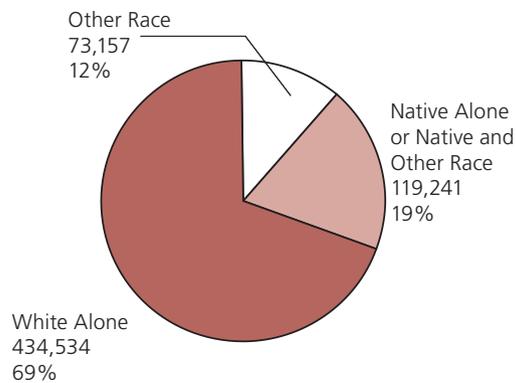
\*American Indian and Alaska Native alone or in combination with one or more races.  
 Source: Census 2000 Summary File 2 (SF 2) 100-Percent Data.

Source: ISER, Status of Alaska Natives Report, 2004, pages 2-5

## Racial Composition of Alaska

In Alaska, 19% of the total population are Alaska Natives (by single race or in combination with another race), 12% are Other Races (Black, Asian, Pacific Islander, Hispanic, and other), and 69% are White, as illustrated in Figure 3-1. The Alaska Native population includes many

Figure 3-1: Racial Composition of the Alaska Population, 2000



Source: ISER, Status of Alaska Natives Report, 2004, pages 2-6

ethnic groupings and cultural affiliations. The major ethnic backgrounds include Athabascan, Aleut/Unangan, Alutiiq/Sugpiaq, Inupiaq, Tlingit, Haida, Tsimpsian, and Yupik.

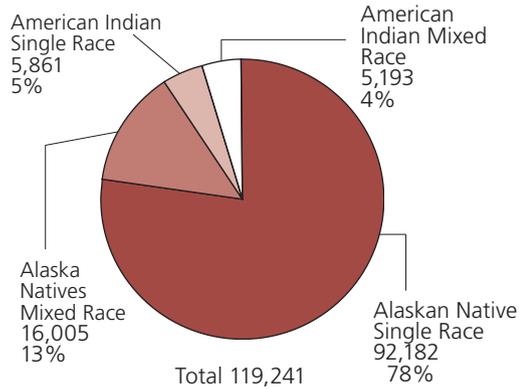
## Composition of the Alaska Native Population

The Census defines the “Alaska Native” population as *all Native Americans living in Alaska at the time of the Census* - whether they are Eskimos/Indians/Aleuts from Alaska or Lower 48 Indians. Of this total of 119,241 people in 2000, approximately 11,000 were Lower 48 Indians, and about 108,000 were Eskimos/Indians/Aleuts from Alaska. 78% of the 119,241 were Alaska Eskimos/Indians/Aleuts of single race; and 13% were Alaska Eskimos/Indians/Aleuts of mixed race. 5% of the 119,241 were Lower 48 Indians of single race; and 4% were Lower 48 Indians of mixed race.<sup>12</sup>

ISER further concluded that 119,241 is the number that should be used as the total Alaska Native population for these reasons:

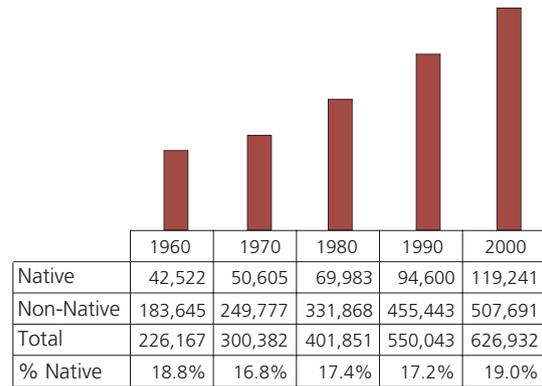
1. “The American Indian population in Alaska is a small share of the total Native American population and its characteristics are not significantly different from the Alaska Native. Consequently, including them [in the Alaska Native population] does not materially influence our analysis and conclusions.” and
2. Most of the American Indian population in Alaska is located in urban areas, so the snapshot of rural Natives is not influenced by the inclusion of American Indians.<sup>13</sup>
3. Since Alaska Statehood, the Census has combined Alaska Eskimos/Indians/Aleuts with Lower 48 Indians in our state. In order to see population trends, the ISER report and this analysis compare five censuses from the past 40 years: 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000. This is possible only if we use the same uniform definition of “Alaska Natives” that the Census publishes.

Figure 3-2: Composition of Alaska Native Population in Alaska, 2000



Source: ISER, Status of Alaska Natives Report, 2004, pages 2-3

Figure 3-3. Alaska Native and non-Native Population, 1960-2000



Source: ISER, Status of Alaska Natives Report, 2004, pages 2-7

In recent years, the Alaska Native population has become more mixed by race than in earlier decades. In 2000, only 7.6% of Natives who were 75 or older were of mixed race; but 22% of Natives less than 20 years of age were of mixed race. Alaska Natives were far less likely to report mixed race (17.7%) than were Native Americans living in the Lower 48 states (52.1%).<sup>14</sup>

## Alaska Natives: Growing, Young, and Changing

### Population Trends

The Alaska Native population has grown over the last 40 years. Figure 3-3 shows that in 1960, the Native population was estimated at 42,522 (18.8% of the population); and in 2000, it was estimated at 119,241 people (19% of the population). Even with the large in-migration of non-Natives to Alaska in the last 40 years, the percentage of the Native population has remained close to 19%.

### Population Projections

In the *Natives 2004* report, ISER provided a population forecast. Based on assumptions of stable rates of natural increase, ISER predicted that the Alaska Native population would

increase to 140,000 by 2010, and to 165,000 in 2020, Figures 3-4 and 3-5, respectively (see page 33).

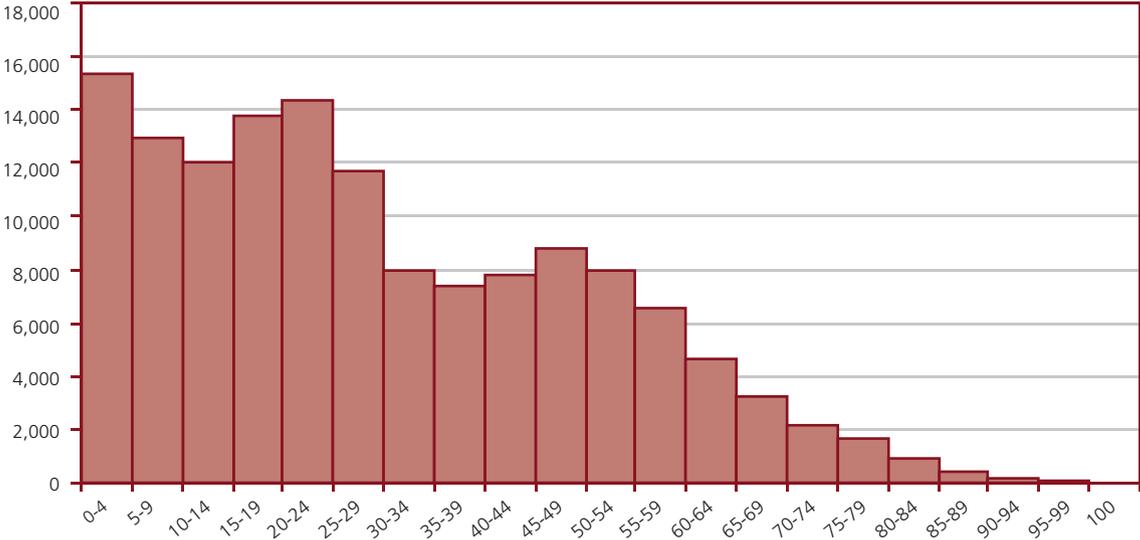
As the 2010 projection indicates, the Native population will see “age bubbles” in the workforce ages of 20-24 and 45-49; and by 2020, the Alaska Native population would have another age bubble of 5 year-olds and younger. The implications of these population forecasts are:

- Growing numbers of people in the workforce age group that will require job creation and placement.
- Growing numbers of Elders who live longer and who will require home care, health care, and other services.
- Growing numbers of school-age children that will need an education system that meets the needs of Alaska Native students.<sup>15</sup>

### Population by Age Group

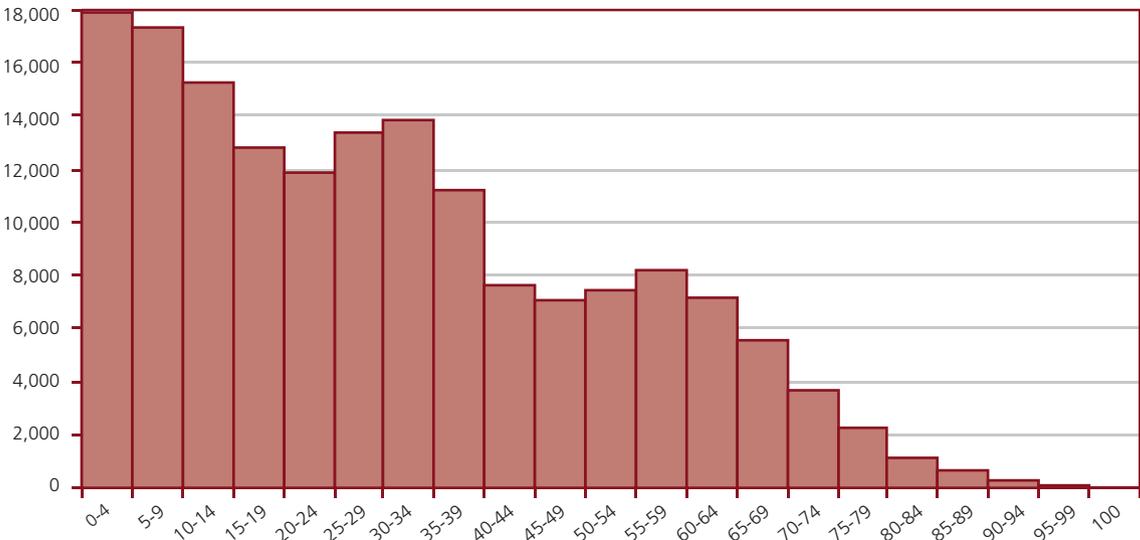
The population growth of Alaska Natives is due in part to annual birth rates (the number of births per 1,000 of population, each year), which have historically been higher than those of non-Natives. It also comes from decreasing annual death rates and the fact that Alaska Natives are living longer. Alaska Native median

Figure 3-4. Alaska Native Population Forecast 2010



Source: ISER, Status of Alaska Natives Report, 2004, pages 2-60

Figure 3-5. Alaska Native Population Forecast 2020



Source: ISER, Status of Alaska Natives Report, 2004, pages 2-60

ages have increased. These factors together have produced the Native and non-Native age distributions as shown in Figure 3-6.

Each horizontal bar shows a five-year age group of the Native and non-Native population. The number at the end of each bar shows the percentage of the Native or non-Native population which is in that age group.

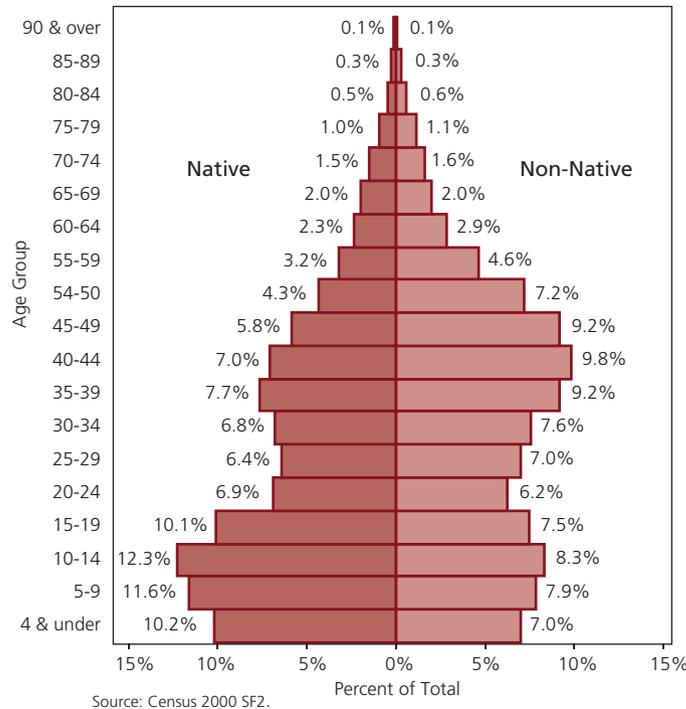
The bottom four bars on the Native side of the graph indicate that **44.2%** of all Natives living in Alaska in 2000 were **under the age of 20** (compared to 30.7% of non-Natives). This is a large population bubble - a "baby boom" from prior years - that is coming up through schools and beginning to enter the workforce. The other 55.8% of the Native population are spread out between the ages of 20 and older. 69.3% of the non-Native population are 20 and older.

The median age of Alaska Natives (meaning that half the population is over that age and the other half is below it) has increased in the past 40 years, as has the median age of non-Native Alaskans. In 1960, the Native median age was reported at 16.8 years, compared to 24.5 years for non-Natives. But in 2000, the Native median age had increased to 24.2 years, while the median age of non-Natives had increased to 34.6 years.

### Household Type

The Policy Center's Project Team identified the composition of households as an important variable to understand because the trend shows a change in the make-up of Native households which may have a relationship to health and educational attainment. (See chapters on health and education.)

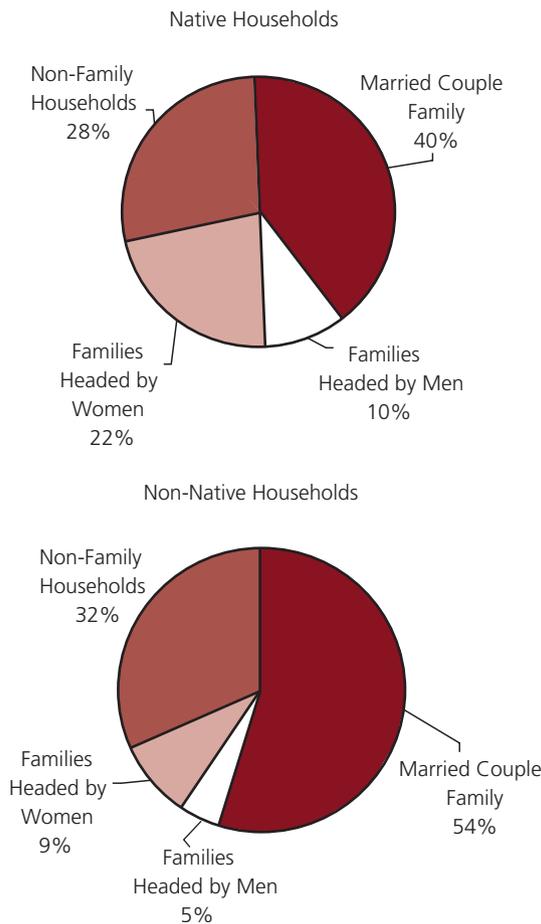
Figure 3-6. Alaska Statewide Native and non-Native Population by Age Group in 2000



Source: ISER, Status of Alaska Natives Report, 2004, page 2-11

Most households contain families - meaning that at least some of the people in those households are related by blood, marriage or adoption. But there are also non-family households (for example, single people) in which no one is related. Alaska Native households changed between 1960 and 2000: Native households headed by married couples declined and households headed by women or men increased. So did non-Native households in Alaska - but not quite as sharply.

Figure 3-7. Composition of Native and non-Native Households, 2000



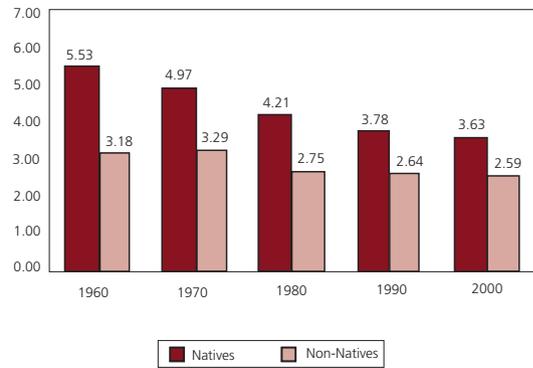
Source: ISER, Status of Alaska Natives Report, 2004, page 2-20. [US Census 2000 (SF 2)]

As indicated in Figure 3-7, more Native households are headed by single women or single men, compared to non-Native families.

### Household Size

Alaska Native households have traditionally been large. Figure 3-8 shows that Alaska Native (as well as non-Native) family size decreased between 1960 and 2000. As the five darker bars show, the average Native household in 1960 had 5.53 persons; but by 2000 it had 3.63 persons, a 34.3% change in 40 years. The five lighter bars show that non-Native households in Alaska also decreased in size - from 3.18 to 2.59 persons, a change of 18.5% in 40 years. Native household size decreased almost twice as much as did non-Native household size in the same period.

Figure 3-8. Average Household Size (Number of Persons), Native and Non-Native Households, 1960-2000\*



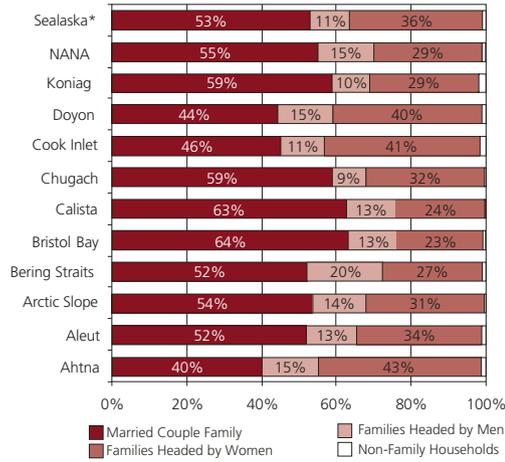
\*2000 includes Alaska Natives of both single and mixed race.

Source: ISER, Status of Alaska Natives 2004, page 2-25 [U.S. Census and ISER Estimates]

### Households with Children

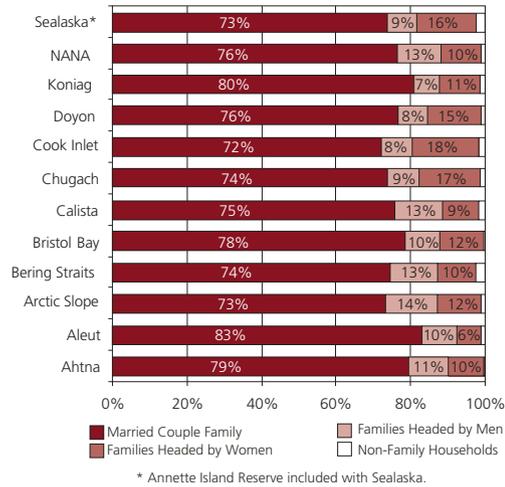
The Policy Center’s Project Team also discussed the types of households in which Native children live as important data to understand because the pattern has changed in the last four decades. The 2000 Census shows that

Figure 3-9. Native Households with Children by Region, 2000



Source: Census 2000 Summary File 2 (PCT 10)

Figure 3-10. Non-Native Households with Children, by Region, 2000



Source: Census 2000 Summary File 2 (PCT 10)

the percentage of *Native* households-with-children that are headed by married couples is smaller than the percentage of *non-Native* households-with-children that are headed by married couples.<sup>16</sup>

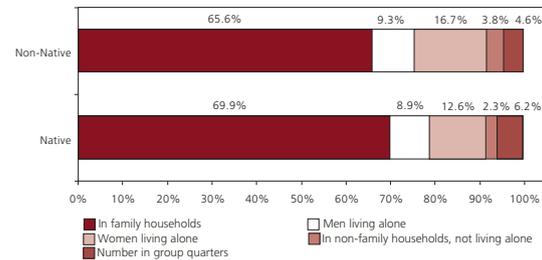
Other ISER data show that larger percentages of Native *children* are being raised in households headed by single parents, grandparents, other

relatives, or non-relatives. The percentage of Native children in households headed by women increased from 8.1% in 1960 to 21.4% in 2000. This change, from the married couple to the mother, affected the largest *number* of Native children. The percentage of Native children in households headed by men almost quadrupled in the same period (from 2.7% in 1960 to 10.3% in 2000), but it affected a smaller *number* of Native children. The percentage of Native children in households headed by one or more of their grandparents increased slightly: from 6.8% in 1960 to 8.3% in 2000.<sup>17</sup> Figures 3-9 and 3-10 illustrate the type of households with children on a 12-region break-out.

### Living Arrangements of Alaska Native Elders

Figure 3-11 shows that in 2000, 69.9% (4,443) of Alaska Native Elders [and 65.6% (19,255) of non-Native Elders] lived with relatives in *family* households of some type. One out of eight elder Native women lived alone, compared to one out of six elder non-Native women. Fewer than 10% of elder Native and non-Native men lived alone. Only 2.3% (149) of Native Elders of both genders lived in “group quarters” (Pioneer Homes or other nursing homes/retirement facilities), compared to 3.8% (1,117) of non-Native Elders.

Figure 3-11. Living Arrangements of Alaskans 65 and Older, 2000



Source: ISER, Status of Alaska Natives Report, 2004, page 2-28

## Where Alaska Natives Live

### Population by ANCSA Region

Where does the Alaska Native population live? Table 3-2 on page 38 shows the population distribution by ANCSA regional boundaries, which were established in conformity with traditional and tribal affiliations. Alaska Natives participating in the Policy Center's discussion series and regional meetings wanted to see the population data presented in the 12-region format.

In Table 3-2, the column on the left-hand margin lists 12 ANCSA regions.<sup>18</sup> The "Total" column shows how Alaska's entire population of 626,932 is distributed throughout those 12 regions. The next column shows each region's Native population. The "Non-Native" column shows the population of non-Natives in each region. The "Percent Native" column shows the percentage of any region's total population that are Alaska Natives. The column on the right shows what percentage of all 119,241 Alaska Natives live in each region.

By far, the Cook Inlet region has the largest total population (364,205) and the largest Native population (35,972). Cook Inlet is home to 30.2% of all Alaska Natives; but the Native population is only 9.9% of all people living there.

Two other regions have large non-Native populations as well. The Doyon region, with 14,128 Natives, is 14.5% Native, reflecting Fairbanks' large non-Native population and significant non-Native settlement in some rural communities. The Sealaska region, with 15,059 Natives, is 21.2% Native, reflecting Juneau, Sitka and Ketchikan, as well as significant non-Native settlement in smaller communities.

Calista, NANA, Bering Straits, Arctic Slope and Bristol Bay regions, located in northern and western Alaska, are home to 37.8% of all Alaska Natives. These five regions' total populations average 79.9% Native.

Added together, four smaller regions (Ahtna, Aleut, Chugach and Koniag) have 6.5% of all Natives, and their total populations average 21.9% Native.

### Urban and Rural Population Distribution

Another way to look at the state's population is by an urban/rural population break-out. Table 3-3 on page 38 shows the distribution of Native and non-Native populations in urban and rural areas as defined by the Census.<sup>19</sup> "Urban areas" consists of five Census Areas covering Alaska's largest cities and their outskirts. "Rural areas" consists of 22 other Census Areas. 42% of all Natives live in urban areas, while 58% live in rural areas.

In the past 30 years, urban Alaska has seen a large increase in Native population. In 1970, 10,382 Natives lived in the five Urban Census Areas, where they made up 5% of the total population. By 2000, the number of urban Natives increased to 50,426, which is 10.4% of the total urban population - more than double the percentage in 1970.

Native population growth in the 22 Rural Census Areas over the same 30 years has been slower. In 1970, 42,093 Natives lived in rural Alaska. By 2000, this number increased to 68,815. The large jump in Native population, whether urban or rural, may be influenced by the fact that in the 2000 Census people could identify themselves as Natives of mixed race.<sup>20</sup>

Assuming similar migration trends from rural to urban areas of the state, ISER forecasts that the Alaska Native population will be an increasingly urban population.

As the Project Team and others reviewed the population data, questions were asked about whether or not various scenarios had been included in the population forecasts. For example, several significant economic development projects are in the planning stages in the Calista region (Donlin Creek mine) as well as the Bristol Bay region (oil and gas leasing, Pebble Creek mine). If these projects

Table 3-2. Native and non-Native Population, By ANCSA Region in 2000

ANCSA Region	Total	Native <sup>1</sup>	Non-Native	% Native	Share of Statewide Native Population
Ahtna	3,682	890	2,792	24.2%	0.7%
Aleut	8,162	2,274	5,888	27.9%	1.9%
Arctic Slope	7,385	5,453	1,932	73.8%	4.6%
Bering Straits	9,196	7,274	1,922	79.1%	6.1%
Bristol Bay	7,892	5,749	2,143	72.8%	4.8%
Calista	23,032	20,353	2,679	88.4%	17.1%
Chugach	12,113	2,165	9,948	17.9%	1.8%
Cook Inlet	364,205	35,972	328,233	9.9%	30.2%
Doyon	97,190	14,128	83,062	14.5%	11.8%
Koniag	13,913	2,452	11,461	17.6%	2.1%
NANA	7,208	6,181	1,027	85.8%	5.2%
Sealaska	71,507	15,059	56,448	21.1%	12.6%
Annette Island Reserve <sup>2</sup>	1,447	1,291	156	89.2%	1.1%
Totals	626,932	119,241	507,691	19.0%	100.0%

<sup>1</sup> Alaska Native and American Indian Single and Mixed Race  
<sup>2</sup> Alaska's Only Federal Indian Reserve Source: US Census 2000 Summary File, 100% Count Data  
Source: US Census 2000 Summary File, 100% Count Data

Source: ISER, Status of Alaska Natives Report, 2004, page 2-29

Table 3-3. Alaska Native Population Distribution in 2000

	Total	Native	Non-Native	% Native	Share of Statewide Native Population
Urban Areas*	482,847	50,426	432,421	10.4%	42.3%
Rural Areas	144,085	68,815	75,270	47.8%	57.7%
State Total Population	626,932	119,241	507,691	19.0%	100.0%

\*Urban Areas include Juneau City and Borough, Anchorage Municipality, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Fairbanks North Star Borough and Matanuska-Susitna Borough.  
Source: Status of Alaska Natives 2004 [U.S. Census 100% Count Data]

Source: ISER, Status of Alaska Natives Report, 2004, page 2-33

move forward, population movements to urban centers may not be as great because more jobs will be available in some rural communities. More people may move into rural communities, which would change the population make-up.

Additional questions were raised regarding the possibility of lowering the cost of living in rural communities. For example, if energy costs and food costs were reduced, the resulting impact on household expenditures and community expenditures would be reduced, making it less expensive to live in rural Alaska. This might slow or stem movement into urban Alaska.

The Project Team discussed the need for the ability to “drill down” into population and economic data by region: if economic development projects move forward, regions will need to know population numbers, including age distribution, gender, and workforce age groups, in order to understand what impacts various types of development might have on the need for educational, health, public safety and housing service provision.

## Migration and Mobility

The *Natives 2004* report shows that between 1970 and 2000, there has been significant movement of Native people out of Rural Alaska (especially from small villages where Natives are in the majority) and into Urban Alaska. Although rural areas have lost population because people are moving, the rural population has continued to grow at a moderate rate because of “natural increase” (births minus deaths). The *Natives 2004* report emphasizes that the growth of Native population in Alaska’s cities has come from people moving to the cities and from the natural increase of Natives already living in and around Alaska’s cities.

- In five regional centers combined (Dillingham, Bethel, Nome, Kotzebue, Barrow), 18.3% of Native residents were “recent arrivals” (during the preceding five years), mainly from outlying villages. The other 81.7% had been there for five years or more.

- In three urban areas combined (Anchorage, Fairbanks North Star Borough and Mat-Su Borough), 33% of Native residents had arrived within the previous five years (1995-2000). In Anchorage, 26% of all Natives were new arrivals; in Fairbanks, 53%; and in Mat-Su 48%.<sup>21</sup>

When these data were presented at discussions and regional meetings, there were questions regarding whether or not the Census data accurately counted rural populations.

*“I believe the 2000 Census under-counts rural village populations - and therefore under-represents Native social conditions in all categories.”*

*“There is an impact of rural out-migration on urban areas – in terms of services and need for transitioning to living in a big city. The Census data has to be accurate so that we can plan.”*

*--Comments from discussion series and regional meetings on population, October 2003 and January through May 2004.*

## Alaska Natives Living Outside Alaska

Based on tribal identification data recorded by the U.S. Census, the *Natives 2004 Report* estimates that 33,288 Alaska Natives live outside of Alaska, in other states and in other countries. Due to how the Census forms track data on tribal membership, neither tribal enrollment nor locality of tribal members is accurately recorded by Census data.<sup>22</sup>

Other sources that record tribal enrollment include Tribes and ANCSA regional and village corporations. While ANCSA corporations maintain confidential shareholder records, including shareholders living out of state, not all tribal members own shares in Alaska’s ANCSA corporations. Tribal governments also maintain tribal enrollment records, but data are gathered inconsistently across tribes, and some enrollment records may be outdated.

## Issues and Implications – The Alaska Native Policy Center View

When the Policy Center presented these data in meetings and discussions, it found that participants wanted to see population numbers both on a statewide level and for their respective regions. Participants wanted to see population forecasts for each of the regions for planning and decision-making. It was clear that there is a need for consistent and periodic updates of population data that regions can use for planning purposes.

*“In hiring minorities and women, many federal agencies try to bring their “on-board” employee statistics up to parity with the percentages of race and gender in the ‘civilian workforce’ (people 16 years of age or older, not working for the military). But they use the national civilian workforce as their standard, not state or regional civilian workforces, which vary widely. National ‘parity’ for Native Americans is set at 0.6%; and this is the definition used in Alaska, where Natives make up 17.26% of the state’s civilian workforce. Parity in Alaska should be based on the state, not the national, percentage.”*

*“Percentage of the population also has implications for voting. How many [Alaska Natives] are registered to vote?”*

*--Comments from the Discussion Series on Population, October 2003.*

Three themes emerged from the discussion on population: youth, Elders, and migration from villages to urban areas.

- **Youth.** Young Native people are going to need economic opportunities to take them into their adult lives and careers. There must be an understanding of how young people can enter existing jobs – as well as new jobs that may be

created through economic development. Healthy behaviors need to be encouraged and supported so that the next generation of Native adults can get and keep those jobs. The public education system must teach them the skills they need for the modern workforce.

- **Elders.** Information on the aging Alaska Native population is critical to plan for services that Elders will need. Population data will help plan for Elders’ quality of life so that they can live where they want to live; in their home communities, with their families, surrounded by familiar faces, speaking their languages, eating their foods, free of pain and stress.
- **Migration.** The Policy Center heard that some Native people are moving out of rural areas in search of economic and educational opportunities and for access to health care that are not available in their communities. The issue does not, or should not, stop with that simple explanation. Many participants in the discussions and regional meetings thought that the movement to regional hubs and urban areas represents deeper issues that need to be addressed, including cost of living and safety in the community.

Meeting participants were concerned with what might happen to villages if people move out. If more people from rural Alaska move into urban centers, what kinds of pressures will that place on systems of education, health, housing, transportation, public safety? Is urban Alaska prepared to deal with an influx of rural residents? How will village systems change as people move from villages?

The population data indicate that large numbers of Alaska Natives will be in the public education systems, now and into the future. These findings demand that Alaska Natives advocate for an education system that addresses the needs of Natives, as well as other students.

*In the Alaska Natives Commission Report, Alaskan voices say: “As parents, leaders and Elders, we must get deeply involved within our children’s’ education, both at the elementary and the high school level. We must get involved in the villages’ educational system, visiting our schools, and participating in programs of the schools, to insure that the children are given the good education. By our involvement, the students will begin to understand why education is very important.’ James Sipary, Toksook Bay.”*

*--Irwin, M. (Ed.). (1994). Alaska Natives commission final report. (Vols. I). Anchorage, AK: Alaska Native Commission. Page 52.*

There will be a continuing and increasing demand for jobs in both rural and urban Alaska because the growing Alaska Native population lives in both rural and urban Alaska. There will also be an increasing demand for health services, particularly for Elders. The mobility of the Native population from rural to urban centers will require continuing coordination of education, health, housing and other services.

## Endnotes

<sup>12</sup> For more discussion on the distinctions between Alaska Native and American Indian, see the *Status of Alaska Natives 2004*, or U.S. Census's *The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2000*, or Alaska Department of Labor, Research and Analysis Section's *Alaska Population Overview: 2001 – 2002 Estimates and Census 2000*.

<sup>13</sup> Institute of Social and Economic Research. (2004, May). *The status of Alaska Natives report 2004*. (Vols. I-III). Anchorage, AK. Page A-10.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, page 2-3.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, page 2-60.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, page 2-24.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, page 2-24

<sup>18</sup> The table also includes the Annette Island Reserve at Metlakatla; and the Doyon region includes Venetie and Arctic Village.

<sup>19</sup> NOTE: The table in the *Report on the Status of Alaska Natives 2004* is formatted in a slightly different form. The "Rural Alaska" category is divided into two sub-categories: "Remote Rural" (rural areas where Natives are the majority population) and "Other Rural" (rural areas where Natives are in the minority). In this analysis, all rural Census Areas are presented together to get the Native percentage of the total population.

<sup>20</sup> Institute of Social and Economic Research. (2004, May). *The status of Alaska Natives report 2004*. (Vols. I-III). Anchorage, AK. Page 2-45.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, page 2-42.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, page A-10 and 2-4.