

Neah Bay, Washington

People and Place

Location

Neah Bay, located in Clallam County, Washington, has the geographic coordinates 48°22'06"N and 124°37'25"W. It is situated at the northwestern-most point of the continental United States, across the Strait of Juan de Fuca from Vancouver Island. Located approximately 165 miles from the City of Seattle, Neah Bay is the main settlement on the Makah Indian Reservation.

Demographic Profile

The 2000 U.S. Census reports that Neah Bay had a population of 794, a 13.3% decrease from 916 persons in 1990. The gender structure showed slightly more males (55.3%) than females (44.7%). The 2000 U.S. Census data shows that the racial composition was predominantly American Indian and Alaska Native (78.2%), followed by White (14.1%), and African American (0.1%). Approximately 1.6% identified with some other race and about 6% with two or more races. Approximately 5.4% of residents identified as Hispanic or Latino. A very small percentage of the population was foreign-born (0.8%), the majority (67%) originating in Canada. According to the Makah Tribe, tribal enrollment was about 2300 in 2000 and 70% of enrolled members lived on the reservation. Not all reservation residents live on the settlement at Neah Bay.

In 2000 the median age in Neah Bay was 28.9 years, considerably lower than the national median age (35.3 years). Of the population age 18 years and over, 77.8% had graduated from high school or continued on to higher education, 7.1% had received a bachelor's degree or higher, and 1.8% had received a graduate or professional degree; as compared to the national averages of 79.9%, 22.3%, and 7.8% respectively.

History

The Makah had an estimated pre-contact population of about 2000¹ to 4000² and inhabited five winter villages as well as many summer villages on the Pacific Ocean and the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The Tribe is most closely related to the Nuu-chah-nulth bands of the western side of Vancouver Island, Canada, with whom they continue to share cultural, linguistic, and genealogical affinities. Marine resources were heavily utilized by the Makah and served as staple foods, including abundant use of whales (gray, humpback, and others), seals (especially fur seals prior to 1900, and harbor seals more recently), and marine fishes such as halibut.

Originally, the Tribe lived in five permanent villages: Diah't and Ba'adah along the Straits, and Wa'atch, Tsooyes, and Ozette on the Pacific Ocean side.³ The year 1790 brought first recorded contact with European explorers, on the Spanish ship *Princesa Real*, though there may have been contacts in 1775 and earlier. This was followed by a short-lived Spanish Fort in Neah Bay (Nuñez Gaona) and years of regional struggle for power between Spanish, British, Russian, and later, American forces. The Makah are party to the 1855 Treaty of Neah Bay with the United States, which guarantees their right to continue hunting whale and seals, as well as to continue fishing and collecting shellfish at all "usual and accustomed grounds."⁴

Smallpox epidemics decimated the population in the 1800s, with only 654 Makahs surviving in 1861. In the late 1800s, Makahs were extensively involved as crew in commercial fur seal hunting in Alaska, and later as boat owner/operators. This trade was very lucrative and kept many in the reservation population in excellent economic circumstances until they were prohibited from participating in the hunt at the turn of the century.⁵ Consolidation of the five traditional villages was forced in the early 1900s, when children were required to attend the school at Neah Bay, even if their parents lived in the other villages. The first road to Neah Bay was constructed in the 1930s, connecting the settlement, by a winding coastal highway subject to frequent landslides and washouts, with the major population and commercial centers of the Olympic Peninsula, including Port Angeles, a logging town 70 miles east. During World War II, battle mounts were built into the ocean-facing cliffs west of Neah Bay. An Airforce Base (now closed) and Coast Guard Station brought many military personnel to the reservation. In 1997, a harbor breakwater and moorage facility was completed, protecting the local fishing fleet from powerful winter storms for the first time.

Whaling is an ancient tradition, with evidence from the archaeological site of Ozette village dating as far back as 2000 years before the present, with whales consistently comprising the largest single category of resource remains over that time period. Although guaranteed by the 1855 treaty, whaling was halted in the 1920s because of a series of external factors including an attempt at acculturation of the Makah by the U.S. Government, death of tribal members due to epidemics and subsequent loss of traditional knowledge, and a decline in the population of the whales due to commercial whaling by non-Indians.⁶ In 1995 following the removal of the Eastern North Pacific gray whale from the list of endangered species, the Makah Tribe began preparations to resume ceremonial and subsistence whaling. They successfully took a single gray whale in May of 1999, under a tremendous amount of attention from the media and pressure from anti-whaling activists. Whether another whale is taken will depend on the final outcome of litigation, international negotiation, and public policy processes.

Unlike many other tribes in the U.S., the Makah Tribe still holds title to a substantial portion of their ancestral land base, engendering “a high degree of continuity in both place-oriented identity and subsistence practice.”⁷ Marine resources continue to be fundamental to the Makah with a recent tabulation in a 2001 Makah Tribal Council report, which informed that “as many as 70 percent of the Makah Tribal population depends on fishing for its income or subsistence.”⁸

Infrastructure

Current Economy

According to 2000 U.S. Census, 50.8% of the potential labor force in Neah Bay was employed, and there was an unemployment rate in the community of approximately 24% for the same year (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). Actual unemployment is estimated to be much greater, since the U.S. Census only counts individuals still seeking work. Chronic widespread unemployment and underemployment have characterized the village for years, with the Tribe estimating it to be above 50% much of the time. About 33.1% of the population age 16 years and over was not in the labor force at the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, compared to the national average of 36.1%.

About 17.9% of employed Neah Bay residents worked in agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting, according to the 2000 U.S. Census; however this number does not reflect all those involved in fishing, many of whom are tabulated as being “self-employed.” The additional top employment industries for working residents at the time of the 2000 U.S. Census were public administration (34.8%); educational, health, and social services (21.2%); and arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services (8.1%). About 60.4% of employed residents were working within local, state, or federal governments.

On the Makah Reservation, most of the full-time employment opportunities are with the Makah Tribal Council, which had 170 employees in the year 2001. Additional employment is available at the Indian Health Service Dental and Medical Clinic (22 employees) and with local businesses. Seasonal employment is engaged in by a large percentage of the reservation population with as many as 300 people employed in commercial fisheries. Individuals are also engaged in timber harvesting, which is managed by the Makah Forestry Enterprise. Employment for a few residents is available off the reservation at the State prison in Clallam Bay.⁹

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the per capita income in Neah Bay in 1999 was \$11,338 and the median household income was \$21,635. The 2000 U.S. Census data reports that in 1999 the income of 29.9% of the population was below the poverty level. In 2000 there were a total of 322 housing units in the community, of which 87.6% were occupied and 12.4% were vacant. Of the occupied housing units, 70.9% were owner occupied and 29.1% were renter occupied.

Governance

Neah Bay is governed by the Makah Tribal Council (MTC), as is the entire Makah Indian Reservation. Neah Bay has no separate incorporation or status. The MTC consists of five members who are elected at the Makah General Council by all voting Tribal members. The Chair is elected by the MTC. The Makah Tribe is a self-governing Tribe under a program initiated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1988, which gives greater power and autonomy to tribal governments. The MTC determines tribal policy and supplies the general manager with direction, who subsequently watches over the enforcement of Tribal policy. The Tribal government is made up of five departments including Natural Resources; Administrative Service; Planning; Public Safety; and Social, Health, and Education. “A high degree of control over physical and economic development on the reservation” is maintained by the MTC with many enterprises chartered by the MTC including the Makah Forestry Enterprises, the Neah Bay Port Authority, the Makah Housing Authority, and the Makah Cultural and Research Center; and with quasi-enterprises which are a part of the MTC including Makah Fuel, Makah Bingo, Makah Marina, Makah Smoke Shop, and Bay’s Best Lodging.¹⁰

Treaty fish and shellfish taken by Tribal members are not subject to state sales or use taxes, regardless of where the sale takes place. The Tribe requires all non-resident motor vehicles entering the reservation to purchase a recreational use permit, proceeds of which are used to maintain trails and other tourist attractions.

The nearest federal fisheries enforcement office is located 165 miles away in Seattle and is the Northwest Enforcement Office of the National Marine Fisheries Service. Seattle is home to other organizations and services including North Pacific

Fisheries Management Council and Pacific Fisheries Management Council meetings and the District Office of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. The nearest regional office for state fisheries, the North Puget Sound Region Office of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is located in Mill Creek, about 159 miles away. The U.S. Coast Guard Station Neah Bay is located in town.

Facilities

Neah Bay is accessible by ground and sea. It is reachable by State Route 112 and is located approximately 208 miles from Sea-Tac International Airport in Sea Tac, Washington. The nearest airport certified for carrier operations, offering international flights to Canada, the William R. Fairchild International Airport, is located 81 miles east in Port Angeles.

Neah Bay High and Elementary Schools, located in Neah Bay, provide schooling for grades Kindergarten through 12th. The Makah Tribe's Sophie Trettevick PHS Indian Health Center is in operation in Neah Bay and provides primary and dental health services. The Tribe operates an alcohol and substance abuse program, a mental health program, and also has a community health field station.¹¹ The nearest major hospital, Forks Community Hospital, is located about 41 miles away in Forks. The Tribe's Senior Center provides meals and other assistance to tribal elders.

Electricity is provided to the reservation by the Clallam County Public Utility District. Because of severe wind and storms, electricity to the reservation is usually disrupted several times each winter, sometimes for long periods of time (hours or even days). Water is provided by the Public Works Department, a department of the Tribal government, from the Educket Creek Reservoir, two shallow groundwater wells, and an infiltration gallery in the Wa'atch River. The system serves approximately 1350 people. Lack of additional water capacity has led to a moratorium on new buildings. Sewer services are also provided by the Tribe's Public Works Department. Two failing wastewater treatment facilities were combined and upgraded in 1997. Public Safety in Neah Bay is provided by the Makah Police Department, which also runs the reservation jail. The Tribe runs a Tribal Court system, consisting of a permanent Chief Judge and Associate Judges who are called in as necessary. There are at least nine hotels, motels, or campgrounds available in Neah Bay for visitors to the area.

The Neah Bay Marina, completed in 1997, "safely harbors over 200 commercial and sportfishing vessels as well as pleasure craft."¹² The marina can moor vessels from 30- to 200-feet in length. Every slip is equipped with electrical service and running water; a wastewater pump-out station is also available at the marina.¹³ Neah Bay's harbor is shielded by a small island and a breakwater. The marina also hosts two emergency oil spill response boats, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) boats, the state's emergency tugboat, and serves as a base for aquaculture development.¹⁴

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

West Coast fisheries landings in Neah Bay in 2000 were delivered by 100 vessels, including 23 commercial, 70 tribal, and 7 personal use vessels. Landings in the community were in the following West Coast fisheries (data shown represents landings in metric tons/value of said landings/number of vessels landing): crab

(confidential/confidential/2), groundfish (1489 t/\$1,941,780/65), salmon (94 t/\$204,055/65), and other species (62 t/\$273,369/37).

Neah Bay residents owned at least 10 vessels in 2000. This number is questionable because of the noticeable difference between the number of tribal vessels delivering landings to the community in 2000 and because field observations indicate a larger participation by community members. Recorded data indicates that in 2000 residents owned eight vessels that participated in the federal groundfish fishery. According to recorded data the number of vessels owned by Neah Bay residents participating in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) in the same year was: coastal pelagic (1/0/0), groundfish (2/0/NA), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), salmon (2/0/0), shellfish (NA/0/NA), shrimp (NA/0/0), and other species (3/0/0).¹⁵

In 2000 four individual community members held a total of five federal groundfish fishery permits. In the same year recorded data indicates that the number of Neah Bay residents holding permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: groundfish (3/0/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (1/0/0), shellfish (0/0/NA), and other species (6/0/0).¹⁶

At least 22 permits were registered to Neah Bay residents in 2000, including five federal groundfish permits and 17 state permits. In the same year recorded data indicates that the number permits held by residents in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: groundfish (8/0/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (1/0/0), shellfish (0/0/NA), and other species (8/0/0).¹⁷

No processor voluntarily reported processing information in Neah Bay in 2000, though at least 100 vessels offloaded fish in the community. An offloading dock and processing facility operate in town, though it has been marked by instability and changes in ownership in recent years.

The MTC engages in mussel aquaculture and has three rafts in operation. Every 18 months about 30,000 lbs of Mediterranean mussels (*Mytilus galloprovincialis*) are grown on the rafts, which are sold to the Washington State Department of Fish Wildlife and Taylor Seafood.¹⁸ Tribal members own and participate in commercial dive operations for sea urchins, scallops, sea cucumbers, and other commercially viable shellfish species. Geoduck clams are present in the area, but commercial operations await adequate Tribal stock assessments.

According to the Boldt Decision¹⁹ the usual and accustomed (U&A) fishing grounds of the Makah Tribe are “located off northern Washington in U.S. waters north of 48°02’15”N latitude (at the Norwegian Memorial), east of 125°44’00”W longitude, and west of 123°42’30”W longitude (at Tongue Point just east of Crescent Bay in the Straits of Juan de Fuca). The Makah U&A is within the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary in coastal waters” and “overlaps two of the National Wildlife Refuges (Flattery Rocks and Quillayute Needles) in northern Washington.”²⁰ Members of the Tribe fish commercially within their U&A for halibut, whiting, rockfish, lingcod, sablefish, flatfish, sturgeon, steelhead, salmon, shellfish, groundfish, and gray whales.²¹

Many tribal fishermen fish for salmon and steelhead in the Wa’atch and Tsooyes Rivers with gillnets operated by hand or from a small skiff. Fishing openings and the relative positions of the nets in the river are regulated by the Makah Fisheries Department. As with most tribal fishing, a portion of the catch is sold commercially and a portion is kept for subsistence purposes.

Sportfishing

Recreational fishing in the saltwater surrounding Neah Bay for salmon and bottomfish is among the best in the United States, outside of Alaska. Neah Bay is the State's most important location for charter halibut fishing. In addition, rainbow and cutthroat trout are available in nearby freshwater lakes and steelhead and salmon from the local rivers.²² It was reported that in 1995 approximately 85,000 visitors were brought to the Makah Reservation for the purpose of sportfishing.²³ In 2000 there were at least three salmonid charter fishing businesses in Neah Bay. Many more charter boats operate out of Neah Bay during the sportfishing season, although none of these are operated by tribal members.²⁴ Many sport fishermen trailer their own boats to Neah Bay and use the public boat launch facilities. There are three vendors in Neah Bay licensed to sell fishing permits; however two of the vendors operate on a seasonal basis. In 2003 there were 1751 sportfishing license transactions made in the community, valued at \$3409.

In Catch Record Card Area 4 (from Cape Alava north and inside Juan de Fuca Strait to the Seiku River) the 2000 sport salmon catch based on catch record cards was 11,652 including: 381 Chinook, 11,258 coho, 5 chum, and 8 pink salmon. In 2000 there were approximately 11,114 marine angler trips in the sport salmon fishery in Area 4. In the same area the steelhead and coastal bottomfish catch in 2000 was 8 and 87,682 respectively.

Subsistence

Members of the Tribe fish within their U&A for halibut, whiting, rockfish, lingcod, sablefish, flatfish, sturgeon, steelhead, salmon, shellfish, groundfish, and gray whales.²⁵ Subsistence shellfish include clams, mussels, oysters, barnacles, urchins, octopus, and chitons. Tribal members also consume harbor seals incidentally caught in other fisheries, under a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Marine Fisheries Service. According to a survey conducted of Makah households in 1997-1998, "99 percent of all households participated in subsistence activities, either by directly harvesting and consuming local resources, or by receiving them from other households through tribal sharing networks."²⁶ From the same survey it was also determined that residents consumed an annual 174 lbs per capita of subsistence resources including: fish, shellfish, marine mammals, terrestrial mammals, and birds. This made up "approximately 65% of all solid animal protein in the contemporary diet."²⁷

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

There were zero vessels owned by Neah Bay residents in 2000 that were involved in North Pacific fisheries. In past years several tribal whiting boats have been seasonally leased to participants in Alaska fisheries. Fourteen Neah Bay residents held crewmember licenses for North Pacific fisheries in 2000.

Sportfishing

Residents of Neah Bay purchased a total of three Alaskan sportfishing licenses in 2000.

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- ¹ Sepez, J. 2003. Makah. In Kutler, S. (ed) Dictionary of American History, 3rd Edition. Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, p.213.
- ² Makah Indian Tribe. No Date. Culture, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.makah.com/culture.htm> (access date - December 2004).
- ³ Olympic Peninsula Web Sites. No Date. The Makah Nation on Washington's Olympic Peninsula, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.northolympic.com/makah/> (access date - December 2004).
- ⁴ Treaty of Neah Bay, 1855. Treaty Text reproduced by Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.nwifc.wa.gov/tribes/treaties/tneahbay.asp> (access date - March 2005).
- ⁵ Sepez, J. 2001. Political and Social Ecology of Contemporary Makah Hunting, Fishing, and Shellfish Collecting Practices. Doctoral, University of Washington, Seattle.
- ⁶ National Marine Fisheries Service. 2001. Environmental Assessment on Issuing a Quota to the Makah Indian Tribe for a Subsistence Hunt on Gray Whales for the Years 2001 and 2002. Draft Environmental Assessment. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service: Silver Spring, MD.
- ⁷ Sepez, J. 2001. Political and Social Ecology of Contemporary Makah Hunting, Fishing, and Shellfish Collecting Practices. Doctoral, University of Washington, Seattle.
- ⁸ Forest Community Research. 2002. Assessment of the Northwest Economic Adjustment Initiative. Sierra Institute for Community and Environment: Taylorsville, CA.
- ⁹ Forest Community Research. 2002. Assessment of the Northwest Economic Adjustment Initiative. Sierra Institute for Community and Environment: Taylorsville, CA.
- ¹⁰ Forest Community Research. 2002. Assessment of the Northwest Economic Adjustment Initiative. Sierra Institute for Community and Environment: Taylorsville, CA.
- ¹¹ NW Portland Area Indian Health Board. 2003. Makah Tribe, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.npaihb.org/profiles/tribal_profiles/interface.htm (access date - January 2005).
- ¹² Olympic Peninsula Web Sites. No Date. The Makah Nation on Washington's Olympic Peninsula, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.northolympic.com/makah/> (access date - December 2004).
- ¹³ National Marine Fisheries Service. 2004. Social, Economic and Historical Information Regarding Treaty Tribes (Appendix D). Groundfish Bycatch Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, National Marine Fisheries Service, Northwest Regional Office: Seattle.
- ¹⁴ Forest Community Research. 2002. Assessment of the Northwest Economic Adjustment Initiative. Sierra Institute for Community and Environment: Taylorsville, CA.
- ¹⁵ "NA" refers to data which was not available, for example, due to few or no recorded permit numbers, or the partially permitted nature of a fishery in 2000.
- ¹⁶ "NA" refers to data which was not available, for example, due to few or no recorded permit numbers, or the partially permitted nature of a fishery in 2000.
- ¹⁷ "NA" refers to data which was not available, for example, due to few or no recorded permit numbers, or the partially permitted nature of a fishery in 2000.
- ¹⁸ Forest Community Research. 2002. Assessment of the Northwest Economic Adjustment Initiative. Sierra Institute for Community and Environment: Taylorsville, CA.
- ¹⁹ Center for Columbia River History. No date. Boldt Decision, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.ccrh.org/comm/river/legal/boldt.htm> (access date - October 2004).
- ²⁰ National Marine Fisheries Service. 2001. Environmental Assessment on Issuing a Quota to the Makah Indian Tribe for a Subsistence Hunt on Gray Whales for the Years 2001 and 2002. Draft Environmental Assessment. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service: Silver Spring, MD.

²¹ National Marine Fisheries Service. 2004. Social, Economic and Historical Information Regarding Treaty Tribes (Appendix D). Groundfish Bycatch Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, National Marine Fisheries Service, Northwest Regional Office: Seattle.

²² Olympic Peninsula Websites. No Date. The Makah Nation on Washington's Olympic Peninsula, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.northolympic.com/makah/> (access date – December 2004).

²³ Forest Community Research. 2002. Assessment of the Northwest Economic Adjustment Initiative. Sierra Institute for Community and Environment: Taylorsville, CA.

²⁴ Sepez, Jennifer. 2001. Political and Social Ecology of Contemporary Makah Hunting, Fishing, and Shellfish Collecting Practices. Doctoral, University of Washington.

²⁵ National Marine Fisheries Service. 2004. Social, Economic and Historical Information Regarding Treaty Tribes (Appendix D). Groundfish Bycatch Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, National Marine Fisheries Service, Northwest Regional Office: Seattle.

²⁶ Sepez, J. 2001. Political and Social Ecology of Contemporary Makah Hunting, Fishing, and Shellfish Collecting Practices. Doctoral, University of Washington.

²⁷ Sepez, J. 2002. If Middens Could Talk: Comparing Ancient, Historic, and Contemporary Makah Subsistence Foraging Patterns. Ninth International Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies. Edinburgh, Scotland. Available: URL: www.abdn.ac.uk/chags9/1sepez.htm (access date - July 2005).