



PGDC

The Village of Port Graham

Port Graham's Heritage

The people of Port Graham were the ancestral inhabitants of the Kenai Fjords. Prior to the arrival of the Russians during the late 1700's, thousands lived and prospered along this rocky coast. A sophisticated culture of maritime hunters and gatherers thrived in Nuka Bay, Yalik Bay and Aialik Bay. Encompassing an area today of Kodiak Island, the Alaska Peninsula, Cook Inlet, and Prince William Sound the Sugpiaq, or more commonly, the Alutiiq, both past and present existence is based on the spiritual ties to the land, the bonds of kinship and belief, respect for Elders and community, and the shared practices and meanings of subsistence life. The spiritual relationship with the natural world is still deeply a part of hunting, fishing, and gathering. This connection is found in traditional art and objects - from kayaks to weapons, clothing, and hunting hats.

The Russians coerced the Alutiiq inhabitants to hunt sea otter for the burgeoning fur trade. Eventually, all the people were relocated to Alexandrovsk (now Nanwalek) or Paluwik (now Port Graham) by the Russian missionaries during the late 1800's. According to the U.S. Geological Survey in 1909, Port Graham later became the site of a cannery and wharf.



Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act

Under the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), the people of Port Graham selected 44,000 acres within the Kenai Fjords and reclaimed their birthright and ancestral homelands from the United States government.

However, in 1980, President Carter signed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act and created the 500,000-acre Kenai Fjords National Park. Since 1980, the National Park Service has been managing Port Graham's land until they could receive title. PGC and the Park Service are pursuing a co-management agreement, with PGC retaining the rights of full private ownership to manage and develop their lands to the benefit of their shareholders in perpetuity.

The population of Port Graham is around 178. After a fire at the fish cannery in 1998, a new \$4.5 million cannery and hatchery was rebuilt and opened in 1999. The cannery continues to be the main economic activity in the community providing seasonal employment for 70 residents. The people of Port Graham still revere their link to their ancestral homelands by frequently visiting for subsistence purposes and seek to maintain their ties to the land and water of Kenai Fjords forever.