

La Push, Washington

People and Place

Location

La Push, the site of the Quileute Tribe's reservation, is located in Washington State's Clallam County, on the Olympic Peninsula. The community is approximately 153 miles northwest from the City of Seattle. It is located at 47°54'32"N and 124°38'07"W. The Quileute Reservation encompasses nearly one square mile of land (594 acres).

Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, La Push had a population of 371, with a gender distribution of 57.1% male and 42.9% female. In 2000 about 82.8% of residents were American Indian and Alaska Native, 11.3% White, 0.5% Black, 0.3% of some other race, and 5.1% of two or more races. Approximately 5.4% of residents identified as Hispanic or Latino. A small percentage of residents (3.8%) were foreign-born with 42.9% born in Mexico, 35.8% in Canada, and 21.4% in Australia.

The median age in La Push in 2000 was 27.5, significantly lower than the national median age of 35.3. Of the population age 18 years and over, 52.9% had graduated from high school or continued on to higher education, 4.2% had received a bachelor's degree or higher, and 1.7% had received a graduate or professional degree according to 2000 U.S. Census.

History

The area of La Push is the traditional land of the Quileute Tribe. According to their creation story the Quileute "were changed from wolves by a wandering Transformer" and their "only kindred, the Chimakum Tribe, were washed away by flood and deposited near present-day Port Townsend," eventually to be wiped out by the Suquamish Tribe in the 1860s. The Quileute historically fished as well as hunted seals and whales, whaling in red cedar canoes as far as Southeast Alaska and California.¹ The Quileute were considered by many as "second only to the Makah as whalers, and first among all the tribes as sealers."²

Contact was made with European traders as early as the 1700s. The first official contact occurred during the signing of a treaty in 1855, with the members of the Washington Territory Governor Isaac Stevens' staff. In 1856 a delegation of Quileute signed a treaty with the United States which ceded their land and would move them onto a reservation, but they were not forced to leave because of the remoteness of their traditional land and lack of pressure to settle that area.³ A schoolteacher, A.W. Smith, arrived in the village in 1882, assembled a school, and renamed Quileutes with names derived from the Bible, American history, and by anglicizing Quileute names.⁴

In 1889 a one-square mile reservation was arranged at La Push by an Executive Order of President Benjamin Harrison. At that time there were 252 persons inhabiting the reservation. In the same year all of the houses in the village were completely burned by a settler who was attempting to lay claim to the land. Four years later, in 1893, a separate reservation was allotted for the 71 members of the Hoh River band of Quileutes. Through the treaties the Quileute maintained the right to gather, hunt, and fish in their "usual and accustomed places." The name La Push originates from the use of the Chinook word for

“river mouth” by traders, a distortion of the French “la bouche.” The 1936 Constitution and By-Laws of the Quileute Tribe and the 1937 Corporate Charter, issued by the Secretary of Interior, asserted the Tribe’s sovereignty. During World War II, the area was part of the 13th Naval District’s Coastal Lookout System with lookout sites on James Island and in La Push. In 1997 evidence of earlier habitation of the village was found from an archeological exploration.⁵

Presently La Push contains the Quileute Headquarters, a museum, seafood firm, oceanfront resorts, fish hatchery, marina, a store, a recreational vehicle park, post office, and additional amenities.⁶ The Quileute Reservation contains 594 acres and is situated on the south banks of the Quillayute River and the Pacific Ocean.⁷

Infrastructure

Current Economy

According to 2000 U.S. Census, 42.6% of the potential labor force in La Push was employed, and there was an unemployment rate in the community of 27.4% for the same year (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force).

Approximately 41.4% 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%.

Approximately 12.3% of employed La Push residents worked in agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting, according to the 2000 U.S. Census; however this number most likely does not reflect all those involved in fishing. The additional top employment sectors for working La Push residents were educational, health, and social services (23.6%); public administration (17.9%); arts, entertainment, and recreation (9.4%); accommodations and food services (7.5%); and manufacturing (7.5%). Approximately 54.7% of employed residents worked within the local, state, or federal government.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the per capita income in La Push in 1999 was \$9589 and the median household income was \$21,750. The 2000 U.S. Census reports that in 1999 the income of 34.5% of the population was below the poverty level. In 2000, there were a total of 128 housing units in the community, of which 90.6% were occupied and 9.4% were vacant. Of the occupied housing units, 87.1% were owner occupied and 12.9% were renter occupied.

Governance

La Push, home of the Quileute Tribal reservation, is governed by the Quileute Tribal Council. The Council “exercises the powers to:…veto any sales, disposition, lease, or other encumbrance of tribal lands; advise on and approve appropriations; levy and collect taxes and license fees from nonmembers doing business on the reservation; enforce ordinances dealing with visitors, trespassers, and tribal memberships; and operate a tribal court and to maintain law and order.”⁸

The Northwest Enforcement Office of the National Marine Fisheries Service is located 153 miles away in Seattle. 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 to the southeast. The U.S. Coast Guard Station Quillayute River is located within La Push. The nearest meetings of the Pacific and North Pacific Fisheries Management Council and the District Office of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services are located in Seattle.

Facilities

La Push is accessible by both ground and sea. La Push is located off of U.S. Highway 101 and State Route 110, approximately 196 miles from Sea-Tac International Airport. The closest airport certified for carrier operations is the William R. Fairchild International Airport in Port Angeles about 69 miles away, with international flights to Canada. The La Push Harbor is the home of the La Push fleet and provides vessel moorage, a fuel dock, and a waste water pump.⁹

The Quileute Tribal School, located in La Push provides schooling for grades Kindergarten through 12th. Water, waste water, and sanitation services are operated by the Tribe.¹⁰ Public safety is administered by the La Push Police Department. La Push is served by the Quileute Tribe's Quileute Tribal Health Facility which provides primary medical and dental care, behavioral health services, and family and addiction counseling and support.¹¹ There are several oceanfront resorts situated in La Push.

The Quileute Tribe utilizes the Sol Duc Hatchery in Forks, Washington, and the Quileute's Lonesome Creek Hatchery in La Push, to reach population recovery goals for local salmon runs.¹² The Tribe, working under a cooperative agreement with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Sol Duc Hatchery, strives to increase wild summer run Chinook populations.

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

West Coast fisheries landings in La Push in 2000 were delivered by 45 vessels, including 32 commercial, 12 tribal, and one personal use vessel. Recorded data indicates landings were made in the following West Coast fisheries (data shown represents landings in metric tons/value of said landings/number of vessels landing): crab (334 t/\$1,594,592/31), groundfish (229 t/\$751,982/29), highly migratory species (21 t/\$38,644/5), salmon (78 t/\$137,025/13), and other species (confidential/confidential/1). At least one seafood company, High Tide Seafood, is located in La Push.

A total of three vessels were owned by La Push residents in 2000. In the same year residents owned one vessel that participated in the federal groundfish fishery. Recorded data indicates that the number of vessels owned by La Push residents that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: groundfish (1/0/NA), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), salmon (1/1/0), shellfish (NA/0/NA), shrimp (NA/0/0), and other species (1/0/0).¹³

In 2000 one federal groundfish fishery permit was held by one community member. According to recorded data for the same year the number of La Push residents holding permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (2/0/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (1/1/0), shellfish (0/0/NA), and other species (1/0/0).¹⁴

At least six state commercial fishing permits were registered to La Push residents in 2000. In the same year recorded data indicates that the number of permits held by community members in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (3/0/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (1/1/0), shellfish (0/0/NA), and other species (1/0/0).¹⁵

According to the Boldt Decision,¹⁶ the usual and accustomed (U&A) fishing grounds of the Quileute (and Hoh) before, during, and after treaty times “included the Hoh River from the mouth to its uppermost reaches, its tributary creeks, the Quileute River and its tributary creeks, Dickey River, Soleduck River, Bogachiel River, Calawah River, Lake Dickey, Pleasant Lake, Lake Ozette, and the adjacent tidewater and saltwater area.” Members of the Tribe fish within their U&A for shellfish, groundfish, flatfish, rockfish, lingcod, trout, steelhead, salmon, sablefish, Dungeness crab, and halibut.¹⁷

Sportfishing

Sportfishing is gaining popularity in the La Push area. Today at least three charter companies operate in La Push. Surf fishing is also readily available on the beaches of La Push. Anglers in the area fish for salmon (Chinook, coho, and pink) and bottomfish, such as halibut, rockfish, and lingcod.¹⁸

In Catch Record Card Area 3 (from the Queets River north to Cape Alava) the 2000 sport salmon catch based on catch record cards was 11,652; including 211 Chinook, 2298 coho, and 10 pink salmon. In 2000 approximately 2205 marine angler trips were made in the sport salmon fishery in Area 3. In the same area the sport steelhead catch in 2000 was 17 fish and coastal bottomfish catch was 10,994.

Subsistence

Quileute Tribal members fish within their U&A for shellfish, groundfish, flatfish, rockfish, lingcod, trout, steelhead, salmon, sablefish, Dungeness crab, and halibut.¹⁹

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

La Push residents did not own vessels involved in North Pacific fisheries in 2000. A total of three La Push residents held crewmember licenses for North Pacific fisheries in the same year. There was zero North Pacific commercial fishing permits held by community members in 2000.

Sportfishing

One La Push resident purchased an Alaskan sportfishing license in 2000.

¹ Quileute Natural Resources. No Date. History, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.quileutetribe.org/7.html> (access date - December 2004).

² Indian Health Service, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2001. Quileute Tribe, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www2.ihs.gov/PortlandAO/about/quileute.asp> (access date - December 2004).

³ Quileute Natural Resources. No Date. History, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.quileutetribe.org/7.html> (access date - December 2004).

⁴ Online Highways. 2004. Quileute Tribe, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.ohwy.com/wa/q/quiltrib.htm> (access date - December 2004).

⁵ Quileute Natural Resources. No Date. History, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.quileutetribe.org/7.html> (access date - December 2004).

⁶ Forks Forum. No Date. Quileute Tribe, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.forks-web.com/fg/quileute.htm> (access date - December 2004).

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- ⁷ NW Portland Area Indian Health Board. 2003. Quileute Tribe, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.npaihb.org/profiles/tribal_profiles/interface.htm (access date - December 2004).
- ⁸ Online Highways. 2004. Quileute Tribe, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.ohwy.com/wa/q/quiltrib.htm> (access date - December 2004).
- ⁹ B. Black, Quileute Tribe, La Push, WA. Pers. commun., 21 October 2005.
- ¹⁰ B. Black, Quileute Tribe, La Push, WA. Pers. commun., 21 October 2005.
- ¹¹ Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board. 2003. Quileute Tribe, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.npaihb.org/profiles/tribal_profiles/Washington/Quileute%20Tribal%20Profile.htm (access date - December 2004).
- ¹² Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission. 2004. Quileute Tribe's Chinook Spawning Efforts Provide More Fish For All, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.nwifc.wa.gov/newsinfo/newsrelease.asp?ID=266> (access date - December 2005).
- ¹³ "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.
- ¹⁴ "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.
- 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 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).
- ¹⁷ National Marine Fisheries Service. 2004. Groundfish Bycatch Programmatic DEIS, Appendix D: Treaty Tribes, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.pcouncil.org/groundfish/gfbdpeis/apdxd.pdf> (access date - December 2004).
- ¹⁸ Johnston, G. 2003. La Push boasts a new attitude and great fishing. Seattle PI, [Online]. Available: URL: http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/getaways/132040_lapush24.html (access date - January 2005).
- ¹⁹ National Marine Fisheries Service. 2004. Groundfish Bycatch Programmatic DEIS, Appendix D: Treaty Tribes, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.pcouncil.org/groundfish/gfbdpeis/apdxd.pdf> (access date - December 2004).