

Census gears up for count

by Holly F. Reimer

Tundra Times reporter

Ten years ago there were 64,103 Alaska Natives living in Alaska. Twenty years ago the Alaska Native population numbered 50,814.

In 10 years the Native population increased 26 percent, and right now the U.S. Bureau of the Census is undertaking another count to find how much of an increase there has been recently.

The Census conducts its counting of people every 10 years. And the year 1990 will be its 200th year.

In 1790, it took Thomas Jefferson 18 months to take the census. Jefferson and some helpers went door to door to collect information. And finally in the '60s most of the forms were sent in the mail.

It seems ironic with all of today's technology that the most accurate way to count people in rural Alaska is door to door. Alaska Natives, along with other minority groups, fall in the category of hard to enumerate, but Alaska is also vast and sparsely

4. Race <i>Fill ONE circle for each person.</i> <i>Report the race the person considers himself/herself to be.</i> If Asian or Pacific Islander, fill circle and print one group, for example: Chinese, Filipino, Hawaiian, Laotian, Asian Indian, Japanese, Korean, Samoan, Vietnamese, etc. If Indian (Amer.), fill circle and print the name of enrolled or principal tribe. If Other race, fill circle and print race.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1 <input type="radio"/> White2 <input type="radio"/> Black or Negro3 <input type="radio"/> Asian or Pacific Islander (Print one group) 4 <input type="radio"/> Indian (Amer.) (Print the name of the enrolled or principal tribe) 5 <input type="radio"/> Eskimo 6 <input type="radio"/> Aleut7 <input type="radio"/> Other race (Print race)
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populated and in many areas mail is sent by general delivery.

Sylvia Carlsson, media representative for the Census Bureau in Alaska, said the agency will start combing the state next month.

She said it's important that Alaska Natives are counted, and to make sure they are counted specifically as part of their ethnic group because funding for aid programs is determined by

Census information.

The first census was taken soon after the 13 Colonies broke their ties with Great Britain. The new nation had a debt to pay from the Revolutionary War, and it was decided that the cost would be divided equally among the people. There was also a need to find out how many people there were so

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• Census day April 1

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members could be accurately appointed to the House of Representatives.

So the census was adopted in 1787 as part of the U.S. Constitution in Article 1, Section 2.

The census is strictly protected, by law, to keep all census questionnaire information confidential. The Census Bureau cannot give any information out at all. And the form doesn't even ask for an individual's Social Security number.

Today filling out the census form, and returning it, is very important. The outcome determines more than how many representatives each state gets. These statistics determine how much money areas can be funded by federal, state and municipal governments.

The data determine the unemployment rate. The Census Bureau counts the number of men, women and children. It counts the American Indian, Eskimos and Aleut populations.

The Census also gathers other vital

statistical information, such as source of water and method of sewage disposal.

Some of the federal agencies that use the census data are the Department of Education, Health and Social Services, even the Indian Health Service. And a lot of this funding depends on how many Alaska Natives there are in the state.

Census day is April 1, 1990, and the Alaska Census Bureau branch is gearing up for it.

Census spokeswoman Carlsson also said that because of today's computer technology during this census all the information will be available a lot earlier than in the past.

The Census Bureau doesn't want anybody to be left out of the count. So the homeless in every state in the nation will get counted during a visit to the homeless shelters and the streets on the night before census day.

The cost of the census for the entire U.S. is \$10 billion over the 10 year period.