

Meeting of Frontiers

Development

Teaching Unit: Urbanization, Demographics, and Economics on the Frontier

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Overview:

Urbanization, population, and economic systems are all important components of the study of human geography, and together with culture and political organization of space constitute the human systems element of geography.

Historical settlement patterns underpin the understanding of current urbanization processes and patterns. In this unit, designed primarily for Alaska History and Cultural Studies classes, this unit allow the student to understand that the Alaska frontier shared much in common with the Siberian and Western American frontiers, what the towns of the late 1890s and early 1900s were like in their human and economics characteristics, and to then create an in-depth examination of current Alaska demographics and the cultural groups creating those demographics. Components of this unit may also be useful for world geography and American history instruction.

Standards:

Geography Standards. The geographically informed student knows and understands:

- ❖ how to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.
- ❖ the physical and human characteristics of places
- ❖ the processes, patterns, and functions of human settlement
- ❖ the characteristics, distribution, and migration of human population on earth's surface
- ❖ the patterns and networks of economic interdependence on earth's surface

Geographic Skills. The geographically skilled student knows and understands how to:

- ❖ ask geographic questions.
- ❖ acquire geographic information.
- ❖ organize geographic information.
- ❖ answer geographic questions.
- ❖ analyze geographic information.

Historical Thinking Standards. The history student:

- ❖ thinks chronologically.
- ❖ comprehends a variety of historical sources.
- ❖ engages in historical analysis and interpretation.

- ❖ conducts historical research.

Technology Standards. A technology literate student should be able to:

- ❖ use technology to explore ideas, solve problems, and derive meaning.

Writing and Speaking Standards. A student fluent in English is able to:

- ❖ write and speak well to inform and to clarify thinking in a variety of formats, including technical communication;

Essential Questions:

- ❖ What were distinguishing characteristics of Russian, Western American, and Alaskan frontier cities?
- ❖ What were the processes, patterns, and functions of the settlement of Russian, Western American, and Alaskan cities?
- ❖ What is the Russian heritage in Alaskan cities?
- ❖ What was the urban development of Siberian, Western American, and Alaskan towns and villages like in the near the turn of the 20th century?
- ❖ How did the Gold Rush affect the demographics of Alaska in the early part of the 20th century?
- ❖ How have Alaska Natives been impacted by the waves of Russian and American settlements and the multiple economic booms of Alaska's economy?
- ❖ How those of Russian ancestry impacting the Alaska of today?
- ❖ What role did the railroad play in the settlement of both the Siberian and Western American frontiers?
- ❖ What are the demographics of the Alaska of today?

Vocabulary:

- ❖ demographics
- ❖ frontier
- ❖ population pyramid
- ❖ urban

Instruction:

Introducing the Instruction

Ask students what the driving forces of settlement were in the American West, Siberia, and Alaska in the 1890s? How were they each a frontier? To what extent were these frontiers urbanized? What role did settlements, large or small, play in the settlement of frontiers?

Developing the Instruction:

Post large maps of Russia (or Siberia), Alaska, and the United States on a wall in the classroom. If commercial maps are available of each, those can be used. Otherwise, a small group of students can make outline maps of each using an overhead projector and art paper. The maps from the Siberian Cities and Western Cities sections of the Meeting of Frontiers websites can serve as the base maps for the outline maps.

<http://frontiers.loc.gov/intldl/mtfhtml/mfdev/colsibcities.html>



<http://frontiers.loc.gov/intldl/mtfhtml/mfdev/colwestcities.html>



Depending on the number of students in your class, assign individual students or groups of students a set of cities to research and compare.

<i>Siberian</i>	<i>Alaska</i>	<i>U.S.</i>
11 Largest Cities of Siberia, 1897	11 Largest Places in Alaska 1900	11 Largest Trans-Mississippi Cities, 1900
Barnaul	Douglas City	Denver
Biisk	Juneau	Kansas City
Blagoveshchensk	Kogiung	Los Angeles
Irkutsk	Metlakatla	Minneapolis
Khabarovsk	Nome	New Orleans
Krasnoiarisk	Point Hope	Omaha
Omsk	Sitka	Portland
Tiumen'	Skagway	St. Louis
Tobol'sk	St. Michael	San Francisco
Tomsk	Treadwell	St. Paul
Vladivostok	Wrangell	St. Joseph

Have students complete the multi-part research task on their cities.

Student Instructions:

- ❖ Locate your cities on the map on the wall in the classroom. Provide a large label for it.
- ❖ Research your cities on the Meeting of Frontiers web site. What were they like as a frontier city of the late 1890s, at the time of the turn of the 20th century?
 - Siberian Cities <http://frontiers.loc.gov/intldl/mtfhtml/mfdev/colsibcities.html>
 - Western Cities <http://frontiers.loc.gov/intldl/mtfhtml/mfdev/colwestcities.html>
- ❖ Then search the Meeting of Frontiers website for images and maps of your cities. (For the Western cities, students may also want to search the maps collection in American Memory. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/>) When you get your results, switch to the Gallery view so you can see the thumbnail size images all at once. Print out up to four images for each city. Choose images that emphasize its location, reasons for settlement, and/or architecture.
- ❖ If you have an Alaskan city or village, the best sites for information on those are outside the Meeting of Frontiers site. Several suggested sites are:
 - Alaska Community Photo Library
http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/photos/comm_list.cfm
 - Alaska Community Database Community Information Summaries
http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/commdb/CF_CIS.htm
 - The University of Washington maintains digital historical collections online. You can search across the collections or within collections.
<http://content.lib.washington.edu/sc.html>
 - Collections that especially pertain to Alaska are:
 - [Alaska and Western Canada Collection](#)
Images documenting Alaska and Western Canada, primarily the provinces of Yukon Territory and British Columbia depicting scenes of the Gold Rush of 1898, city street scenes, Eskimo and Native Americans of the region, hunting and fishing, and transportation.
 - [Harriman Alaska Expedition of 1899](#)
254 photographs from 1899 of Edward Harriman's scientific expedition to Alaska, including images of Alaskan Native Americans and their villages, scenic views of the coastline, glaciers and Alaskan towns.
 - [Frank La Roche Photographs](#)
310 photographs ca. 1888-1910 depicting scenes of the 1898 Klondike Gold Rush, Seattle, Washington state, Alaska, western United States, and Canada
 - [William E. Meed Photographs](#)
233 photographs, ca. 1898-1907, of scenes in the Yukon Territory, Canada, and portions of Alaska and British Columbia during the Klondike gold rush
 - [Frank H. Nowell Photographs](#)
281 photographs by Frank Nowell documenting scenery, towns, businesses, mining activities, Native Americans, and Eskimos in the vicinity of Nome, Alaska from 1901-1909.
- ❖ Create a small display representative of your city and post it on or near the appropriate map, linking the display and the city name you already created.

As a class, discuss the characteristics of Siberian, Western American, and Alaskan places at the turn of the 20th century.

For students of Alaska History and Cultural Studies, it is then useful to study the demographics of the 1900 cities and the demographics of Alaska today, as well as information about the economic development of Alaska places today. Have students analyze data from two different sources to create answers to two essential questions.

- ❖ What is the demographic and cultural group composition of Alaska’s ten largest places today?
- ❖ What are the driving economic forces of Alaska’s ten largest places today?

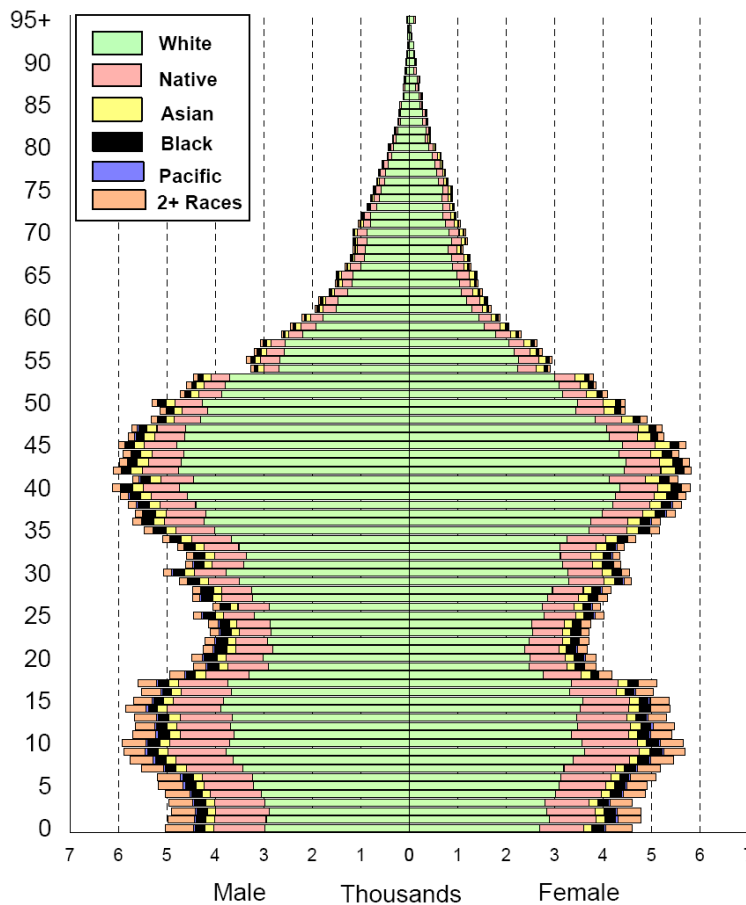
Start with 1900. What do the pictures examined for the first activity reveal about the population structure of these communities?

- ❖ For example, at the time of the 1900 Census, Sitka’s non-Native population consisted primarily of men. (Ducker, 1983) If time, students may be interested in analyzing the population data for 1900. The author has had Alaska studies students examine the 1900 Census data for Sitka and construct population pyramids for each segment of Sitka’s population to expand the ideas in Ducker’s study and to include all segments of the

population. (As recorded in the 1900 Census, Sitka’s population was grouped by Indians, Russians, Russian Orphanage, U.S. Jail, Industrial Training School, Sitka Mission Hospital, White Population, and U.S. Marine Barracks.)

- ❖ Siberian population study--peasants

Alaska Population by Age, Race and Male/Female, 2000



Today, general demographic characteristics of Alaska are analyzed by the Alaska Department of Labor. Share the visual images of Alaska’s population pyramid with students.

<http://almis.labor.state.ak.us/?PAGEID=67&SUBID=115>

Then have students construct a population pyramid for the current city or place being studied. Have them write an explanation for that Alaska place. Instructions follow after the references. To explain population pyramids, the following points are useful:

Population pyramids:

- ❖ are bar graphs, arranged vertically, that show the distribution of population by age and sex. By convention, the younger ages are at the bottom with males on the left and females on the right.
- ❖ graphically display a population's age and sex composition.
- ❖ show numbers or proportions of males and females in each age group or cohort.
- ❖ give a vivid picture of a population's characteristics.
- ❖ show 100% of the population, which is the sum of all age-sex groups or cohorts in the pyramid.
- ❖ show a new cohort at the bottom each year as new children are born, thus reflecting birth rates.
- ❖ show the movement of cohorts through the years as the new cohorts appear at the bottom.
- ❖ show loss of cohort members due to migration or death, thus reflecting changing economic conditions and death rates.
- ❖ show population growth rates.
 - An expansive population pyramid reflects rapid growth and large numbers of people in the younger ages.
 - A constrictive population reflects slow growth and small numbers of people in the younger ages.
 - A stationary population reflects near zero growth and roughly equal numbers of people in all age ranges, tapering off gradually at the older ages.

Who populates the Alaska of today? What drives the economy of Alaska and its communities today?

Two important sources for this information are:

- ❖ Alaska Economic Information System
http://www.dced.state.ak.us/dca/AEIS/AEIS_Home.htm
- ❖ Alaska Community Database Community Information Summaries
http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/commdb/CF_CIS.htm

For students of world geography, create a travelogue for a Siberian city of today. Conduct a more extensive search for information on your Siberian city. Prepare yourself to give a brief synopsis of that city to the class. If our class were to be able to travel extensively in Siberia, prepare a briefing for the class on what to expect when we visit the city you researched.

In addition to regular sources of information, you may be interested in using such sites as:

- ❖ The Trans-Siberian Railroad website: <http://www.transsib.ru/Eng/city-vsib.htm>
- Encyclopedias, other online sites, and travel books are also potential sources of information.

For students of American history, research the current ten largest Trans-Mississippi cities. Use Census data to uncover their demographic profiles. In addition to the ten largest or instead of the ten largest, research the ten fastest growing cities of the Trans-Mississippi West.

Extensions:

- ❖ Have students read, examine, and discuss *The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2000* Census Brief available from the Census Bureau web site or this web site.
- ❖ Have students read and analyze the Status of Alaska Natives executive summary available from ISER.

References

Ducker, James H. *Carmack's Alaskans: A Census Study of Alaskans in 1900*. Juneau: State of Alaska, Alaska Historical Commission, 1983.

Geography for Life: National Geography Standards. Washington, DC: National Geographic Research and Exploration, 1994. (Also see the Xpeditions web site <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions> at National Geographic. It contains explanations of the geography standards and background on each.)

Hunt, William C. *Census Reports, Volume II: Twelfth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1900, Population, Part II*. Washington, United States Census Office, 1902.

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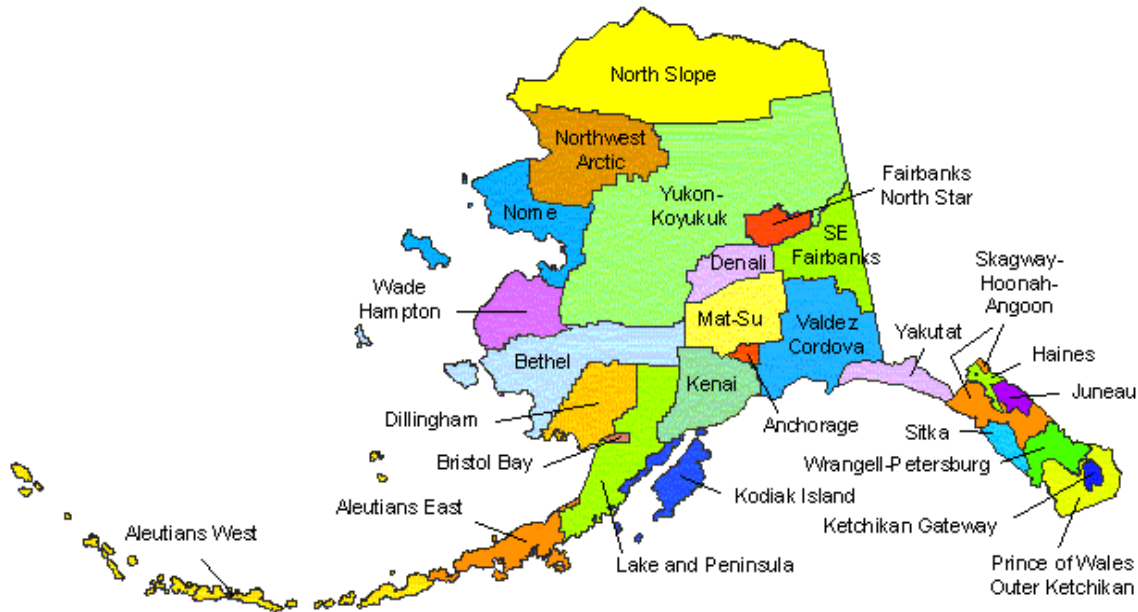
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Population Reference Bureau <<http://www.prb.org>>

Smothers Marcello, Jody. "Population Pyramids and US." National Geographic Society
<<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/09/g68/pyramids.html>>.

Status of Alaska Natives study from ISER

U.S. Census Bureau <<http://www.census.gov>>



Population Pyramid Assignment

Create a population pyramid for your assigned Alaska community using Excel (separate instructions).

Calculate the dependency ratio for your assigned Alaska community.

$$\frac{\% \text{ Population Under Age 15} + \% \text{ Population Age 65+}}{\text{Population ages 15-64}}$$

Use the line method to compare your community's population structure to that of Alaska, the United States, rapid growth countries, slow growth countries, and zero growth countries.

Write an executive summary of your interpretation of your community's population structure. An executive summary is formatted as follows:

- Introduction
- Main Points
 - One
 - Two
 - Three
 - Four
 - Five
 - Six
 - Seven
- Summary

Some questions that you may want to answer in your executive summary.

- What types of patterns do you see in terms of dependency ratios, gender differences, and age cohorts?
- Can you see evidence of any historical or economic events?
- Are there any cultural influences on the community's population structure?
- What advice would you have for those interested in marketing, education, housing, and medical care? What policy implications does the population structure of your community have for those making business and political decisions?
- How do births, deaths, and migration affect the population structure of your community?
- How would you describe the baby boom impacts on your community?
- Does the borough or state government try to affect the population structure of the community?
- If your community were a country, would it have slow, rapid, zero, or negative growth?
- How does your community's population pyramid compare to that of the State of Alaska?

CheckBric for Population Pyramid Assignment

<input type="checkbox"/>	Includes a well-crafted population pyramid made with Excel	<p>4—exceptional degree of understanding of population pyramids</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ analysis of population structure indicates a sophistication in thinking that is beyond those outlined in class and represents a novel approach to the assignment ○ summarizes main points in a clear, succinct style ○ accurately uses demographic terms
<input type="checkbox"/>	Uses executive summary format	<p>3—proficient degree of understanding of population pyramids</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ analysis of population structure indicates a solid understanding and ability to think about population structure ○ summarizes main points in a clear style ○ accurately uses demographic terms
		<p>2—limited degree of understanding of population pyramids</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ analysis indicates a level of understanding that reflects fragmented thinking ○ summarizes main points, but may be unclear ○ may misuse or not use demographic terms
		<p>1—missing degree of understanding of population pyramids</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ analysis indicates thinking that misses the mark of understanding of population structure ○ main points may be missing and/or unclear ○ missing demographic terms