

Alaska Community Database Community Information Summaries (CIS)

State of Alaska > Commerce > DCRA Home Page > Community Database Online > CIS > Results



Metlakatla

(MET-luh-KAT-luh); a.k.a. Annette Island Reserve

For a Map of Metlakatla click [here](#)

Current Population:	1,404 (2006 DCCED Certified Population)
Incorporation Type:	Unincorporated, Indian Reservation (Federal)
Borough Located In:	Unorganized
Taxes:	No taxing authority

Location and Climate

Metlakatla is located at Port Chester on the west coast of Annette Island, 15 miles south of Ketchikan. By air, it is 3.5 hours from Anchorage and 1.5 hours from Seattle. The community lies at approximately 55.129590° North Latitude and -131.574960° (West) Longitude. (Sec. 05, T078S, R092E, Copper River Meridian.) Metlakatla is located in the Ketchikan Recording District. The area encompasses 130.2 sq. miles of land and 83.8 sq. miles of water. Metlakatla is in the maritime climate zone with warm winters, cool summers, and an average annual precipitation of 115 inches (nearly 10 feet,) including 61 inches of snowfall. 200 inches of annual rainfall has been recorded. Summer temperatures range from 36 to 52; winter temperatures range 28 to 42.

Topographic
map of
Metlakatla
area



History, Culture and Demographics

Metlakatla means "saltwater channel passage," and was founded by a group of Canadian Tsimshians who migrated from Prince Rupert, British Columbia in 1887 seeking religious freedom. They were led by a Scottish lay priest in the Anglican Church (Church of England), Reverend William Duncan, who had begun his missionary work with the Tsimshians at Fort Simpson, B.C., in 1857. Rev. Duncan traveled to Washington D.C. around 1886 to personally request land from President Grover Cleveland for the Tsimshians. The Island was selected by a local search committee, and by 1890, there were 823 residents. Congress declared Annette Island a federal Indian reservation in 1891. Residents built a church, a school, a sawmill and a cannery, and constructed homes in an orderly grid pattern. Duncan continued to inspire and lead his followers until his death

in 1918. In 1927, the community built a hydroelectric plant. During World War II, the U.S. Army constructed a large air base a few miles from town, which was later used for commercial amphibian flights to Ketchikan. The U.S. Coast Guard also maintained a base on the Island until 1976. The Annette Island Reserve remains the only federal reservation for indigenous peoples in Alaska.

A federally-recognized tribe is located in the community -- the Metlakatla Indian Community (Annette Island Federal Reserve). The population of the community consists of 89.7% Alaska Native or part Native. It is a traditional Tsimshian community on the federal Annette Island Reserve, with an active economy and subsistence lifestyle. It is the only Indian reservation in Alaska. The community was not part of ANSCA. The 86,000 acre Island reservation and surrounding 3,000 feet of coastal waters are locally-controlled and not subject to state jurisdiction. The community regulates commercial fishing in these waters, and also operates its own tribal court system, including a Tribal Juvenile Court and Tribal Appellate Court. Salmon, halibut, cod, seaweed, clams and waterfowl are important subsistence food sources. During the 2000 U.S. Census, total housing units numbered 531, and vacant housing units numbered 62. Vacant housing units used only seasonally numbered 11. U.S. Census data for Year 2000 showed 501 residents as employed. The unemployment rate at that time was 20.85 percent, although 48.98 percent of all adults were not in the work force. The median household income was \$43,516, per capita income was \$16,140, and 8.01 percent of residents were living below the poverty level.

Facilities, Utilities, Schools and Health Care

A concrete dam on Chester Lake provides water to a 200,000-gal. water tank in the main community. A second water source, Yellow Hill Lake, serves Annette and the airport, but water is not treated. In the main community, piped gravity sewage system provides primary treatment in an aerated lagoon with effluent discharge through an ocean outfall. 485 homes and the school are served by the system, and all are fully plumbed. The Annette and airport area use individual septic tanks. 40-year-old sewer mains, serving 100 homes, need replacement. The community's water system and landfill do not require state permits, because the reserve is not within state jurisdiction. Metlakatla Power & Light owns and operates the Purple Lake and Chester Lake Hydroelectric facilities, and the Centennial Diesel Plant. Electricity is provided by Metlakatla Power & Light. There are 3 schools located in the community, attended by 287 students. Local hospitals or health clinics include Annette Island Family Medical Clinic (907-886-4744). The clinic is a qualified Emergency Care Center. Metlakatla is classified as an isolated town/Sub-Regional Center, it is found in EMS Region 3B in the Annette Island Region. Emergency Services have marine, floatplane and helicopter access. Emergency service is provided by 911 Telephone Service and volunteers. Auxiliary health care is provided by Metlakatla Vol. Fire/EMS/Ambulance (907-886-7922/886-4011).

Economy and Transportation

Metlakatla's economy is based primarily on fishing, fish processing and services. Because it is a federal Indian reservation, there are no local taxes. The community built a salmon hatchery on Tamgas Creek which releases millions of fry of all five salmon species. The largest employer is the Metlakatla Indian Community, which operates the hatchery, the tribal court, and all local services. Annette Island Packing Co. is a cold storage facility owned by the community. The cannery and two sawmills no longer operate. 49 residents hold commercial fishing permits. The community is interested in developing tourism. Residents rely on salmon, halibut, clams and waterfowl for food.

Metlakatla is accessible by air and water. The Annette Island Airport is owned and operated by the community, with a 7,500' asphalt runway and a 5,700' gravel crosswind runway. Two seaplane bases are available -- one State-owned, and one community-owned at Port Chester. Scheduled float plane services are available from Ketchikan. Port facilities include a dock with a barge ramp, two small boat harbors, and two marine ways. The Corps of Engineers is providing major improvements to Tamgas Harbor. The State ferry serves Metlakatla from Ketchikan only between the spring and fall. Significant improvements to the ferry facilities are under construction. Freight arrives by barge. A \$40 million road is under construction to link the northern end of Annette Island and Ketchikan with a proposed hourly ferry. The 14.7-mile Waldon Point Road is expected to be completed by 2007.

Organizations with Local Offices

City - Metlakatla Indian Community

P.O. Box 8

Metlakatla, AK 99926

Phone 907-886-4441

Fax 907-886-7997

E-mail Clerk: marciabrendible@yahoo.com; Secretary: diana@metlakatla.com

Economic Development - Metlakatla Office of Tourism

P.O. Box 450

Metlakatla, AK 99926-0450

Phone 907-886-1216

Fax 907-886-4161

E-mail lauth@metlakatla.net

Housing Authority - Metlakatla Housing Authority

P.O. Box 59

Metlakatla, AK 99926

Phone 907-886-6500

Fax 907-886-6503

E-mail methouse@aptalaska.net

School District - Annette Island School District

P.O. Box 7

Metlakatla, AK 99926-0007

Phone 907-886-6332

Fax 907-886-5130

E-mail bagenbroad@aisd.k12.ak.us

Web <http://aisd.k12.ak.us>

Regional Organizations

Regional Native Health Corporation - Metlakatla Indian Community

P.O. Box 8

Metlakatla, AK 99926

Phone 907-886-4441

Fax 907-886-7997

E-mail Clerk: marciabrendible@yahoo.com; Secretary: diana@metlakatla.com

Regional Native Non-Profit - Central Council Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska

320 W. Willoughby Ave., Suite 300

Juneau, AK 99801

Phone 907-586-1432

Fax 907-586-8970

E-mail econdev@ccthita.org

Web <http://www.ccthita.org>

Native Housing Authority - Metlakatla Housing Authority

P.O. Box 59

Metlakatla, AK 99926

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Regional Development - Southeast Conference

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