



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

January 19, 2009

Re: Inupiat Village Will be First Counted in the 2010 Census

Dear Tribal Leader:

As you may know, in less than a week, on January 25th, the 2010 Census kicks off in the Inupiat Eskimo village of Noorvik, Alaska. No roads lead to this community, so Census workers will arrive by air, snow machine, or dog sled - and they will need to get there early before the ice melts and the residents leave for fishing and hunting season.

It is important to recognize the significance of Noorvik as the place the census count begins. American Indians and Alaska Natives are among the nation's hardest populations to count, often because of mistrust of the federal government, as well as geographical, linguistic, and cultural challenges.

Counting all Alaskans is critical, but it is especially so for Alaska Natives, given the unique, historical relationship between the United States government and that community. An accurate count of Alaska Natives means fair access to federal resources and fair representation in state legislatures and the United States Congress.

But equally important, the census determines the annual distribution to states - and our communities and children - of more than \$400 billion in federal funds annually over the next 10 years. Federal funds are distributed based on census data for everything from schools and roads to health care, veterans, and senior citizens.

The goal of the 2010 Census is to paint a "Portrait of America."

Because the American Indian and Alaska Native population is so small, every Native person who is counted makes a huge difference in getting that portrait right. We know Indian Country faces many hurdles to an accurate Census count. We must overcome a chronic undercount of American Indians and Alaska Natives, language barriers, unmarked or difficult-to-find addresses, travel and transportation to remote and rural communities, and a historic mistrust of government institutions and efforts.

The future of Indian Country must be built on a foundation of reliable and accurate Census data.

As the President of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), I encourage all tribal leaders to get the word out to Native communities about how important the Census is to our future generations. I also urge all local leaders across the nation to encourage their community members to participate in Census 2010. We are all proud of our peoples, our cultures, and our nations - and now is the time to make sure all of Indian Country is counted in the 2010 Census! A sample drop in article on the Noorvik enumeration is available at www.IndianCountryCounts.org. If you have any questions, contact Amber Ebarb at aebarb@ncai.org or call NCAI at 202-466-7767.

Sincerely,

NCAI President
Jefferson Keel

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