Census Bureau Calls on AI/AN Data Users To Identify the Most Important Data They Need from the 2020 Census

Tribes and Native organizations all over the country are gearing up to help insure the most accurate count possible of the American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) population in the 2020 Census, now only a little over six months away.

A number of tribal governments took advantage of the opportunity to review the Census Bureau’s list of housing addresses and make additions or revisions to the list. Complete Count Committees have been formed on many reservations and involving Native organizations in urban areas. These CCCs are instrumental in coordinating the effort to get Native people to respond to the questionnaires when they become available next March. The count actually begins in Tooksok Bay, Alaska January 21st, before the spring thaw draws many Alaska Natives away from their villages to hunt and fish.

The results of the 2020 national headcount will begin to become available on December 31st when the Bureau releases the numbers of the total population living in each state, numbers which will determine how many seats in the US House of Representative each state gets. Detailed results, including the counts of AI/AN people will follow in the spring and summer of 2021.

Just how detailed the data products produced from the 2020 Census will be has yet to be determined by the Census Bureau. In order to improve the way the agency protects the privacy of personal information collected in the Census, such as individual names and addresses, the Bureau is using a new set of procedures. These procedures will result in some data published after previous decennials not being provided after 2020. Data on smaller populations and populations in smaller geographic areas are particularly vulnerable and may not be issued. In many cases the AI/AN population numbers and data on the populations on AI/AN lands fall into these categories.

Several months ago the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) assembled a work group of technicians with considerable experience in using Census Bureau data on AI/AN populations to work with Bureau staff to insure that particularly valuable data is not lost because of the shift to the new disclosure avoidance system.

One result was a letter, described in the last issue of this newsletter, calling on the Bureau to insure that it consult with tribal governments on this issue. The letter also raised a number of fundamental questions about the impact of the new disclosure
avoidance procedures on the types of AI/AN data that have been available after previous decennial censuses.

The Bureau's Response

The Director of the Census Bureau, Steven Dillingham, responded to the NCAI letter. In that response, he said: "While we cannot answer the questions posed in your letter until we finalize the list of data products [the various data sets and tables to be published from the 2020 Census], we take the concerns you raised seriously. We will not make final decisions on these matters without the input of our data users, including the American Indian and Alaska Native federally recognized tribal governments."

Director Dillingham turned the issue around by calling on AI/AN data users to identify the data that are most essential in providing services to the AI/AN population.

The letter also announced a national webinar on these AI/AN data issues, to be held on Wednesday, September 25th, along with two tribal consultations. One of those consultations is scheduled for the Alaska Federation of Natives Convention on October 16th in Fairbanks, and the other is scheduled for the NCAI Annual Convention on October 21st in Albuquerque. The schedule is on the last page of this newsletter.

The questions the Bureau has asked tribal leaders, tribal staff and other users of AI/AN 2020 Census data to identify include the data sets and tables they use at the various levels of geography that they consider as "must have," and how that data is essential for the services that tribes and Native organizations provide to their people.

One simple example involves the data that is needed by tribal Head Start and child development programs to allocate services to various parts of the larger reservations. It also can provide numbers for the child care counts which each tribal child development program director must submit to HHS in order to receive program funds under the Child Care and Development Block Grant program.

This data used for these purposes can be found in the Census data set called "Summary File 1." The table number from the 2010 Census is P12C, Sex by Age for the AI/AN Alone\(^1\) Population. The table provides counts of the AI/AN alone population by gender in various age categories, such as under 5 years, 5 to 9 years, 10 to 14 years, 15 to 17 years and in increments of 5 years or less through age 85 and over.

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\(^1\) Those that identify as only American Indian or Alaska Native on the response to the race question on a Census questionnaire are called by the Census Bureau AI/AN "alone." Those who, at the same time, identify as also a member of another racial group, like White, are called AI/AN "in combination [with one or more other races]." The total of both groups is called the AI/AN "alone or in combination" population.
A number of the larger federal reservations have tribal subdivisions, districts or equivalent areas from which tribal Council members are elected. The data in this table for tribal subdivisions allows the tribal Directors of programs serving young children to allocate services and facility construction funds to the various tribal subdivisions consistent with the number of tribal children in each tribal subdivision.

This is just one very simple example of the information that Census Bureau staff is seeking. **What the Bureau staff hear from tribes and other AI/AN data users will help them determine what data to prioritize in deciding how to apply the new disclosure avoidance procedures to various the data sets, tables and levels of geography the Bureau will publish in 2021.**

All comments are to be submitted to Dee Alexander, the Tribal Affairs Coordinator at Census Bureau headquarters. Her e-mail address is Dee.A.Alexander@Census.gov.

There is no specific deadline for the submission of comments. Ideally the Bureau would like to receive as many as possible before the tribal consultations begin in October at the AFN and NCAI Conventions.

The Census Bureau will provide background information on this subject at the national Webinar scheduled for September 25th. To access the Webinar, use the information on the last page of this newsletter.

**Field Address Canvassing Begins for the 2020 Census**

The Census Bureau announced last month that it is beginning to send Census enumerators into neighborhoods around the country. This operation, called "in field address canvassing," covers those areas where staff has not been able to verify all the addresses where people might be living on Census day in 2020 by examining aerial photos or using other in-office means.

The Bureau estimates that it will need roughly 40,000 people for this particular operation. Many of those people may also be employed to help conduct the actual enumeration next spring and summer. As has been the case for months, the agency is anxious to employ local people who know the neighborhoods, who speak whatever language is likely to be spoken by many of the people living there and can be recognized as part of that neighborhood. These enumerators, called "address listers" for this operation, will have badges to identify them as Census Bureau employees.
## Schedules for Webinar and Tribal Consultations

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<td><strong>Wednesday, October 16, 2019</strong></td>
<td>Time (TBD)</td>
<td>2019 Alaska Tribal Leaders Conference, Fairbanks, Alaska</td>
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<td><strong>Monday, October 21, 2019</strong></td>
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<td>National Congress of American Indians, 67th Annual Convention and Marketplace, Albuquerque Convention Center, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102</td>
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