Understanding Tribal Territorial Jurisdiction in Alaska after VAWA 2022

1. The Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act of 2022 reaffirms the inherent sovereignty of Alaska Tribes to exercise their authority over all Native people present within the boundaries of a Village.

SEC. 813. TRIBAL JURISDICTION IN ALASKA.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subject to title II of Public Law 90–284 (25 U.S.C. 1301 et seq.) (commonly known as the “Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968”), Congress recognizes and affirms the inherent authority of any Indian tribe occupying a Village in the State to exercise criminal and civil jurisdiction over all Indians present in the Village.

2. In recognizing tribal territorial jurisdiction in Alaska, VAWA 2022 refers to “Villages” as defined in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, commonly known as ANCSA, which is now a part of the United States Code in Title 43.

(7) VILLAGE.—The term “Village” means the Alaska Native Village Statistical Area covering all or any portion of a Native village (as defined in section 3 of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1602)), as depicted on the applicable Tribal Statistical Area Program Verification map of the Bureau of the Census.
3. To find the ANCSA definition of “Village,” perform a Google search for “43 U.S.C. § 1602” or follow this link to the Legal Information Institute (LII).

From the Definition section, you can follow the link to either 1610 or 1615; or, you can search for 43 U.S. Code § 1610 and 43 U.S. Code § 1615 directly in the search bar.

4. ANCSA refers to two sections within the statute that list Villages, Section 1610 and Section 1615.
   a. Section 1610
   b. Section 1615
5. VAWA recognizes Alaska Tribes’ territorial jurisdiction by referring to the Tribal Statistical Area Program (TSAP) Verification maps, which are maintained by the U.S. Census Bureau.


   b. They can also be found by searching: 2010 Census TSAP Verification Maps.
c. Select the Regional Corporation folder. Example: Doyon Regional Corporation.
d. The Census maps vary based on Region and Village. This example uses the Village of Nulato, listed in 43 U.S.C. § 1610 as “Nulato, Koyukuk-Lower Yukon.” Each map of a statistical area will look something like this:

This is a screenshot of the first PDF in the Nulato folder:
e. *Each statistical area can be difficult to interpret and contains a unique legend. When in doubt, ZOOM IN.*