

## SECTION III: INTRODUCTION

### CONTEMPORARY DISPLACEMENT IN ALASKA'S VILLAGES AND URBAN AREAS

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The papers in this section pertain to two very different aspects of displacement in Alaska today. The first relates to the increase of migration from rural communities in the state, particularly villages with predominantly Alaska Native populations, to urban areas such as Anchorage and Fairbanks. The second concerns the influx into Anchorage of refugee populations from around the world. Unlike many foreign immigrants who have settled in Alaska as a matter of personal choice, the fate of refugees is determined by a complex process of national and international agreements, regulations, and procedures stipulating where each refugee family will ultimately be resettled. These papers explore several of the themes discussed in the earlier sections of this volume, including economic motivations for voluntary displacement, sudden forced displacement due to political upheaval and war, and the challenges of the resettlement process.

In Hannah Voorhees' paper, "Emplacement and 'Cosmobility': Rural-Urban Migration and Indigenous Futures in Alaska," she discusses the role of rural places for Alaska Native communities and how the concept of "place" should be defined. She develops a dichotomy between the notion of place as a geographic entity and that of place as an intangible sense of community cohesion. Her paper echoes the recent words of anthropologist Wallace Olsen, who states that "there may be an alternative to cultures surviving only in the villages. It may be preserving what Native people want to preserve for future generations, and doing it in a different place and setting" (2010). Marie Lowe's paper, "Rural-Urban

Migration in Alaska," highlights the realities of displacement from rural communities as economic conditions worsen and residents worry about educational opportunities for their children. She presents the results of a recent study of new students in the Anchorage School District whose parents responded to a questionnaire about their decisions to relocate from villages or the Matanuska-Susitna Valley and enroll their children in Anchorage schools.

The last two papers in this section deal with the growing international refugee population in Anchorage. My paper, "Anchorage, Alaska: City of Hope for International Refugees," is a general overview of this population, which includes a large contingent of Hmong who have relocated to Alaska as secondary immigrants from states such as California and Minnesota, where they were originally resettled as refugees beginning in the 1980s. I discuss the role of religious and nonprofit organizations in easing the transition for the refugees, and I highlight the challenges they must overcome and successes that they have achieved. Cornelia Jessen's paper, "Refugees and Healthcare Providers in Anchorage, Alaska: Understanding Cross-Cultural Medical Encounters," is the result of research for her master's thesis in anthropology at the University of Alaska Anchorage. After interviewing both health care providers and refugees, she analyzes the content of the interviews and identifies barriers to good healthcare due to differences in cross-cultural perceptions between caregivers and their patients. Jessen's applied anthropological research on the Anchorage refugee population is one of

the first of its kind for Alaska, and will serve as a model for other anthropologists interested in an ever-changing segment of the state's population.

#### REFERENCES

Olson, Wallace  
2010 Cultures Must Change as the World Does. *Anchorage Daily News* November 6, p. B-4.